

## Emotional Education Coffee Morning

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### How an emotional education benefits children

When children are able to recognise, manage, express, listen to and process their emotions, they can:

- Have improved academic and health outcomes, better sleep, protection from mental health illness as an adult
- Make responsible, loving, joy-bringing decisions which can lead to a fruitful and fulfilled life
- Protect themselves from harm
- Be closer to personal potential
- More loving and joyful relationships with others

### 15 things children need to learn about their emotions

1. You and your feelings matter.
  - Emotions are important to help us make decisions in the world and feel the depth of life's best offerings.
2. Feelings come and go. They do not last forever.

You are not your feelings. Feelings which feel bad do not make us bad people.
3. Feelings which feel bad are an integral part of life
  - Anger, despair, shame, rage, grief, loss, frustration are an integral part of life and we have to learn how to process and express these feelings in a safe and appropriate way - that is emotional maturity and it is a decades long process.
4. Feelings are manageable. We can get through them and you're going to be supported in learning how to do that.
  - We grow through what we go through
5. These are the things which help us with big, painful feelings \*not just making them go away)
  - Connection - understanding, a hug, articulating how we feel
  - Let it out to someone you trust
  - Calm - breathing, drawing, exercise, nature, mindfulness
  - Creativity - helps us release
  - Movement - how we move affects how we feel. Move differently, feel differently.
6. Happiness is not a constant
  - We are not expected to be happy all of the time
  - Happiness is a fleeting moment in response to something good.

- You are lovable all of the time even when (especially when) you are feeling really unpleasant, painful, horrible feelings.

7. Your worth is not dependent on anything

- Lacking self worth is a huge source of emotional struggle and stress.
- Children need to know that their worth is not dependent on achievements, making others happy etc.
- You do not need to be exceptional to be special.

8. You are loved.

- You are loved even when you or I are sad, overwhelmed, anxious, angry, grieving, worried, struggling emotionally, when we make mistakes, when we feel lost... I love you.
- Security, connection, belonging and relationships are crucial to our wellbeing.

9. We all need to be understood through deep empathy. We don't feel good when we feel misunderstood.

10. You are not in control of everything, and that is really hard.

- Empathy for when we have no control or when we cannot resolve unfairness.
- Children need to learn how to accept what they cannot change and how to change what they can control.

11. Relationships need to feel loving and supportive

- Relationships are the cause of most human suffering and the most human joy.
- Children need to learn what loving, healthy relationships look and feel like.

12. Boundaries will be held and are there because of your incredible worth

- *"Your feelings matter; you are loved AND we cannot let you hurt people or things"*
- Creates safety and therefore shows children they really matter.
- *"You want to keep reading the story because you love it and you feel sad that we have to stop, we still need to go to bed because your sleep is so important to me because I love you"*

13. There's always reasons behind behaviours

- Teaches children self awareness and to be curious about why they acted a certain way.
- Encourages openness, builds connection and emotional development
- In turn, teaches empathy for others, understanding of why certain people may act a certain way (helps with the acceptance of what we cannot control).
- Reiterate learning that whilst big feelings are allowed, we are not allowed to hurt others or objects when we feel big feelings. Hold the boundary still while empathising with behaviour.

14. It's okay to make mistakes, it is how we learn

- Remove shame, encourage reflection
- We can overcome failures and we are loved

15. You need to be free to be your unique self.

### 13 things parents do to help children's emotional education

1. Children need to feel emotionally understood. How?

- How?
- Connect empathically, THEN reason with your child to talk through the situation once they are calm
- Naming emotions is physically calming for the brain's emotional processing.

2. Help your child develop their emotional vocabulary

3. Role model how you want your child to manage their emotions

- Children do as you do, not as you say.
- This may be different to how you habitually manage your emotions. Role modelling is an attempt to communicate and show your child that you too are trying to change how you notice, respond to and reflect on your feelings and it is so valuable.
- Speak aloud your process. Being calm does not mean pretending everything is fine. It's okay, if anything it is actually really positive, to model that we're anxious, sad or worried too. It is helpful to model that **feelings are normal, feelings are manageable, you are not alone, and this is how I am going to help myself.**
- Seek support where you need to.

