

## Parenting Related To Social-Emotional Intelligence

*From the creator of Emotes – Helen Lau*

### **THE CREATION OF EMOTES**

As parents we are the best people to understand our children. And yet the challenges of each child are different and unique in their own ways; there is not an exact and standard formula to teach them or shape their life experiences.

During the upbringing of my own two sons, I realized very quickly that fostering emotional intelligence was very important and that it could strongly affect them in academics, character development and social relationships with others. I did have a hard time trying to understand this complicated emotional landscape and so I looked for necessary teaching materials or books to help my own children, but good resources were hard to find!

In general, I think that in the past the trend for many parents was to only focus on academic achievement, forgetting about the importance of emotional development. My younger son consistently achieved in the 99th percentile academically and performed well in studies, however he was very sensitive and seemed to be more emotional than his elder brother. He was chosen to be in the gifted program when he was in Grade 3, but sometimes his teachers remarked that he wasn't putting forth his best effort.

It was hard for me to observe my son who could tackle complex academic problems struggle with significant frustration and get easily and quickly overwhelmed by emotions. In fact, both of my sons were strong in academics, but in terms of emotions, they were so very different from one another.

I searched for ways to help my younger son to cope with his complex emotions. I did research for materials and resources and tried to learn through observing the growth of my children and their friends. And through this process I realized that emotional intelligence is the key that can affect children in very big ways.

Throughout the years, I was heavily involved in parent groups, school communities and youth community service. I was surprised when I found that many other parents were facing similar difficulties and challenges, and yet there were not readily available tools for emotional development that would hold the interest of children.

And so, with my design education background and studies in preschool education and psychology, I started to think about a concept that might help in this particular area. I wanted to find a way to encourage parents, school educators, school psychologists, therapists and society as a whole to all work together to help our children to have healthy emotional growth. This was the starting point for the concept of Emotes.

My ideas were forming during the dawning era of the internet and social communication networks were rising faster than parents or schools could react to the formation of this new social-media world...

When children are bombarded with tons of information they can become easily and quickly confused and so even stronger emotional skills are needed to cope with the fast paced technological world. In fact, it is even tougher for *parents* to keep up and keep track of good ways to help children keep emotionally well balanced throughout the different developmental stages of growth.

In some cases, technology and the internet has created even more complicated and confusing issues for children. For example, we developed the first Emotes book *Abash and Cyber-Bully* based on a real-life experience at the school of my youngest son. Two students were using the internet at school when one student began to threaten and bully the other student online. When this was discovered, instead of parents working together to

help the children handle their emotions properly, one of the parents decided to take legal action against the school. As a result, the two children did not learn the proper ways to handle conflicts. In reality, it was harmful to both the children and the school.

I was sympathetic with the school faculty as I understood that technology was changing so rapidly and it was hard for the school to know how to respond to some of these new and complicated issues. And it further inspired me to create a resource to encourage dialogue about emotions in this quickly changing world.

The goal behind the Emotes characters has always been to let the stories of these characters enable children to better understand their own emotions and connect to the challenges of social-emotional development.

Nowadays, children start using electronic gadgets or the internet very early in childhood. There are advantages and disadvantages to this, which depends on whether parents can monitor the usage properly.

It's because of these issues that I decided to have the internet as the habitat for Emotes. It would be in the virtual world where Emotes could provide useful information or stories for children to understand how to handle social-emotional challenges. My mission was that this new set of nurturing tools would allow children to express or share their thoughts and feelings more easily and creatively.

Emotions are very abstract and something not easily explained or expressed, and so I created each Emotes character with distinct facial expressions and body language so as to provide a good tool to explain emotions in a concrete way. In addition, through the adventures of these characters, I wanted to model and teach children how to handle conflicts and challenges in the real world. Through relatable and universal stories, children can learn to recognize and care for their own emotions.

In today's social media world, children face more potentially confusing situations and an overload of information; this can sometimes trigger even

more anxiety, sadness, and frustrations in their daily lives. Many children are also over engaged in the tech world and become off balance in their ability to develop their communication skills.

Kids need to be given time or opportunities to explore and communicate their own feelings directly with others. Parents need to explain to children that having emotions is normal and good, but teaching them how to handle them and express them properly is vital.

From my own experience, having groups of parents that can support each other and share experiences is extremely helpful. I am particularly thankful to some of my good friends in my fellowship group that have been able to share their experiences of their own children with me. They have been like mentors towards my own teaching to my children. It is because of this sharing experience that I hope Emotes can be a program that can share information with other parents as well.

