

Building Resilience

Understanding Emotional Literacy

Parent Brochure

What is emotional literacy?

Emotional literacy (often referred to as emotional intelligence) is our ability to recognise, understand and appropriately express our emotions. It is also the ability to recognise the emotions of others and to respond to them appropriately. Emotional literacy is a key component of both self-awareness and social awareness.

Emotional literacy is a key skill which underpins:

- Self-awareness – Being able to identify and recognise your emotions
- Self-management – Being able to exert self-control and manage stress and challenge
- Social awareness – Being aware of others' needs and having empathy for others
- Relationship skills – Being able to communicate and relate well with others
- Responsible decision-making – Being able to problem-solve and accept responsibility

How do we teach emotional literacy?

The *Building Resilience* Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) lesson materials use a range of individual and group activities to help students to:

- Learn to **recognise** and **describe** their emotions
- Discuss and practise how to **express their emotions appropriately**
- **Think about the consequences** of expressing emotions inappropriately
- **Reflect** on their own emotional responses to a variety of situations
- Learn new ways to **manage and regulate** their emotions
- Practise effective **communication skills** and learn to **moderate** their emotional responses when expressing their needs, wants and opinions



Sample Activities to complete with your children

Positive and negative emotions

- Ask your child to draw the outline of a body and to write the words for some positive and negative emotions around the outside
- Encourage them to talk about where in their bodies they might feel the different emotions and add these to the drawing: e.g. nervous-sweaty palms, excited/afraid tension in the tummy, pride-a big smile (This can help your child to recognise their stress signals and encourage them to talk with you about these)

A rollercoaster of emotions

- In the course of a day we feel a range of emotions. The metaphor of the rollercoaster can be used to help children and young people understand emotional intensity and the way experiences can lead to or trigger positive or negative emotions
- Drawing a rollercoaster diagram showing the high and low points of a day helps children recognise events and situations that lead to varying emotional responses
- Draw the rollercoaster that represents your own day and share it with your child and then encourage them to try drawing one of their own

A rollercoaster of emotions

- The metaphor of a thermometer can help children and young people talk about the different intensity with which emotions are felt.
- You could:
 - Place a picture of a thermometer in a central place and use it to show how you are feeling about a situation: has it made you feel a little bit happy, or delighted, or thrilled; a little cross, or annoyed, or angry?
 - You could encourage your child or young person to use the thermometer to show their emotional response to a situation
 - **Example emotions thermometer:**

- 10 **Boiling point**
- 9 **Extremely strong**
- 8 **Very strong**
- 7 **Quite strong**
- 6 **Strong**
- 5 **Considerable**
- 4 **To a degree**

What can parents and carers do to support emotional literacy?

Families have an essential role to play in supporting children and young people's emotional literacy. Children and young people experience a range of positive and negative emotions. This is normal and healthy. Each person will feel and express these emotions differently. You can support them to recognise these emotions by

helping them name their positive emotions (such as proud, interested, excited, relieved) and negative emotions (such as angry, lonely, afraid, disappointed).

You can support your child through:

- Role modelling - how you express and manage emotions influences how they learn to express and manage their own emotions
- Helping them name their positive emotions (such as proud, interested, excited, relieved) and negative emotions (such as angry, lonely, afraid, disappointed).
- Recognising and naming your own feelings and emotions
- Creating spaces for regular communication
- Validating your child or young person's feelings
- Guiding them towards appropriate expressions of emotions
- Setting consistent, clear and supportive boundaries for the expression of emotions

Useful links

- **SAFEMinds:**
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/health/Pages/mentalhealth.aspx>
- **The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)**
<http://www.casel.org/>
- **KidsMatter** <http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/families/role-families>

For further information, references and the evidence base, please see the *Building Resilience in Children and Young People* literature review (hyperlink)