4. Allow children to work through their anxieties (not have reassurance alone).

- Go through worst case scenarios, discuss what can be controlled and give empathy for what cannot be.

5. Try to not shield children from difficult situations - see them as an opportunity for growth in resilience and emotionally

- Lots of parents are afraid of showing emotion to their children for fear it will upset them. However, children will see and know we are emotional and become confused otherwise. It's completely different to burdening a child with feelings or asking a child for help with your feelings. Role modelling a healthy response to what we feel is so helpful.
- When children hear adults whispering, shielding them from conversations, or saying "you won't understand that don't worry", it can make them feel quite paranoid and afraid.
- Children can then often start catastrophising and jump to the absolute worst case scenario because they assume that something is being hidden from them because it is so terrible.

- Self blame - Children also have a tendency to blame themselves if they don't understand a situation well. That is why it is really helpful for children to understand what is happening in clear and age-appropriate language, no matter what the circumstance.
- Clear Language - It is really helpful to avoid phrases or unclear sayings such as 'passed away' or 'money troubles' as children don't usually understand what these phrases mean. It is often helpful to ask children to tell you what they understand or repeat back in their own words what has just been explained. We can then clarify any incorrect assumptions they may have made. This process may happen over several different conversations.

6. Independence comes from dependence. Regulation comes from co-regulation

- Humans are not meant to be able to manage emotions alone. We are social animals. Our brains develop in tandem with loving and responsive caregiving unlike other mammals whose brains are more developed from birth.

7. Play together

- A lot of our emotional processing happens unconsciously and a lot of the way children communicate about their emotions is through play.
- Children communicate best through play, it is their most natural form of communication
- Use puppets, drawing, drama, art etc

8. You need to be able to connect with your difficult emotions to support your child to be able to

- Find ways to manage parental stress and communicate this to your child
  - i. You will know that the more stressed you are the more stressed your children are. Offer permission to focus on your mental health as a loving choice for you and your family. Try to begin overcoming any stigma you may have by asking yourself if you would want your children to feel shame for their natural feelings, as though they should manage alone, if they should feel weak for having impactful feelings. Would you want your child to feel guilty for burdening others. No? Role model!
- Seek support if you need to. You deserve it.

9. Children oscillate between different emotional states much more than grown ups.

- This doesn't necessarily mean that they have been bottling up all their feelings and suffering in silence when they have been happily playing. They are much more in the present moment than adults.

10. Help your child feel inner trust

- Inner trust is important for resilience and knowing "I can do hard things and manage hard times"
- Show your child you trust them: "*I know that you'll tell me when you're ready*"

11. Talking about difficult feelings does not make them worse.

- Acknowledging the feelings everyone may be feeling about a difficult situation is helpful because the child will likely be picking up on it anyway and feeling very confused, self-blaming and catastrophising.

**12. Tell children: “*It is not your job to make me happy. I can handle what you tell me*”**

- Children developmentally are self-centred and attribute a lot of blame to themselves. They need to know clearly that even if their emotions or something that has happened to them upsets you, that is okay.
- Again we can model “*I feel sad and angry that your friend did that to you - look I am crying - but I can manage this feeling. My love for you is bigger than how sad I feel. I am going to talk to Dad about it, we're going to make a really nice dinner, we're going to read your favourite story*”.

**13. A loving, connected relationship with you is essential for any emotional education to happen**

- Repairing after ruptures in the relationship builds so much resilience and strength.
- This fosters and nurtures the deep bonds of attachment and shows children that emotions are safe to feel because their relationships are not going to be ruptured forever. The safer children feel emotionally, the more regulated they are and more able to develop emotionally so that they can process their emotions more effectively.
- Strong attachments help children feel their emotions fully, manage them, learn from them, and make good choices throughout their lives.

## **Resources**

**Happy, Healthy Minds - The School of Life**

**An Emotional Menagerie - The School of Life**

A book of poetry for KS2 age children to help develop emotional vocabulary

**The Whole-Brain Child - Dr Daniel Siegel and Dr Tina Payne Bryson**

**CTS Website - [Wellbeing information PDFs](#)**