Strong Emotional Intelligence does not only affect children when they are young, because they will carry their emotions, behaviors, and habits all the way through adolescence and beyond! It's because emotional intelligence wasn't encouraged in past generations that now many corporations are having to provide Social Emotional Intelligence training for employees!

Today, I am very thankful that my two sons are considerate adults and have found ways to manage and express their emotions! They have both passed through tremendous trials and numerous kinds of examinations and both of them are now mature professionals. My elder son has achieved his BS/MPH degree and CFA in Finance, while my younger son has achieved his BS/BA degree and is working towards his MD degree. And believe it or not, they still have to exercise and practice their emotional skills on a daily basis. We all do, because emotional intelligence is something that grows continuously and throughout all of our lives.

The challenges that my sons and I have gone through have now become good memories and I have to thank them for the path that we have

experienced together and for all that I have learned from them along the way.

At an earlier stage in my life, those challenges and anxieties seemed quite overwhelming! I also need to add that lots of credit goes to my husband, for without his encouragement, I would not have been able to develop Emotes!

I hope that my experience and thoughts can bring parents an encouraging message. Please do not worry; remember, *you are not alone!* Think positively and seek out appropriate support and help for yourself and for your children. Regardless of your situation there is always hope to help you and your children to live happy and emotionally healthy lives!

### **Emotional Intelligence as Related to Multiple Intelligences**

In the book *Emotional Intelligence* written by Dr. Daniel Goleman, it is explained that the Emotion Quotient (EQ) can actually be more important than the Intelligence Quotient (IQ). If someone cannot communicate effectively and cannot work well with other people, then they will encounter more difficulties in life. And so it's important that children learn how to manage their emotions at the same time that they are learning or practicing other areas of knowledge.

There are many different kinds of intelligences such as Musical Intelligence, Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence, Logical-Mathematical Intelligence, Linguistic Intelligence and Spatial Intelligence as well as Creative Intelligence. All of these forms of intelligence can be learned and enhanced through gaining more knowledge or practice. There is then no difference in learning Emotional Intelligence. Children need to try out different areas to explore their own strength. Curiosity is the beginning of possible potential future achievement.

Children are born with talents and may be gifted in certain areas, but they still need a nurturing environment to excel in those particular areas. They

still need a good mentor or good sources of inspiration so that they can practice and continue to grow with strong support.

A child can be a genius or profoundly gifted in certain types of intelligence, but lacking good emotional or social-emotional skills can prohibit them from being able to handle more challenges or reach higher levels of achievement and success. Because of this, it is important to not overlook the importance of emotional intelligence.

In fact, the development of emotional intelligence can be experienced and learned through practice and training just like with any other skills such as music, sports, languages etc. All of these skills can be a compliment to each other and practiced at the same time.

Imagine a successful sports star that has an ill-temper and poor sportsmanship that throws his racket after loosing a match. Or a famous musician broke her own instruments after an unsatisfactory performance. These professionals would not have practiced their emotional intelligence skills!

A lot of the time, we emphasize or are concerned about IQ or multiple intelligences, but emotional intelligence is often left out in the parental or educational world.

In fact, this is one of the big factors that can affect a student's relationship between his or her parents, peers and teachers. It is therefore very important to have a good ability to express and emotions so that our children can handle challenges that come their way.

### **The Most Powerful Emotion Is– LOVE**

Children face many challenges as they grow up in an increasingly complex world. Issues such as peer pressure, destructive and hateful cultural influences, dysfunctional families, divorce and both parents needing to be absent from the home leaving children feeling alone and insecure.

At the core of the Emotes message is love – when children receive love from parents then they can learn how to love others. Love and be loved! Everyone deserves love.

Children have to learn how to express and appreciate love. The importance of sharing and showing caring towards others will help them to grow up to be healthy individuals and not self-centered and greedy.

Love is an extremely powerful emotion. It provides encouragement and support, even when situations seem hopeless and disappointing.

The unconditional love of parents towards their own children shows children that they are accepted as just who they are. Each child has his/her own strengths and weaknesses and are reminded that no one can be perfect!

As children grow, they will experience some sort of failure or disappointment—this is part of life. When children first begin to realize this truth, it becomes a critical time for unconditional support and love and acceptance.

The showing of love by parents towards their children can encourage children to climb up a ladder from one rung to a higher one, taking one step at a time. We can teach them and guide them so that they might not fall easily. But children have to try things out for themselves and experience the process of living and falling on their own. If they fail and fall and need multiple attempts before they can get back up and succeed, we can be there to cheer them up until they can make it on their own.

