



What is Emotional Literacy?

The terms emotional literacy and emotional intelligence both refer to the ability to recognise, understand, handle and appropriately express emotions. 'Emotional intelligence' is a person's overall ability to deal with their emotions, while 'emotional literacy' suggests a person's ability to communicate their emotions through words and read them in others. The ability to understand, express and cope with a wide spectrum of emotions lies at the heart of happiness, self-esteem and positive relationships. Unlike other milestones, becoming emotionally literate is a more dynamic process that requires nurture and attention throughout childhood. We work on this throughout the children's daily school life and in particular at the moment when supporting children's post-Lockdown mental health and well-being.

What are the Main Aspects of Emotional Intelligence?

There are five main aspects of emotional intelligence (identified by Daniel Goleman) which, when developed, lead to children becoming emotionally literate.

1. **Knowing emotions** - a child recognises a feeling as it happens.
2. **Managing emotions** - a child has a way of reassuring themselves when they feel anxious or upset.
3. **Self-motivation** - a child is in charge of their emotions, rather than controlled by them.
4. **Empathy** - a child is aware of what another person is feeling.
5. **Handling relationships** - a child is able to build relationships with others.

Top Tips for Helping Your Child Develop Emotional Literacy

- Some children are instinctively in tune with their feelings and emotions, and will be ready to deal with new and different people and situations more easily, whereas others will need more help and guidance. Children need to have their emotional literacy nurtured, supported and encouraged, so by teaching your child to express themselves appropriately, you are empowering them to navigate their emotions successfully when growing up.
- Don't immediately judge, criticise or negate how your child is feeling. Name the emotion for them and say things like: 'Oh, that sounds really frustrating,' or, 'I can tell how excited you are.' Giving a name to their inner turmoil can be reassuring and containing. Feelings faces on lolly sticks or feelings charades can help children understand and normalise emotions. Help the child realise that emotions (even anger and jealousy) are OK, it's how we react to them that is important.
- Difficult feelings (anger, fear, jealousy, etc.) are all natural emotions that help us to grow, reflect and learn. They are signals that guide us; however, for children they can be frightening and overwhelming. Children need to know what these feelings are and that they are manageable. We should accept these feelings with empathy rather than shutting them down - offer comforting words, maintain gentle eye contact.
- Encourage your child to talk about their feelings. Create an environment where it's safe to talk openly about feelings and emotions free from judgement and criticism. Say things like: 'You sound really fed up. Shall we have a chat?' and, 'How did that make you feel?'
- Help them to recognise the signs about how others may be feeling. In stories or on television programmes, ask open-ended questions to help your child step into the shoes of a character or person - 'How do you think that made them feel?' 'How would you feel if that happened to you?'
- Teach children alternative ways of expressing their frustrations. Ask your child an open-ended, empowering question to help them feel that they have choices. 'How could you explain how you feel using words rather than hitting?' 'What different ways can you think of to let him know how angry you are without using aggression?'
- Recognise what motivates them to perform at their best. Encourage your child- focus on celebrating the behaviour and the effort, not just the end result. 'I've noticed when things get difficult, you just keep trying. That's fantastic.'
- Model how to remain calm and in control when you are tired, angry or frustrated. Children learn how to cope with their emotional states by mirroring how adults respond to them.
- Remember the three As - Acknowledge the feeling, Accept the feeling, Action the feeling - in a positive way - 'What can we do moving forward to try and make this better?' This may be best faced as small steps, rather than trying to overcome an emotion immediately.



The Britain Get Talking campaign encourages us all to focus on our mental well-being and reach out to others.

Promote an Empowered Attitude

Giving children some simple yet powerful strategies to implement when faced with strong feelings will increase their ability to cope with a whole spectrum of emotions - children can then manage tricky feelings, rather than feel controlled by them. These can also help when children have moved out of the left side of their rational brain and are in the fight or flight side with their feelings. Creative tools can help them to recalibrate their emotional response.

- **Glitter Bottle** - Mix glitter into a bottle of water. When your child is experiencing difficult feelings, encourage them to shake the bottle and watch the glitter until it all settles at the bottom. This process is mesmerising and helps children to stay grounded in the moment. For older children, you could draw a comparison between the bottle and their minds: when our emotions are overwhelming, it can be hard to see clearly (through the cloudy water) but when we give our minds chance to settle, things become clearer and we can make decisions about what to do next.
- **Flower Breathing** - Invite your child to imagine their hand is a flower and their fingers are petals. Instruct them to take deep breaths in through the nose, and out through the mouth, opening and closing their hand (flower) simultaneously.
- **Mindful Moments** - To help your child stay focused in the present, ask them to notice three things they can see, three things they can hear and three things they can smell. To help with this exercise, you could take them on a walk around the house or in the garden.
- **Sorting Activities** - These types of activities can be very calming for some children. You could give your child a pack of cards to sort though, some pencils to sharpen or toys to place in size order or in different categories.
- **Creative Activities** - Some children engage very well with Lego, colouring, clay or Play-doh etc. to help them relax and work through an emotional state.

Active Listening

How often are you doing something else or thinking about something else when you are listening to someone?

Sometimes children just want to be heard. So what can we do?

- ✓ **Get the information** - encourage, ask for more, allow silence, use words like: 'Tell me...Explain...Describe...'
- ✓ **Understand and Reflect**- Check details and sequencing. Clarify and summarise: 'So what you are saying is...' 'It seems as if...'
- ✓ **Re-affirm** - well-timed questions and comments to show you are listening (what, where, when, how, etc.), open and interested body posture.
- ✓ **Create an environment** - affirm their effort, offer empathy, check they are comfortable.
- ✓ **Avoid** - expressing impatience, disinterest or judgment.
- ✓ **Help** - Help them identify what they are good at and small steps they can take to make the emotion / problem less overwhelming but don't tell them what to do - empower them instead.

A People Place

By William J. Crocker

If this is not the place where tears are understood...
Where do I go to cry?
If this is not a place where my spirit can take wing...
Where do I go to fly?
If this is not a place where my questions can be asked...
Where do I go to seek?
If this is not a place where my feelings can be heard...
Where do I go to speak?
If this is not a place where you'll accept me as I am...
Where can I go to be?
If this is not a place where I can try to learn and grow...
Where can I just be me?

For more information and helpful resources, go to:

The Huge Bag of Worries - Virginia Ironside

Stories we have studied in school in relation to post-Lockdown mental health:

While We Can't Hug - Eion McLaughlin / The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse - Charlie Mackesy

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