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TIPS FOR TEACHING KIDS EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Emotional Intelligence (EQ) can be taught. EQ starts with self-awareness around thoughts, feelings, and strategies for expression. As someone develops language and competency of feelings they are able to further develop and enrich their ability to empathize. Children have a rich inner and emotional life. Disqualifying these emotions neglects their ability to develop healthy coping strategies.

1 HELP CHILDREN DEFINE FEELINGS

Feelings are complex because we try to put words to something that each of us might perceive differently. What is a feeling? Ask a child what they think a feeling is and how they know that it is a feeling. How do we know something is a feeling and not a thought?

2 EXPLORE DIFFERENT TYPES OF FEELINGS

Helping a child explore different types of feelings will help them associate their experience with a feeling that might arise. List all the feelings they can think of and their associations to the feeling. For example, frustration: when I can't figure out my homework assignment. Ask how the kids know what they are feeling is one feeling and not another. Ex: How do you know you are mad and not sad? How are those feelings different?

3 DISCUSS WHERE YOU CAN FEEL EMOTIONS IN THE BODY

Feelings often manifest in the body, e.g. shoulder pain, bellyaches, sweat, butterflies in the belly, tears, headaches, dizziness, etc. Helping a child identify where a feeling manifests in their body can help them recognize it more effectively next time it occurs. Explore strategies for releasing that feeling such as hitting a pillow when angry, taking a nap when tired, etc.

Simple Activity:

- a. Invite the child to outline your body on a large butcher paper or to draw a figurine on a paper.
- b. Ask the child to draw the different places where they experience feelings.
- c. Discuss strategies for healthy coping responses.

4 UNHELPFUL WAYS TO EXPRESS FEELINGS

Unhelpful ways to express feelings come with consequences. When Timmy hits his little sister he gets in trouble, which doesn't help Timmy cope with his anger. This is an ineffective coping strategy. Fostering helpful and healthy coping starts with identifying consequences (outcomes) to unhelpful expressions (like hitting) and brainstorming alternative helpful strategies

5 HELPFUL WAYS TO EXPRESS FEELINGS

Learning healthy ways to cope starts with identifying helpful ways to express feelings. Associating feelings with healthy expressions will provide children with options when a strategy doesn't work. For example, sad: talk to friends, write in journal, or take a break.