

Grow Your Child's Emotional Intelligence

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From the time a baby is born until they establish themselves as adults, many parents are at least a little concerned with how intelligent their child will be (I know I sure do!). While it is important that children learn their ABCs and 123s, and pass college entrance exams, developing a child's emotional intelligence is an aspect of our child's development that we must consider in an ongoing, intentional manner. Studies consistently show that emotional intelligence (EQ) is much more important than IQ because it relates directly to happiness and success (Goffman & Declaire, 1997; Segrin & Flora, 2019). Many highly intelligent adults struggle in day-to-day life due to a lack of emotional intelligence (Segrin & Flora, 2019). The good news is that we can do this with joy! We can also make it fun and involve every member of the family.

Making an effort to increase your child's emotional intelligence is one of your most important tasks as a parent. Emotional intelligence is our ability to identify and manage the emotions of others and ourselves. EQ refers to the way that we perceive, process, regulate and use emotional information. Those with a higher level of emotional intelligence enjoy more satisfying careers and stronger, more fulfilling relationships. Emotional intelligence has five components (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2017).

- 1. Self-regulation of emotional states.** An emotionally healthy person can manage their moods appropriately and successfully.
- 2. The ability to motivate yourself.** Staying the course in spite of doubt and distractions is an important component of emotional intelligence.
- 3. Empathy for others.** This includes the ability to recognize emotions and feelings in others and choose an appropriate course of action.

- 4. Navigating relationships.** This aspect deals with conflict resolution, treating others appropriately, and receiving the same in return.
- 5. Self-awareness.** It is important to be able to recognize your own thoughts and emotions dispassionately to make wise choices.

These five qualities are important in all aspects of life. Just as a child learns to read or do multiplication, it is important to learn how to manage and recognize emotion in oneself and others.

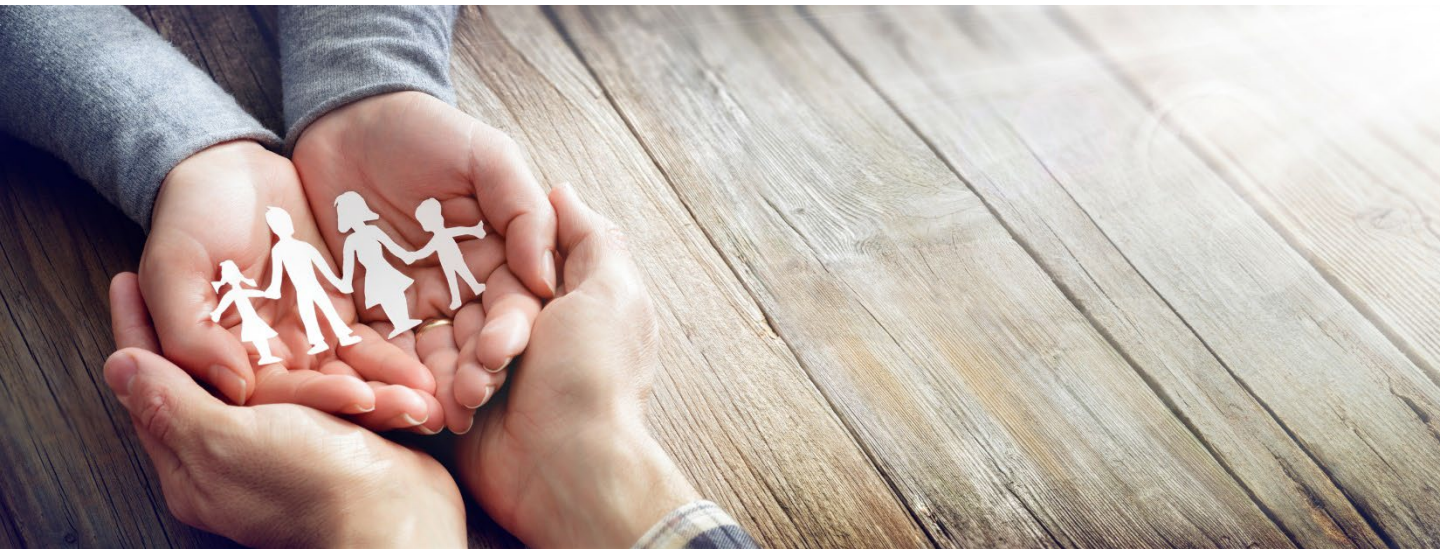


The following strategies can help you increase the emotional intelligence of your child:

- 1. Teach your child about his or her emotions by recognizing and labeling them.** Doing so will validate the way your child feels. Putting a label on the emotion provides some perspective to your child. (e.g., “You’re very excited about your birthday party,” or “You’re sad that you can’t go out and play.”)
- 2. Help your child to recognize how they respond to stress.** Some children cry, while others seek solitude. Your child might hit a sibling with a toy. We all have our own ways of dealing with uncomfortable emotions. Your child will start to associate certain emotions with their behaviors. This is an effective way of teaching a child to notice their emotional states. (e.g., “You cry when you’re tired or frustrated,” or “You want some alone time when you feel angry.”)
- 3. Encourage your child to share his or her emotions.** If your child is angry, scared or nervous, encourage him or her to discuss it. You might want to share circumstances when you felt the same emotion as a child. Providing your own examples allows your child to develop a broader perspective. Discussing his or her emotions with you will allow the start of learning how to process emotions. This is healthier than suppressing them. (e.g., “Tomorrow will be your first day of preschool – how are you feeling? I remember when I went to school for the first time! I was so nervous; my belly felt like it was full of butterflies! But I did it. I was brave and you are, too.”)

4. **Encourage problem-solving behaviors when emotions run high.** Teach your child that strong emotions are a sign of something that needs to be addressed, if possible. It is more effective to work on a solution than it is to become more upset. (e.g., “What’s wrong? How can we make it better?” or “Do you know why you’re crying? What would make you stop crying?”)
5. **Be an example of emotional intelligence.** Children learn many of their strategies for dealing with the world by observing their parents. Be an example worthy of imitating.

Does your child excel at school, but struggle socially? Building your child’s emotional intelligence is very important. **Those with high levels of emotional intelligence enjoy happier and more productive lives.** Do your best to learn about emotional intelligence today and prepare your child for a bright future. There are many excellent books on emotional intelligence at your local bookstore, as well as a plethora of information on the web. Learn how to enhance your own emotional intelligence ... you and your child will both benefit!



References:

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