



Skipping Stones

EMOTIONAL LITERACY

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"Play with a purpose."

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Emotional Literacy Game

Title: *Mood Swings*

Supplies: Piece of Paper or book

Description: Have the group sit in a circle and explain that you are going to make a different face that will demonstrate what mood you are in (i.e. happy, mad, sad). Hold a book or piece of paper in front of your face between changes in mood. Have the group members guess the mood. When someone guesses correctly it is their turn to have everyone guess their mood.

EMOTIONAL LITERACY

What is emotional literacy?

Emotional literacy is the ability to recognize, understand, and appropriately respond to emotions in ourselves and others.¹ Just as verbal literacy serves as the basis for reading and writing, emotional literacy is the building block for our emotional lives.

Emotions are a central part of who we are as people. Emotions influences our wants and needs, our thoughts, actions, and behaviors, our health and well-being, and our relationships. Our emotions allow us to respond to people and situations in a number of ways--with happiness, excitement sadness, anger, love. Once developed, emotional literacy is a skill that provides a positive alternative to many of the problems society faces today : crime and violence, dysfunctional relationships, substance abuse,² and high degrees of depression, anger, and sadness.³

What happens when children are emotionally literate? Children with well-developed emotional literacy skills are better able to keep themselves motivated and committed to projects and tasks; they are better able to recognize the extent to which they can change their own behaviors; they are more aware of themselves, their needs, resources, and goals; they are better able to communicate and convey their empathy for, and also their disagreement with, others in a respectful manner; and they are more likely to have a greater understanding of their own potential and the desire to live up to that.⁴

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Top 10 Benefits to Gaining Emotional Literacy

Children with emotional literacy skills are:⁵

- Healthier
- Less impulsive
- Less lonely
- More focused
- More tolerant of stress and frustration
- Better able to solve interpersonal problems
- Engage in less destructive behavior
- Get into fewer fights
- Have greater academic achievement
- Have a greater sense of control over their lives

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The key is to not resist or rebel against emotions or to try to get around them by devising all sorts of tricks, but to accept them directly as they are.

~ Takakisa Kora



Draw or write about how you are feeling

Emotional Literacy

Emotional Literacy Flash

Building A Feeling Word Vocabulary

A large, complex feeling word vocabulary is the basic building block of emotional literacy development.⁶ In order to correctly identify and respond to one's own feelings and those of others, children first need to have the correct labels for those feelings. Feelings can be confusing when we do not have the right words to express them, leading to feelings of frustration and problem behavior.

Try these activities to increase your child's feeling word vocabulary⁷:

-Place a list of feeling words in a common gathering area to spark curiosity and discussion.

-Choose a feeling word for the day and look it up in the dictionary as a family

-Choose a feeling word and act it out; discuss a time when you felt that way; or draw a picture of what it looks like.

-Pick a feeling word and write down its synonyms (i.e., anger = infuriated, mad, upset, furious). Talk about how the feelings differ in intensity.

-Engage children in "feeling" activities: sings songs, read books, and play games with new feeling words.⁸



Ten Basic Feelings

1. Want
2. Need
3. Lonely
4. Overwhelmed
5. Hungry
6. Satisfied
7. Frustrated
8. Bored
9. Jealous
10. Disempowered

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Emotional literacy is one of the best investments we can make in ourselves, our children, and our future!

What Can Adults Do To Increase Emotional Literacy in Kids?

Adults can play an important role in helping children develop emotional literacy skills:⁹

-Label your child's feelings:

Throughout the day, adults can attend to their child's emotional needs and help label their feelings. For example, as a child runs for a jump rope on the playground, another child reaches in and grabs it. The first child begins to frown. The teacher helps label the child's feeling, "You look sad about that jump rope." The broader a child's feeling vocabulary, the better they can communicate their feelings.

-Be a good role model: You can make it a point to talk about your feelings as you experience them throughout the day as well as the actions you will take to cope with your feelings.

-Embrace your child's emotions:

You must make it OK for children to have emotions. Listen to your child's emotional experiences without rushing to give advice or pass judgment.¹⁰

Cut out and keep game on back



Helpful tips for managing emotions¹¹

- Talk about your feelings: do not suppress or deny them but instead, acknowledge your feelings and deal with them directly.
- Do not react emotionally to emotional outbursts: if you are having trouble staying calm, temporarily leave the room and pick up the conversation again when you have had a chance to clear your mind and think more clearly.
- Express your feelings in a non-confrontational way using I-messages: I feel _____ (state your feeling); when you _____ (describe the action that led to the feeling); because _____ (why the action connects to the feeling).