

INFORMATION AND ACTIVITY SHEET

The importance of developing emotional and social skills How can we foster the development of these skills in children?

Civility: The key to respectful behaviours

Simply put, you are the best role model for your children

The development of emotional and social skills in children is crucial for learning respectful, civil behaviours. Humans are social beings who are in constant interaction with their peers, and it is within this context that children grow. They develop socially through contact with other children and, especially, with adults.

Definition of civility

Set of behaviours and attitudes that demonstrate respect for the other people, rules and values of the community

A large part of the learning of emotional and social skills occurs through imitation. Children observe their role models interacting and copy what they see, both the good and the bad. As parents, you can demonstrate the socio-emotional skills that you would like to see your children develop. This type of **intentional** demonstration of what we would like to see in our children is called “**modelling**.”

Emotions are at the heart of what we teach and learn, not only our own, but also those of our children. To be the role model to which we want to expose our children, we must understand how social interactions work.

Here are some more details on the components of socio-emotional learning (Beaumont et al. 2021).

Me

Self-awareness:

Recognizing our emotions and thoughts, and understanding how they influence our behaviour; assessing our strengths and weaknesses; acquiring accurate vocabulary for describing emotions

Self-regulation:

Identifying and understanding where our emotions are coming from, managing our different emotional states, setting goals, practising self-motivation and self-discipline

You

Social awareness:

Understanding the norms that govern social behaviours; being aware of and taking into account the feelings and needs of others; feeling and expressing empathy

Relational skills:

Communicating clearly, actively listening, managing conflicts appropriately, asking for help and offering help to others

Us

Awareness of interdependence:

Being aware of being part of different systems (friends, class, school, etc.) and of our influence and impact, developing critical analysis skills

Responsible decision-making:

Formulating solutions adapted to the problems being faced by taking into account the effects of our decisions on ourselves and on others, working together with others to make decisions

Recommendations

Through modelling, you could help your children develop their emotional and social skills.

It takes patience and humility to work on oneself to model the standard you want to set for your children. It requires awareness of your own emotions and of how you manage them. Here are a few pointers to help you be more successful in modelling as a parent.

During childhood

- Set realistic objectives as a parent.
- Be consistent and calm.
- As an adult, accept your own emotions.
- Explain your emotions and how you manage them.
- Take breaks if needed.
- Acknowledge your mistakes and correct your approach.

In adolescence

- Take into account the fact that teenagers can be more closed and distant. This is a phase that they will grow out of as they get older.
- Take an interest in your teenager and make them feel valued.
- Do not push them. Take baby steps.
- Favour a question-based approach rather than directly stating your requirements and advice.
- Avoid blaming them.

You can carry out these activities with your children to develop their socio-emotional skills.

These suggested activities allow children to gain practical experience in managing their social relations and their role within a group, as well as to acquire tools to better interact with their peers in a civil manner. They also reinforce empathy, respect for others, communication and problem-solving, which are all key elements of social skills.

1 Role play

Teach your children how to manage their interactions with others and to develop their sense of empathy by exploring different social situations (playing at school, shopping at the grocery store or spending time with family; creating scenarios in which a conflict must be resolved; etc.).

2 Co-operative games

Help your children to understand the importance of teamwork and communication by playing games that teach patience, co-operation and negotiation (giant puzzle, construction set, etc.).

3 Books on emotions and conflict management

Bring your children to understand and express their own emotions and to accept those of others by discussing situations that occur in the story and how they might be resolved.

4 Sports activities

Instill teamwork and respect for the rules in your children by enrolling them in group sports, even at a young age.

5 Group activities

Develop your children's ability to make friends, share and negotiate by encouraging them to participate in activities offered near your home or by inviting other children to your home to play, take part in creative workshops or go on outings.

6 Emotions journal

Help your children to identify their emotions and to talk about them more easily with others by working together to create an "emotions journal" where they can draw or write how they feel every day.



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