

**A FAMILIES' GUIDE TO EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE
IN EARLY CHILDHOOD**

Honors Thesis

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Abstract

This literature review looks over multiple research articles from researchers who investigated emotional intelligence, the different aspects of it, as well as its importance and how it can positively affect a person. Intelligence has long been considered the number one way to determine how successful someone is going to become, but plenty of research has been done to prove that it is far from the truth. But a different type of intelligence called emotional intelligence has been found to support success in both a person's career and social life. Emotional intelligence itself can be broken down into multiple aspects: emotions identification (identifying your emotions), emotions utilization (expressing your emotions in the right way), emotional understanding (understand your emotions as well as the emotions of others), emotions regulation (a person's ability to respond and regulate their emotions), and empathy (understanding and being able to sense and understand the feelings of others, whether or not you yourself are feeling those same emotions or have ever felt those emotions before). The development of these skills helps support lower stress levels and better relationships with others, both in an individual's personal life and their work life. These aspects can be taught at any point during a person's lifetime, but the younger the individual is, the longer period of time this individual will have to develop and incorporate these skills in their lifetime.

Also, although this may seem like something new to many, these skills are already being taught through practices that families utilize today such as building relationships, having open and clear communication with one another, and modeling how families themselves regulate their emotions. My work is dedicated to educating and

supporting families interested in teaching their young children emotional intelligence to further build their children to success.

A Families' Guide to Emotional Intelligence in Early Childhood

Intelligence has long been regarded as something an individual is born with and that someone cannot easily build to improve their success in the future. But in recent years, plenty of research has been done by different individuals all proving that this is now false (Cherniss, 2000; Paavola, 2017). The misconception of what the true meaning of intelligence has caused mixed beliefs on what it truly is and influences a loss in confidence when they have been told they have a lower level of intelligence in comparison to their peers (Alegre, 2011). Developing emotional intelligence is something everyone can accomplish and are already developing the skills of it whether or not they are aware of it (Sheydaei et al., 2015).

At the core of emotional intelligence is an individual being in tune with their own emotions as well as being in tune with others' emotions around them and using their knowledge to make their next plan of action. When someone is reflecting on their feelings, using coping mechanisms to handle strong emotions, and caring for another individual, they are using their emotional intelligence. This has been found to improve relationships with others as well as improve overall the individual's mental health (Schutte et al., 2002).

My intentions with this literature review and with my pamphlet is to put together information from multiple different research articles to review what they have to share about emotional intelligence, its importance, at what age is the best to begin teaching it, and what are the biggest influences in our lives that help individuals develop it.

Specifically with my pamphlet, I have created it as a resource for the families of my future students to use if they are interested in learning more about emotional

intelligence and how to teach it to their children. Much of the research that has been published about emotional intelligence can be considered daunting to read, so my intention then with the pamphlet is to take that research and present it in a more family-friendly manner.

What is and Why Emotional Intelligence?

Emotional intelligence can be specifically defined as “a form of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own and other’s feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and action” (Cherniss, 2000, p. 4). This description then explains emotional intelligence to not only be beneficial in helping ourselves, but also helping the relationships we form with others. It has been found that people who have higher emotional intelligence are more organized perform better at work (being more organized and better at performing), have more satisfying relationships, better personal success in coping with stress and being having a more positive day to day attitude, and just have better mental health overall (Cherniss, 2000; Sánchez-Núñez et al., 2020; Schutte et al., 2002; Takšić, 2002). Emotional intelligence has many skills or traits to it that someone can develop. Some can be developed on their own, but others cannot be developed until you have developed a different one first, like building blocks. Regardless, all these traits fall under the umbrella of emotional intelligence.

Traits of Emotional Intelligence

Research done by Nelis and colleagues (2009) found that many different models of emotional intelligence have been made describing what the different traits or skill sets there are within emotional intelligence. Although names and specific definitions have

been argued, and continue to be argued, back and forth between researchers, the specific names provided by Nelis and colleagues to title these different sets of traits seem to encompass all the different skills an individual would develop through emotional intelligence development.

