

The Parents Corner

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☆We're in your Corner☆

Do you ever notice how negative emotions make us feel uncomfortable? So much so that we try to avoid these feelings, escape from what is triggering us, or even apologize for feeling the way we do? Even as adults, it's difficult to sit with our negative emotions and accept them for what they are—a message that we need something. Although we refer to these feelings as "negative," we must move away from creating a world where "negative" emotions are not ok. Kids need to be able to recognize and accept that anger, worry, sadness, and fear happen to ALL humans, and that this recognition and openness to feeling all types of feelings is the first and most important step in learning to cope. This ability to figure out what we need in order to move into a calm and comfortable space is part of **emotional intelligence**, and it's something we need to start teaching as early as possible.

Is your EQ as important as your IQ? Why yes, we think it is! Emotions are part of our health. Managing anxiety in order to tackle a big project, managing anger in order to work through a peer conflict, managing fear in order to try something new; a person's ability to manage their emotions in a healthy way can have a profound impact on their quality of life. Therefore, taking care of feelings is critical in keeping our kids, and ourselves, healthy.

So how do we help our kids become emotionally intelligent? It's certainly a lifelong lesson, but there are some great ways we can start the process:

- 1. Identify and accept ALL feelings.** Accept and acknowledge your child's full range of emotions. Teach kids that they can't choose their feelings any more than they can choose their arms and legs. But they CAN choose what to do with those feelings.
- 2. When in doubt, empathize.** Your empathy and acceptance will help your child accept their own emotions. *Accepting* our emotions makes it possible to cope with them. *Empathizing* teaches children that feelings are not dangerous or something to be embarrassed about—they are common and manageable.
- 3. Help your child learn to problem solve.** Sometimes kids need help brainstorming. Try to resist the urge to handle the problem for them unless they ask you to. Let your kids feel your confidence in their ability to handle it themselves. Emotions are visitors with a message. Teach your child to breathe through them, feel them, accept them—and once they aren't in the heightened state of strong emotion—to problem solve if necessary.
- 4. Model emotional intelligence.** Think of yourself as a coach. Kids often mimic what they see their parents do, so it is important to reflect on how you handle your own emotions by asking: What do I do under pressure? How do I cope with strong emotions? Do I panic or start snapping when I'm under stress? Do I overreact when things go wrong? How do I talk about myself? How do I treat others? Do I empathize when feelings are expressed? These can be tough questions to ask ourselves, especially in the heat of the moment, but practicing EQ is lifelong, so don't beat yourself up if your answers aren't as positive as you would like. Remember, identifying and accepting all emotions is the first step in helping kids develop their own emotional intelligence—and continuing our own!

~If you continue to have concerns, contact your school counselor to make a plan for a success—they're full of ideas, and are always in your corner!~