Children are more eager to try out new things and achieve better results when they have the support and guidance of parents and supportive adults. They are more confident to face failures if they know their parents will forgive them or accept them despite these failures and without judgment.

Love and forgiveness can give children the most powerful support and motivation to seek their own growth and betterment, because they know there is always a warm loving home as their refuge.

Reminding kids of this love is essential. A hug or a kiss can mean a lot to a child!

The Emotes teach unconditional love and emphasize the importance of expressing and accepting this particular emotion. Love covers all wrongs and provides for forgiveness and acceptance. Emotes serve as empathic reminders of love during the emotional challenges of childhood.

I hope that you will find Emotes to be an engaging way to connect with the emotional worlds of your children and help you to connect with the inner feelings of your children.

I would add that love does include discipline; there are no conflicts between the two. If we love our children, but do not give children guidance or discipline when they are young, we will either spoil them or let them fall into traps that can be harmful to their future. As responsible parents, we have to look for effective ways to apply discipline and boundaries and rules.

Children can feel the difference between conditional and unconditional love. Children might seem to not like boundaries and discipline, but on some level it's what they need and truly want. It is more important what is good for the children in long term.

Remember, direct and honest communication is essential and a part of the process of expressing love and guidance.

## **Acceptance and Self Worth**

### *At Home*

Being parents, we certainly hope that our children are healthy, happy, clever, and more... However, what if they are judged as unattractive, too



short, too tall, intellectually challenged? What if the child has a learning disability, they are blind, deaf, or struggle with sickness? All children are loveable and deserving of love.

I know two families who had children with multiple sclerosis. Tragically, their children died at the young ages of 21 and 31. However, the parents from these two families never gave up their love and care for their children with this long-term illness. Can you image how much trauma these parents went through? But it was their *unconditional love* towards their children that kept the family together.

I know a young deaf man who began to lose his hearing during high school; his parents are still constantly searching latest technology to cure him. He is now studying in college and is pursuing a career in the public health field. I can see that he has hope because he knows his parents still love him and gives him that hope!

If you are concerned about your child not being perfect, please remember that there is no such thing! Bear in your mind and your hearts all the many things there are to appreciate about your children! If we love our children truly as they are and try our best to nurture them, we can still maximize their best potential (and you might be amazed what special talent or gifts that they might have to discover!)

It is very important that we can accept our children despite how other people might judge them. A child's self-identity and self-worth begins at home.

### **Empty Praise and Affirmation**

I have an "ugly duckling" story to tell about my two sons. When they were young, some of my relatives always praised my elder son, constantly telling him that he was handsome, and they would always do it in front of both my sons.

One time, my younger son sadly asked me whether he would be fine if he just worked hard since he was “not handsome” like his brother. In that moment, I realized the uncomfortable feelings that had been bothering my younger son for quite some time. I had some friends that would say my younger son was “cute” but my little one perceived cute mean “not handsome.”

Thankfully my son was able to communicate to me his feelings so that I could give him the assurance and love and acceptance that he needed. From that moment on, I have been particularly careful about how to keep a balance between my sons and the praise that I have given them. We try not to compare our two sons, as both of them are unique in their own ways. I have also tried to make sure that my elder son did not take pride in only his appearance! Both my husband and myself believe the character or personalities are far more important in children than how they are judged to look.

We have tried to teach them to be humble and to be kind to others. Children can be highly sensitive and vulnerable regarding people’s opinions, so parents have to help them to build their own secure identity. More importantly, we must try to show them our acceptance towards them without any conditions.

### **Single Families**

A loving family environment can give children the bonding, security and sense of belonging that they require. Children from single parent homes are no different than children from homes with two parents, however, they may face more challenges. Single parents may need to spend even more time and attention tending to their children’s emotions. Sometimes a good mentor, good teacher, grandparents, uncles or aunts etc. can also be helpful to fill in the gap for the missing parents or caregivers.

In particular when parents remarry and blend and create a new family situation, it might trigger even more emotional changes and challenges for a child. The impacts of a changing family can be a lifelong series of

emotional challenges unless there is discussion and openness about the feelings that children might have during the changes.

### **Disadvantaged Families**

Children from lower socio-economic situations can be particularly sensitive about their own perceived worth and self-esteem. Parents can teach their children not to compare their way of living to others, instead promoting the value of dignity and integrity through genuine love and encouragement. Adversity can teach endurance and endurance can build good character.

### **At School**

When children start school, a healthy self-identity is important to help them to stand firm and stay away from peer pressure.

In school, sometimes children can be sensitive to how teachers perceive them or accept them.