Emotions Identification

One of the main traits of emotional intelligence and arguably the most important of them all is 'emotions identification'. This can be defined as being able to name and recognize the emotions you are feeling or were feeling at a current moment. (Nelis, et al., 2009; Takšić, 2002). In research however, it is only being described as an individual being able to identify their own emotions. When identifying emotions we are feeling, we assess specific reactions and feelings we are having that connect back to a specific emotion. If we are feeling frustrated and lashing out at others, we are angry. If we are feeling unmotivated and hopeless, we are sad or depressed. If we are smiling and positive, we are happy. Even from a very young age, we are able to identify emotions we are feeling on whether or not they make us feel pleasant and unpleasant (Adibsereshki et al., 2016). As we grow older, we can identify our emotions simply as happy, sad, angry, disgust, and fear, and as we continue to age and our vocabulary develops, those basic emotion titles become less general to more specific (Oatley & Johnson-Laird, 1987). Meaning, instead of identifying that you are feeling fear about giving a presentation in front of your class, you are really feeling anxious because you don't enjoy having everyone's attention on you at once. Regardless of how we identify or name our emotions, being able to give a name to what we are feeling adds another layer of comfort and reduces the stress of an unknown (Nelis, et al., 2009).

Emotional Understanding

Another trait of emotional intelligence is emotional understanding. This is defined as understanding what caused the specific emotion you are feeling and possibly the deep-rooted reason as to why you are feeling that specific way (Nelis, et al., 2009; Takšić, 2002). Someone can feel angry for a multitude of reasons and that can be sparked from a specific belief or reason within themselves that they are feeling a specific way. A child might get angry because their friend broke their crayon. However, the reason behind them getting mad at their friend for breaking their crayon was because that crayon had glitter in it, and it was their favorite. Essentially it is understanding where your emotions are coming from, or if we are discussing it regarding another person, understanding where the emotions of another person are coming from. For example, a child sees their friend sad in the sandbox not playing with anything. They can understand that they must be feeling sad because they have no toys to play with in the sandbox.

Emotions Regulation

Another trait of emotional intelligence is emotional regulation. This can be defined as being able to control and/or handle your emotions when they arise and not allowing them to influence your actions that could lead to negative outcomes (Nelis, et al., 2009; Cherniss, 2000; Takšić, 2002). For example, if someone were to get angry after they find out their friend was dishonest to them, an action that this person could take that would cause a negative outcome would begin a fight with that friend. Regarding a positive emotion having a negative outcome, someone could be looking for a new job and apply to multiple places at once. When they hear back from the job offering the most money, they jump at the chance for an interview and cancel the rest. Except once at the

interview, they realize that the job isn't what they dreamed of, only they already canceled all the other interviews they had originally booked. This trait in comparison to the others focuses more on the individuals developing this skill for mainly their own benefit, rather than learning it to benefit them to support their emotional development, but also to benefit others and support them in working through their emotions. Experiencing emotion, especially strong ones, in and of itself can be intense and scary, but for young children it can be very daunting as their brains are still developing and processing things at a different rate than an adult's. An adult can feel anger but is able to think of other things on their mind to distract them. With children though, their brains aren't developmentally there yet, so if they are feeling angry, it can be harder to support them in coping with those feelings (Paavola, 2017).

