

DEVELOPING SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING AT HOME

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Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) isn't just a curriculum or a program; it's a way of life. It's a lifelong journey that begins the moment your child takes their first breath and continues long after they've flown the nest. It's about teaching them not just how to make a living but how to live. It's about equipping them with the emotional intelligence they need to fully live the human experience.

And the best part? You get to be their guide, their mentor, their biggest fan.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) refers to the process of learning social and emotional skills that set the foundation for healthy relationships, mental well-being, and skills to thrive at school and in life.

Developing social and emotional skills is a life-long practice. SEL can take place at home, school, and in community.



Parents can play a key role in fostering their child's social-emotional learning (SEL).

The relationship between child and parent is essential for building the foundation for future social-emotional health. When parents work to model healthy social-emotional skills, they can promote these key skills and build the trusting and safe relationship necessary with their child that will allow them to learn and explore.

According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), there are 5 key skills to social-emotional learning:



Before reading and trying out the tips provided below, first reflect on your own SEL skills:

1. Self Awareness

How do you experience strong emotions such as joy or anger? What does it feel like in your body? Do you find that you experience certain emotions more often than others? Are there things your children do that trigger strong feelings in you? What do you think about when you have these emotions?

2. Self Management

How do you handle strong emotions? Do you cope in the way that you want your child to learn? How well do you set goals and make and keep plans to reach those goals?

4. Social Awareness

How much do you notice others' facial expressions, tone of voice, body posture, and other signs of their feelings? Are you typically accurate about how others are feeling, and do you understand why they may be behaving the way they do?

5. Responsible Decision Making

What do you think about when you have to make a big decision? Are you able to assert yourself? Do you consider others? How do you solve problems involving conflict or arguments? Are you able to make healthy and good decisions?

3. Relationship Skills

How do you connect with others? How do you make friends? Do you maintain relationships with others over time? Are you more comfortable or effective in a group or one-on-one?

Next, consider your child's social and emotional skills.

Most of the tips provided in this handout make sense for both young children and adolescents, but you may need to implement them slightly differently depending on your child's age and skill level. Think about what you know about your child in the same areas as above:

1. Self Awareness

How does your child experience emotions? How well, and with how much variety and nuance, is your child able to name feelings or describe them?

2. Responsible Decision Making

How does your child make decisions? Does your child think first before acting or act first before thinking? How good is your child at considering consequences, both short and long term, before acting on or after reflecting on his or her actions?

3. Relationship Skills

Does your child have appropriate friends? Is your child able to initiate friendships, join games, and resolve conflicts with others? Does your child like to be around others?

4. Social Awareness

Does your child pay attention to the feelings of others, and are his or her ideas accurate? Is your child able to put himself or herself in others' shoes and show empathy?

5. Self Management

How does your child cope with emotions? Is your child able to manage strong emotions appropriately? How well does your child set goals and make and keep plans to reach those goals?

SEL Strategies for Home



SEL skills also can be developed in your daily interactions with your child.

Researchers at Harvard University have identified six broad areas of SEL: emotion, social, cognitive, identity, perspectives, and values. Each area is made up of multiple skills that can be promoted at home. **Here are a few research-based tips to try at home.**

● *Emotion Skills*

- Help your children build awareness of emotions by talking about your own feelings and validating all emotions (It's okay to feel sad, angry, disappointed...)
- Discuss healthy and unhealthy ways to express emotions that align with your home and cultural values. For example, hitting a pillow may be okay, but hitting people is not okay.
- Try out different ways to regulate emotions to see what works best for your family. Participating in cultural activities, such as music and dancing, spending time in nature, and seeking support through social connections are some healthy and effective ways to help your child process their emotions during challenging times.

● *Social Skills*

- Model positive social behaviours, such as empathy, kindness, and compassion, and your child is more likely to engage in those behaviours.
- Build social awareness and healthy relationship skills by getting to know the diversity of people in your community as a family.

● *Cognitive Skills*

- One of the best ways to improve brain (cognitive) function is combining physical activity with learning new things, such as dance, yoga, recreational sports, and martial arts. Enjoy some active time together as a family when you can.
- Support your child's critical thinking and problem-solving skills by talking through challenges together and allowing them to find their own solutions.

● *Identity*

- Having a healthy sense of identity is one of the most important ways to promote well-being. Encourage your child to embrace and celebrate their identities.
- Having a sense of purpose contributes to a healthy identity. Talk to your child about what is important to them and support their participation in those activities.

● *Perspectives*

- Cultivating positive perspectives such as gratitude, optimism, and mindfulness, are foundational to mental well-being.

• Values

- Discuss and explore personal, social, and cultural values with your child. Your child may hold different values than you. Learn from your child and practice acceptance as a source of connection.

The following ideas are just a few of the great ways parents can bring social-emotional learning into the home:

here's how:

Create a trusting, safe connection with your child

1 Spend time with them and talk about anything that comes to their mind. Offering a safe space or time for children to talk to you assures them that you care.

Model the types of behavior you want your child to emulate.

3 While you work to build your child's confidence, ensure that they don't witness you putting yourself down.

Encourage the expression of emotions

5 Rather than dismiss your child's feelings, ask them to explain them. This may mean asking them, "What's wrong?" rather than telling them to "Stop crying." You can help a child manage their emotions by asking them to express what causes them and then offer a different solution to responding to those feelings.

Establish routines

2 Routines are another key piece of creating a safe and open space for your child. The sense of stability that routines create - from bedtimes to mealtimes - can reduce your child's anxiety and assist in SEL.

Offer praise and support for positive behaviors

4 Children who demonstrate cooperation, sharing and follow the rules can benefit from positive reinforcement to build their confidence.

Ask children to reflect

6 If you notice them being empathetic towards another child who is upset, ask your child to talk about what they were feeling and why they behaved in the way that they did. Be sure to encourage this type of behavior by saying, "I liked how you were kind to your friend when he was feeling sad."

As children's first and most important teachers, families play a critical role in nurturing **social and emotional learning (SEL)** from the very beginning. As a parent, you can support your child's social-emotional development by making time for them, listening actively and practicing empathy and patience. It is also important to partner with your child's teachers.

SEL also has a wide range of benefits, including **better academic performance and improved mental health in kids**. By practicing SEL at home, you can reinforce these positive outcomes — and **help your children grow into caring, capable individuals**.