At the beginning of the schooling experience, you have to prepare them psychologically for this life change. You can comfort them and explain that the teachers will be additional adults that can care about them. They should love and express positive feelings toward teachers, but to let parents know if they are feeling neglected or mistreated by anyone at school, whether it is an adult or child.

Parents need to pay more attention to children who are more emotional and sensitive, overly active, easily upset and tearful, rude, aggressive or always choosing negative ways to interact with others.

These behaviors indicate that more communication and encouragement is needed or that the child is struggling with some emotional issues. If you are the parents and cannot help these children, don't rely on a teacher who needs to teach many children in a class! Seeking outside help from psychologists and family therapists is always a good idea.

We need to communicate with our children daily about what happened at school, how their day was and any notable interactions between their teachers and other students.

You can help your children to build a trust towards their teachers. Sometimes, students might have different feelings and think teachers have a bias against them. It is also the responsibility of the parents to keep communication open with teachers.

Parents need to act as detectives, to look for clues and listen and find out bits and pieces about what might be going wrong so as to help children to get back on the right track. Being a detective does not mean that you don't trust your children, it means being observant with their surroundings and expressions. When they are young, children might not know the best ways to express fully what is bothering them. It's our job to teach them the language of emotion so that they can let us know more directly.

The best way to prepare children to behave well at school is to encourage good behavior and good habits starting at home. It is the best time to shape them and reinforce positive behavior when they are toddlers as bad behaviors are difficult to be changed the older children become.

Children that constantly display inappropriate emotions and behaviors at school will then have challenges around learning capabilities and relationships between teachers and other students. If these emotional problems continue or get more serious, they can be labeled as "problem kids." This label can be extremely harmful to their self-esteem and prohibit their future growth, also encouraging rebellion and negative acting out towards teachers and authority in general.

Both parents and teachers could have the wrong assumption about who is responsible for the emotional education of children. Parents who are not aware of the need for teaching about emotion at home or who expect that they will learn at school puts too much expectation on teachers. The challenge is that teachers are so overwhelmed with large class sizes and

vast amounts of material to cover in required curriculums, that they often don't have enough time to address emotional education.

In general, teachers will rely on school psychologists to take care of behavioral and emotional issues. Children are being sent to school psychologists and it's often there that then they can get some help and emotional guidance.

In reality, these visits with psychologists require a lot of coordination with parents at home and depend on funding and resources available from school to school. These children then need support from teachers and parents, not relying just on the school psychologists.

Parents should be open-minded and listen to suggestions or advice provided by teachers or school psychologists. This input is meant to help your child and if you have any concerns or feelings about anything suggested, having a direct and informed dialogue with these teachers and psychologists is a good idea.

Sometimes, there are parents that might complain to the school administration without first finding the true facts about their children. There are also parents that are afraid to talk to school professionals even if they have concerns.

Parents should try and schedule meetings with teachers at least twice or more a year. Please try to schedule meetings with teachers ahead of time, as this way teachers can better plan their schedules and prepare any necessary information about your children. Normally for younger children, meetings with teachers are more frequent.

Also, try not to miss parent meetings arranged by the school or school activities as these are good opportunities for you to learn from the school faculty about the school community.

If time permits, volunteering at school is a wonderful way to be a good role model for your children, showing the importance of school community and

community involvement. It's also a great way for teachers to know more about you and your family.

In fact, teachers can help your children better if they have a better understanding about your whole family. You can help to enhance the relationship between your children and teacher. For example, you might suggest that your child make a drawing or small handmade gift by themselves to give to their teachers to show their respect and appreciation.

*Remember: Do not expect that you can just drop off your children at school and that they will be perfectly fine! It takes your involvement too!*

### **Well-Balanced Emotional Intelligence - Positive Communication Skills – Good Behaviors – Good Habits**

Children that can communicate their feelings effectively will have a better chance to build confidence and good self-esteem about themselves.

It is easier for emotionally aware children to have good relationships between parents, teachers and friends. They can express appropriately their caring, respect or concern towards others.

Parents need to demonstrate to children how to manage their emotions. Sometimes parents tend to give their own children excuses or make excuses themselves on avoiding the facing and expressing of feelings.

If parents have strong temperaments or inappropriate and uncontrolled emotional behavior, it will give children the wrong message about emotions that they will begin to mimic themselves. So, just as it is important to encourage emotional intelligence in your children, it's important that you do your own work to understand and express your feelings in a healthy way.