Emotions Utilization

Lastly, another trait of emotional intelligence, and arguably one of the hardest of traits that can be developed, is emotions utilization (Nelis et al., 2009). It can be defined as how you use your emotions to determine your next set of actions, or how you utilize the energy from that emotion (Cherniss, 2000; Takšić, 2002). It's been found that the emotions that we experience can strongly affect us, not only mentally, but physically as well (Takšić, 2002). Examples consist of that stomach-turning feeling someone can get when they are scared to present a speech in front of a large crowd. Another example is when someone is so angry that their heart rate has increased and their body shakes. As mentioned, this can be one of the hardest of the traits to develop because with this trait, an individual must develop or have developed parts of the other traits before these in order to develop this one. To explain, you must be able to identify the emotion that you

are feeling and how it is making you feel to understand why your stomach may be turning or why your heart is racing. You will also need to be able to regulate this emotion so that it does not cause these physical effects on your body anymore. This can be the most difficult part of this trait because it requires the ability to take the increased energy from that emotion and transfer it to a safer outlet (Cherniss, 2000). An example includes individuals going to the gym or going for a run when they feel stressed, overwhelmed, or energy. Another example is when someone is worried or anxious waiting to hear back on test results from the doctors or from school, they can practice yoga or doing mindful exercises in order to release that negative energy from their mind and remind themselves that worrying isn't going to change the outcome. This is considered the last trait because it can be one of the hardest to develop. It is important to develop because when there is too much energy concentrated in one area or part (in this case, if someone has lots of contained energy from excitement, happiness, anger, fear), it can build up too much within the person and in the end hurt the person unless they release it in some form.

Empathy

Empathy can be defined as understanding and being able to sense and understand the feelings of others, whether you yourself are feeling those same emotions or have ever felt those emotions before. Although Nelis and colleagues stopped at four different traits of emotional intelligence, they did mention that in each of these traits, the person developing these traits within themselves is also developing skills to be able to reflect on these with other people and is essential to complete development of emotional intelligence. Meaning, when someone has been able to identify their own emotions, they have also developed the ability to identify the emotions that other people around them are

feeling. Cherniss argues that empathy is a skill within itself that when someone is developing their emotional intelligence alongside the skills they develop to understand and work through their own emotions. I would agree with Cherniss and other research done by Paavola that empathy can be a difficult skill for some to develop and would take its own focus in order to develop effectively.

Emotional Intelligence in Early Childhood

Early childhood is the specific time during a child's life between birth to age eight. This is a time of great development in children both physically and cognitively, with many of the foundational skills needed in life (language, reading, writing, gross motor, fine motor, etc.) (Goleman, 2020; Nielsen-Rodríguez., et al, 2021). When these children begin going to school, they also begin developing their social skills through their interactions with their peers.

Emotional intelligence is also being developed during this time through both their social as well as cognitive development. For example, young children are very ego-centric at this age, meaning they lack the ability to put themselves in the perspective of others around them and only think about themselves. Over time, as they grow older, their brains further develop, and they become interested with other children their age in school, they will begin to develop empathy and can begin to understand others' emotions and have better self-awareness (Paavola, 2017).

Paavola researched and found that there was a multitude of benefits to children developing their emotional intelligence skills in early childhood. Because children develop better empathy skills and have an easier time putting themselves into their peers' shoes, they will have better relationships not only with their peers but also with others

within their life. It was also found that when young children are developing and practicing emotional intelligence skills, they are less violent and aggressive, especially within the classroom. Plus, because children with higher skills in emotional intelligence can identify their emotions, are more self-aware, and are able to regulate their emotions, they are less stressed and are more confident in the classroom. These positive outcomes have been found to support children doing better in school and increased their overall enjoyment of learning. Lastly, Paavola, as well as research done by Sánchez-Núñez and colleagues, Takšić, and Cherniss, have all found that when developing emotional intelligence, it contributes positively to overall physical and mental health. This is due to the ability of the child (or adult as well) to cope better with stress, whether expected or unexpected, and there are fewer negative effects on the individual.

So instead of emotional intelligence teaching being seen as another skill that a young child will be expected to develop at such a young age, it can simply be seen as a heightened level of skills they are already going to be developing at that stage of their development. With that, an understanding that it should then be taught from an early age, so these skills have further time to grow and help children lead more successful and satisfactory lives has begun to receive more support, similar to how all other important life skills are taught from an early age (reading, writing, math, motor skills, etc.) (Nelis et al., 2009). This can only contribute to further positive outcomes for children in the future (Paavola, 2017). Although these skills can be taught alongside the other skills already taught in school, teaching them at home in tangent with them being taught at school would only further strengthen the child's development.

