

Readiness to Learn at School

Emotional Health and Maturity

What is it?

Emotional maturity is the ability to recognize and express both positive and negative emotions in ways that are healthy, respectful, and appropriate to the situation. It is also empathy and the willingness to help and comfort others.

Why is it important?

Children who are able to concentrate on task and show patience, and are able to understand and get along well with others, are children who are prepared to learn and succeed—at school and throughout life.



Respond quickly and sensitively to your infant's needs, especially every time your baby cries during the first six months. Use your words to label the emotions you see. For example, "so sad... baby's crying."

Read books about feelings with your child.
Attend parent-and-child library programs.



What can I do to build my child's emotional health and maturity?

Your child is constantly watching and learning from you. This makes you your child's first and best teacher of emotional maturity. But you don't need to teach "a lesson"—just look for teachable moments. Start by watching your child. See what he or she is doing, then join in. Children learn by playing, so have fun and be confident that how you are being—helpful, kind, caring, patient and so on—is what they are learning from you, day after day, and this is the best way to ensure your child enjoys school and is successful throughout life. For ideas on building your child's emotional maturity, try some of the activities on this tip sheet. Although these activities are grouped into three ages (see footprints below) they may be suitable for children of different ages.



INFANT



TODDLER



PRESCHOOLER

Stroke your baby's face with your fingertip. Name all the parts of the face as you touch them.

Play "Pet the Dog": First, you pet your cat or dog. Then, with your hand over your baby's hand, gently pet your cat or dog together.

Hold your baby close while singing or talking. Make lots of eye contact and smile, so that your baby knows just how special it is to you. Giggle and laugh together.

Play different types of music with a variety of "moods." Take your baby in your arms and dance.

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Make a home-made “Teddy Bear Hospital” for all your child’s cuddly toys, complete with blankets, beds, bandages and medical tools.

Give your child the chance to play independently, as well as with you, each and every day.

Give your child some cuddly toys to care for (e.g., wash, feed, hug). Talk about what your child is doing, and how helpful and caring she or he is being.



Sing and act out the well known song, If You’re Happy & You Know It. Use exaggerated expressions. Help your toddler label emotions by explaining that when you feel angry, you say “I feel angry,” and so on.

Play “Guess the Feeling”: You act out an emotion and your child will guess what you are feeling. Include your child’s teddies and other stuffed animals. This adds other personalities and situations to the game.



Help your child organize a play date with one or two friends. This is a chance for your child to design the invitation, or practice manners on the phone if he or she prefers to call.

Every week give your child a few jobs around the house (e.g., dusting, making bed, tidying up toys). Tell your child how much this helps the family.

Sprinkle cookie crumbs outside and let your child observe ants or other insects. Provide a magnifying glass. Talk about what the insects are doing (e.g., are they working together?).

Use puppets or toys to act out various dramatic situations. Using characters with unique personalities, such as a lion and a lamb, will help you and your child make-believe many different points of view.

Keep to regular routines and talk about the routine of the day. For example, “After lunch, we will clean up the dishes and then walk to the park.” Ask your child to tell you what has to be done next.

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