

COACH'S CORNER

Coach's Corner is a DIEEC blog dedicated to providing fresh ideas for all early childhood education professionals.

Developing Emotional Intelligence

By Meghan Pallante

Understanding emotions is one of the most important parts of the human experience. Our emotions are intertwined with every facet of our lives including our individual well-being, relationships, and work. Gaining an understanding of our own emotions and the emotions of those around us begins at an early age, thus making social and emotional skills an integral part of early childhood education.

Adults with high emotional intelligence tend to have more success in the following areas:

- **Personal relationships.** High emotional intelligence is associated with good communication skills, a higher level of empathy, and the ability to maintain relationships.
- **Workplace.** Emotional intelligence is important when collaborating with colleagues, performing in a leadership role, and handling stressful situations.
- **Mental health and wellbeing.** People with high emotional intelligence are more self aware and able to self-regulate when dealing with strong emotions.



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Emotional Intelligence in Early Childhood

Now that we have looked at some of the long-term benefits of emotional intelligence, how do we get there? Over the years, early childhood education has changed and evolved. There has been a major push for “school readiness” which has trickled down to our youngest learners. It is important to remember that “school readiness” does not have to mean only academic concepts. Some of the most important skills to have in getting ready for kindergarten fall under the social and emotional developmental domain, including independence, managing emotions, and conflict resolution. Early childhood education programs can begin promoting social and emotional skills as early as infancy! Below are some ways to incorporate social and emotional learning in your daily experiences with young children.

Developing our own emotional awareness

- **Labeling emotions.** For our infants and toddlers, this is a great way to lay the foundation for an emotional vocabulary. It might feel a little silly at first, but for nonverbal infants, you can literally state the emotions they may be feeling based on their actions. If a baby is fussing you might say, “You seem to be feeling upset right now” followed by a reason such as, “you might be getting hungry.” Another example could be a toddler squealing and giggling while running through bubbles outside. You could say, “You sound so happy! I love watching you having fun with the bubbles!”
- **Talking through emotions.** For our preschoolers, we can go beyond just labeling emotions. If a child seems to be experiencing a difficult emotion, ask them if they would like to talk about it or describe how they are feeling. If the child would like to talk about their feelings be sure to listen before offering any follow up actions or solutions. Children, like adults, just need someone to listen sometimes. For example, if a child seems sad after drop off and shares that they miss their family, a great follow-up would be to validate their feelings and offer a hug or to do an activity with them. “I know leaving (insert family member name) is hard and makes you feel sad sometimes. It’s okay to feel that way. We can sit together and read a book or do a puzzle if you would like.”

Recognizing the emotions of others

- **Pointing out the emotions of peers.** For toddlers, we can start to promote awareness of the emotions of others. An example could be, “Your friend seems sad. Let’s see if he would like to join us in the block area.” We can also begin to point out how our actions affect the emotions of those around us. “You made your friend so happy by giving her the purple crayon to use!”
- **Helping children through conflict resolution.** For preschoolers, we can start to explore conflict resolution. We want to be sure to be playing a supportive role without demanding that the children work toward a certain solution. “I see your friend is upset that you knocked over his block tower, what can we do about this?” We want to give our little ones the opportunity to problem-solve before we offer solutions!

Using Materials

- **Emotion posters** - Another great way to promote conversations around emotions is to add an emotions poster to your space. Invite the children to identify how they are feeling each day. This is also a great time to acknowledge that we may feel a variety of emotions throughout the day. Below are some examples of emotion posters that are available for purchase. ****Please note that DIEEC does not endorse any specific vendor.***



Image credit: Lakeshore
Emotions Photo Poster



Image Credit: Amazon/FLYAB Store
FLYAB Feelings Chart Poster

- **Books.** There are so many books for all age groups that promote social and emotional development. Below are examples of books for each age group.
 - **Infants & Toddlers**
 - Baby Faces (Margaret Miller)
 - Words Are Not for Hurting (Elizabeth Verdickem)
 - Feelings (Alike)
 - **Preschool**
 - Listening to My Body (Gabi Garcia)
 - The Story of Ferdinand (Munro Leaf)
 - Owl Babies (Martin Waddell)
 - When Sophie Gets Angry – Really, Really Angry (Molly Bang)
 - The Feelings Book (Todd Parr)

While planning for your daily experiences and activities this month, look for opportunities to discuss emotions. Also, be sure to pay special attention to moments that happen organically throughout the day. While we want to prepare our children to be successful throughout their lives, most importantly we should be preparing them to be good people to those around them.

Source

- [Ready or Not Kindergarten, Here We Come- NAEYC](#)

Professional Learning Experiences

- [Bridging the Connection Gap: Individualizing Relationships for Family Child Care Providers \(Virtual Live\)](#)
- [Developing Relationships, Developing Brains: Infants and Toddlers \(Virtual Live\)](#)
- [Self-Regulation and Play \(Self-paced\)](#)
- [Transitions: Emotions in Motion \(Virtual Live\)](#)

Resources

- [10 Reasons Why We Want to Start The School Year Helping Our Children Build a Strong Emotional Vocabulary- Devereux Center for Resilient Children](#)
- [Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning](#)