Family Impact on Emotional Intelligence Development

Schools are often regarded as the best place to teach and develop specific skills. Emotional intelligence is often one of them because there is a valid fear that families don't know much about it themselves. So, if they aren't familiar with the topic, they do not know how to teach it. They would prefer teachers to teach their children out of interest in wanting the best environment for their children to learn. However, the best way for children to learn about emotional intelligence is at both school and home. A child's home is the first place where they begin to develop foundational skills such as language, social skills, gross and fine motor skills, so they already build that comfort in their homes as their first learning environment (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2019; Paavola, 2017). Also, a child's first relationships are with their family at home, so what they learn from those individuals are the most impactful lessons they take with them for their entire lives (Ghanawat et al., 2016). Research has shown that children do their best learning in a safe, comfortable environment with others they are familiar with and see on a consistent basis, meaning both the home and school are the best learning environments for young children (Gargiulo & Metcalf, 2017).

Aspects of Family Structure

Without families knowing or being familiar with emotional intelligence, much of the aspects of emotional intelligence are already worked on at home such as building relationships and social/emotional understandings and they are also built based on the aspects of their family life (Sheydaei et al., 2015). Research has found that different components of family structure and different interactions between family members have a strong influence on an individual's development of emotional intelligence (Alavi et al., 2017). Since emotional intelligence is already being built within relationships and daily

interactions, an awareness of what specifically affects emotional intelligence development can support families in ensuring they are supporting their children further with their development. The specific aspects are family adaptability, family functioning, family cohesion, and open communication.

Family Adaptability

Family adaptability is how well a family does with presenting and acting in the specific family roles they have within their immediate family, even when the role changes (Alavi et al., 2017). For example, if a young couple becomes parents for the first time, how well that couple takes on the roles of parents and how they model the role of a parent to their children. This also applies to how they model a parent-child or partner-partner relationship to their children. Over time, things may change where the child becomes a caretaker for their parents and again parents and/or family members are meant to model for their children that the adjustment of responsibility is normal and acceptable. This development of mutual respect releases pressure from children, both young and old, as they know what their expectations are and what and to whom they can go to when they may need help and/or advice. This can specifically connect to the emotional regulation trait as the changes of responsibility and roles within a family can cause a mix of emotions, but also the change in responsibility and roles are within choice (i.e., the only child in the family now becoming the older sibling). By becoming more ‘adaptable’ to changes within the family, the individual can learn to develop coping mechanisms to help themselves regulate their feelings and the emotions they are feeling at that point in time.

Family Functioning

Family functioning is defined as essentially how well the family members co-exist and work together to support one another. It also concerns how family members model their own personal function, meaning when they come home from a stressful day at work, what they do and how they tend to themselves in order to help themselves feel better (Alavi et al., 2017). Even without knowledge, family members are modeling for young children what to do when you are feeling a specific emotion, both positive and negative. They are also modeling how to support someone else who is feeling an emotion such as when a parent may be consoling the child's older sibling when they didn't get picked for the role they wanted in the school play. Not only parents can model these, but siblings as well can support their development through modeling themselves. This connects to all the traits of emotional intelligence, only instead of these skills being taught explicitly, they are being modeled to the child, which is one of the biggest ways young children learn new skills and concepts at their age (Schuman & Relihan, 1990; Rosenshine, 2012).

Family Cohesion

Family cohesion can be defined as the bond that a family builds together (Alavi et al., 2017). Relationships with family members are some of the first relationships someone forms in life. When an individual, especially a child, has consistent love and support behind them, they develop another level of confidence and feel safer taking risks and feel more accepted in the world (Alavi et al., 2017). When an individual feels safe with their family members, they are more likely to come to members within their family when they need help and support no matter the issue or concern. It can be a problem at school or with their homework, but also when they are having a feeling they can't define

themselves or are stressed out about something and feel as though they need to talk to someone to help them feel better. It also teaches the importance of being there for others that you love and care about, building empathy. Especially when this is being modeled by others within the family, for example, a parent doing this for another sibling.

Open Communication

Open communication can be defined as the home environment being a safe place for everyone within the family to share their feelings and experiences freely without judgment and rather full support (Alegre, 2011; Alavi et al., 2017). This means the family/home environment is always a place where anyone in the family can reach out to one another and share their current experiences or feelings they may be struggling with and either just need to express it or need advice on. This connects back to emotional intelligence in multiple ways. It connects to the entire teaching and development of emotional intelligence by going to others within your family for support and advice on what they are experiencing. Emotional understanding can be developed through discussing what you are feeling with a trusted family member.

Emotional regulation can be built as well because an individual may learn that finding the right outlet to express their emotions to and releasing the potential tension they are feeling or the happiness that is bursting throughout their body, is sitting down with someone they trust and expressing it to them.

Different research combines open communication and family cohesion while others separate them into their own components. In research where they have been combined, it is retitled as “parental responsiveness” and consists of “...parental warmth, nurturance, and support” (Alegre, 2011, p. 57). In other research that separates the two, it

titles it as “family communication” and defines it as “the way verbal and nonverbal information is interchanged between family members to share needs and concerns, and find solutions for problems” (Alavi et al, 2017, p. 2). Open communication is built from having a safe, supportive system at home that an individual, in this circumstance a child, feels welcome to speak up and share their feelings, concerns, and overall thoughts. I would argue that they are separate as families can be supportive but may not practice open communication at home. Also, families may openly communicate with one another at home, but that doesn’t mean everyone is being supportive of one another.

Research suggests that even if families aren’t as high in emotional intelligence or specific traits within emotional intelligence, they are still able to practice emotional intelligence skills themselves while trying to teach emotional intelligence to their children. It’s also suggested that as emotional intelligence is being built within the family, there is a positive effect on the family environment and improving family relationships overall (Ghanawat et al., 2016).

Methods to Teaching Emotional Intelligence

There are a multitude of ways to teach emotional intelligence to young children. However, this is also not to say that one specific method is better than another, if anything, it is best to use different methods at once in order to ensure the most connections to be made with young children. The more exposure, the more likely they are to retain new information.

To begin, one of the most important methods to teaching young children emotional intelligence is through explicitly teaching them about different emotions, whether it’s an emotion they are or someone close to them is experiencing, or something

that had just come up in a conversation. This can consist of talking about being angry, what it means to be angry, how it can make you feel, and how to make yourself feel better (Goleman, 2020).

Another method to teaching young children about emotional intelligence is through modeling different strategies with how to handle and express different emotions. Modeling is one of the best methods to teach young children new skills as it helps them understand visually what is expected of them and they will have an easier time practicing the new skill as they physically know what to do (Nielsen- Rodríguez., et al, 2021). This can consist of simply openly discussing your emotions in the presence of your children and sharing what you do to regulate them. Also, explicitly teaching and modeling again how to regulate emotions and express them. For example, if your child is upset and seems to be inconsolable, model for them to find a quiet place to relax and regulate your emotions until you are feeling better. Or model a breathing technique they can use to control their breathing and practice it together with them. It is important to note too that since modeling is one of the best methods to teach young children, this also means that they are constantly observing your behaviors. Meaning you are consistently modeling different strategies whether you are aware or not. This does not mean that you must be perfect in every situation, but it is important to be mindful of our intentional, but especially of our unintentionally modeling.

Another method is building relationships with your children. When they are experiencing a specific emotion and either need some advice or perhaps don't understand what they are feeling, they will feel comfortable approaching you for advice and support to help themselves better understand themselves and feel better (Alavi et al., 2017).

Along with building relationships with your children, having an open level of communication not just with your children, but among everyone in the household supports the development of emotional intelligence (Alavi et al., 2017).

Lastly, another method to teaching emotional intelligence to your children is being supportive to your children, not only in all aspects of their life, but especially in moments when they are trying themselves to develop their emotional intelligence or are practicing specific skills within (Alavi et al., 2017). Children overall develop better confidence in themselves when they know they have a great support system and others are excited for them to succeed, not only within their family but also others outside such as teachers and friends (Trawick-Smith, 2014). Having the support while they are developing emotional intelligence will encourage them to continue practicing their skills to further develop their level of emotional intelligence, and as mentioned, will increase their confidence in their abilities overall.

It is important to keep in mind while teaching these methods to young children that they will need support in the sense of directions and explanations. If a child seems to be struggling with understanding a method or concept, it could be they do not understand it, or it possibly they are not developmentally ready to develop that specific trait. When this occurs, pause and try to assess where the misunderstanding is before deciding the next set of actions. Also, there is no expectation that someone trying to support the development of emotional intelligence in another person needs to accomplish these supports perfectly. The smallest amount of support makes all the difference.

Emotional Intelligence in Children with Disabilities

Along with sharing the importance of teaching emotional intelligence skills in early childhood, it is also important to note what can prevent children from developing emotional intelligence at the same rate as their peers. Specific disabilities can affect an individual's ability to socialize, empathize, and connect with others through relationships, which are big components to emotional intelligence development (Gargiulo & Metcalf, 2017; Adibsereshki et al., 2016). Because of this, many people are quick to assume that children with disabilities are unable to develop higher levels of emotional intelligence.

Except, that is placing the dehumanizing stereotype on individuals with disabilities that they cannot develop the same skills that their peers without disabilities can. Rather than considering them as “less than” or “incapable”, a new perspective needs to be and is being taken currently in schools across the country that every child is a diverse learner in that they learn best in different ways, and these include children with disabilities (Gargiulo & Metcalf, 2017). For example, it is strongly encouraged for teachers, both current and future teachers, that they implement the universal design for learning, which is a method of designing lessons and curriculum from the beginning with the understanding that not every student understands and learns new content in the same ways (i.e., some students learn better through lectures, some through reading, and others through taking an active role) and not every student can express their learning in the same ways most effectively (i.e., some perform well on tests, others express what they have learned better with a project). With this planning method in mind, teachers are better able to reach every student within their classroom, no matter their needs and/or interests (Gargiulo & Metcalf, 2017).

Many studies have been done to see how well children with disabilities develop emotional intelligence skills through specific training. All have found positive results in that children with disabilities, through specific and dedicated training, can develop emotional intelligence skills (Adibsereshki et al., 2016; Sheydaei et al., 2015). It's found that although there can be difficulty in teaching and supporting students with disabilities to develop and understand the different traits of emotional intelligence, having dedicated interventions can make all the difference. Interventions similar to the ones done in the studies are constantly being done within schools to this day such as interventions helping students improve their communication skills, social skills, and their ability to understand nonverbal communication (ie., body language and/or facial expressions). Combining interventions along with the concept of teaching emotions intelligence is proving to be very successful with supporting students with disabilities in the classroom (Sheydaei et al., 2015).

It is important to begin the development of emotional intelligence skills at home, as the home environment is the first environment children become familiar with and because of that, it is the most comfortable environment for them. Also, the best learning happens in an environment that an individual is the most comfortable in. This can be the case for many students with disabilities in that the school is an environment where they are constantly being compared to their peers, but at home they will not have those similar stressors. It has been found through this that emotional intelligence training still begins at home for students with disabilities and in some cases is a more successful environment for some students as they are more comfortable and feel safe in their environment. It has also been found that there are more success rates in teaching children with disabilities

new skills when both teachers (and/or other support staff within their school) and families are working together as partners to support the child than when only one group is supporting the child (meaning only families or only school staff) (Wright & Kaiser, 2017).

Long have students with disabilities been seen as unequal to their peers without disabilities, but this treatment has just further setback these students from success. Although these students have disabilities, they need to be considered to have different needs for learning and can and will be catered to to support their development.

Conclusion

The realization of emotional intelligence's importance and the push to increase the teaching of social emotional learning has been on the rise in recent years (Cherniss, 2000). Especially considering mental health is now being considered as important to keep up with and to take care of, like how individuals take care of their physical health by attending doctor visits, taking vitamins, and doing physical activity. An individual's emotions can largely affect the systems of the human body positively, but also negatively (Takšić, 2002). Developing a better understanding of ourselves and our emotions can make a difference in an individual, what they think about themselves, and how they interact with others. Emotions can be used as tools to guide thoughts and actions as well as a method to build better and stronger bonds with others.

Parenting and raising children can be one of the hardest jobs life can throw towards someone. For many years authors and publishers have been publishing books and articles advising families on the best parenting practices. Still though, new information is being discovered and published. Emotional intelligence is one of those

things as well. There has been a peak in its popularity within the past few years and there continues to be a bigger increase as the years pass on. These teachings have made their way into these parenting guides as well and one thing that every guide has in common is one thing: helping raise a great human. It is important for families to know how to do this and my understanding of this was informed by my own experiences (see Appendix A).

Therefore, I have taken the key elements from this literature review and created a simple and straightforward pamphlet with practical guidelines for families to educate them about emotional intelligence (see Appendix B). In the end, families and teachers alike have the same want for their students and it is “...the best possible outcome for every human being: to be happy in life” (Takšić, 2002, p.2).

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Appendix A

Rationale

Emotional intelligence has been considered important for a long time, but is especially of more importance today since the pandemic. There has been an increase in awareness of the need for more social emotional training in schools. It has been found that these skills support students with their mental health in order to better support their academic success. I also understand there is much controversy on the topic itself and bringing it into schools. Many have different opinions regarding emotional intelligence, its importance, and whether schools should be dedicating time and money towards educational opportunities to offer to their students. I believe though with better education on what emotional intelligence is and its importance, those conflicting views can be changed into more positive ones. The word intelligence can be scary for many, considering the stigma around it being something people are born with and not a skill people can work on like math or reading. In reality, emotional intelligence can be learned and developed at any age and by all people.

My parents came from Portugal and raised my sister and I with their cultural beliefs, including those about emotions. Those beliefs included developing my own coping skills with my emotions and limited emotional expression, especially to others outside my home. It is believed, not only in my culture but in many others, that expressing your emotions can be seen as a form of weakness. Although I was raised with that culture at home, all of my schooling was in America, and parts of my home culture have begun to have influences from America mixed into it as well. Emotional intelligence and my understanding of it has been one of those things that has developed and changed.

My intention is to educate others on research that has been done specifically on emotional intelligence and how beneficial it can be for people of all ages to learn about and develop.

This is why I decided to read through as much literature that I could find about emotional intelligence, its benefits, why it should be taught in early childhood, and about the family contributions already being made in helping young children learn these skills. I took what I learned from it all to create a family friendly pamphlet. I believed this would be the most beneficial and easily shareable over many research articles and can feature all the key findings each article has to share. Specifically, I intend on sharing it with the families of my future students. I also hope to share it with anyone interested in learning more about emotional intelligence and how they can better support the young children within their family (and even use some of the information to help themselves) to learn and develop their emotional intelligence. My overall goal I have with my research project connects back to what I intended to do as a future educator: support this world's future, specifically young children, in becoming the best and most kind humans they can be.

Appendix B

“Families Guide to Emotional Intelligence in Early Childhood” Pamphlet

Attached as next page.

Why in Early Childhood?

Early childhood is the specific time during a child's life between birth to age eight. Children go through lots of development both physically, cognitively (mentally), and socially, with many of the foundational skills needed in life (language, reading, writing, gross motor, fine motor, etc). Emotional intelligence is also being developed during this time. Stronger emotional intelligence skills have led to less behavioral problems, better relationships with others, more success in school, as well as higher physical and mental health.

Family Impact

It can be overwhelming to learn about another set of skills that you should support your child through developing. Especially a skill that you may be learning about for the first time now. But the best way for children to learn new skills is within both school and home. A child's home is their first learning environment, and the relationships they make at home are some of the first relationships they ever make. Those first experiences and relationships are the most impactful on their development. This makes all lessons that they learn from their family the most influential and memorable for them.


Ways to Practice at Home

- ❖ Model expression and coping strategies for your children
- ❖ Specifically teach about different emotions that someone might experience
- ❖ Build relationships
- ❖ Welcome open communication and let children know it is safe to share with you
- ❖ Support children when they are trying to use their own strategies with coping with emotions

*Please note that there is no perfect way to accomplish these. Your best effort is perfect! *



References/Learn More

- ❖ My Research Paper ⇒ 
- ❖ [CASEL Frameworks Website](#)
- ❖ [Healthychildren.org: Early Childhood Development](#)
- ❖ [Healthychildren.org: Emotional Wellness](#)

A Families' Guide to Emotional Intelligence in Early Childhood

By: Chantel Mendonca



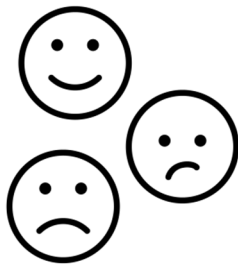
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What is Emotional Intelligence?

Emotional intelligence is defined as the ability to recognize, identify, and regulate your emotions as well as being able to have empathy for others and their feelings. It has been found that people who have higher emotional intelligence are more organized, perform better at work, and have more satisfying relationships, better personal success in coping with stress and a more positive day-to-day attitude, and just have better mental health overall.

Now, the stereotype of intelligence is that people are born with a specific level, but that is far from true. Plenty of research has found that intelligence of all types (cognitive, emotional, etc.) is not the sole determinant of how successful someone will be. In addition, intelligence is something that continues to develop throughout our lives.



Skills of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence consists of multiple skills that are developed:

- ❖ **Identification of Emotions:** being able to name and recognize the emotions you are feeling or were feeling at a current moment.
 - Example: A child got the toy that they have been seeing on TV for weeks. They are full of energy, cannot stop smiling, and want to show off their toy to everyone. They are feeling happy!
- ❖ **Understanding of Emotions:** understanding what caused the specific emotion you are feeling and possibly the reason as to why you are feeling that way.
 - Example: A child comes to school and sits in their seat. They take out their folder and lunch, and when they are about to start their morning work, they begin to cry. Their teacher brings them over to their desk and asks them how they are feeling and what is making them sad. It turns out that that child's parent left on a week long business trip the night before, and that parent usually brings them to school.
- ❖ **Emotional Regulation:** being able to control and/or handle emotions that you are feeling and not allowing them to influence your actions that could lead to negative outcomes.
 - Example: A child got into a fight with a friend of theirs on the playground. They become really angry, but decide to walk away and play with chalk instead and draw on the sidewalk until they feel better.
- ❖ **Utilization of Emotions:** how you use your emotions to determine your next set of actions, or how you utilize the energy from that emotion.
 - Example: A student has been feeling really stressed and overwhelmed during their final exam week at school. They decide to begin to do yoga every day when they get home to relieve their stress and feel better.
- ❖ **Empathy:** being able to sense and understand the feelings of others, whether or not you are feeling those same emotions or have ever felt those emotions before.
 - Example: A child sees their friend crying on the playground after falling and cutting their knee. They know they must be sad because they had gotten a cut on their hand before and it really hurt.