Both parents working outside of the home is very common nowadays. Grandparents or relatives can also live very far from the children's home. It therefore becomes harder to find someone whom you can trust to take

care of children during the day and when they are not in school. So please try to spend quality time to communicate with your children in the evening or whenever you can be together. Children need your attention to feel your presence in their daily life.

## **Positive Communication Skills – Attitude & Behaviors**

### **Positive Attitude**

Start off each day in a peaceful way! Try to smile or laugh more often with your children! This helps them to have a loving and positive attitude towards themselves and other people.

This laughter and positive regard can be a good feeling that can begin even during infancy when children are in the comfort and caring of a parent. Even before birth, children begin to develop their mood and temperament as they respond to stimulations from their surroundings.

Children are quite sensitive to their environment therefore try to be observant of your surroundings, making sure that it is calm and positive and safe. If a child is in an environment that does not feel safe or calm then seek help to make change.

Children who can be open-minded, attentive and have good listening skills will be able to cherish and be more respectful to others. These children tend to be more resilient in different conditions and situations. In fact, this positive attitude can influence their behavior towards other people and society in general. They are more ready to handle emotional and life challenges and are able to perform better in school.

Here are some of the big key words to help children to think positive and be mindful of others:

**Friendliness** – Approach people in a friendly way no matter the situation. Problems can be resolved in a better way when kindness is involved.

**Forgiveness** – Even when we are in the right, we can still forgive others. Holding on to anger will only make an unhappy person.

**Acceptance** - No one is perfect, ever! So even if someone does not think or act the ways that we wish, we have to try and accept this person in a kind way.

**Understanding** – Try to be able to think constantly from the other perspective and see the different sides of different situations.

**Respect** – It's important to be humble and learn to love other people. How much easier life would be if there was respect for one another.

**Appreciation** – Be thankful. Remember all that you have, because there are many people who are suffering in despair or severe poverty around the world.

*REMEMBER: "The Golden Rule" - Treat others how you want to be treated*

## **EMOTIONAL COMMUNICATION**

### **Facial Expression**

Always talk to your children while directly facing them so that they can mimic your way of speaking as well as observe your facial expressions.

It's important to practice listening and talking with your child. Infants or toddlers need to look at their parents or caregiver's mouth movement to help them learn language.

When parents are busy, they simply give children electronic devices like iPads and iPhones and other gadgets to keep them busy. This eliminates opportunities for children to learn from their own parents or caregivers. It is not just the speech that children learn from our talking to them, in fact



when we talk to an infant or toddler gently they are learning about emotions from our facial expressions.

Some children like to be more playful and make funny faces or act silly in order to draw peoples' attention. These children can simply be rich in their ability for expression or gifted in drama. However we need to teach them when this behavior is socially appropriate and when it is not.

Sometimes children display funny faces or act out silliness inside the classroom; it's in this situation where it might cause interruption or distraction. If they are constantly acting inappropriate in those occasions, parents need to teach them to care about the proper etiquette or manners in public.

### **Eye Contact**

Children learn from the eye contact of caregivers. Please try to have eye contact with your children when you are talking to them. We also have to teach children to have eye contact with other people. This helps them to be more attentive and show respect to other people.

When children misbehave or do something wrong, it is necessary that you have good eye contact when you explain to them the problem. Please do not express with squinty eyes or rude expressions as this only makes a child feel afraid and ashamed.

Children can have a hard time accepting their mistakes or can feel guilty when they don't need to. Also they can become afraid to tell their parents if something is bothering them in the future. It is more damaging to the relationship and harder to build trust in between parent and child when you shame them with a non-loving look.

Please help children to stop themselves when they express anger inappropriately and unreasonably at home; help them to calm down and then try to understand the reason for their feelings. At the right place and

moment, make use of those opportunities to teach them about their feelings.

### **Tone of Voice**

Children learn and mimic facial expressions and mouth movement when they are learning to speak. We should therefore talk to children in a gentle, soothing and clear voice. If we talk to them with impatience all the time, it makes a child anxious and fearful. Also, they can learn unproductive ways of expressing themselves. Therefore, please avoid screaming or yelling at home in front of your children or at your children. Excessive anger and hostile yelling can be very traumatic and abusive towards a child.

Parents therefore need to be in control of their behavior when they are frustrated themselves or in a hurry in doing many things. Even though there might be many things bothering you, you need to calm yourself down before talking to your children.

Your tone of voice can express your mood as well.

Children can sense and become vulnerable according to the mood of their parents and the tone of voice or expressions that parents use. When they are constantly in a noisy, quarrelsome and uncomfortable atmosphere, it can irritate their temperament.

During the toddler stage, if children scream or raise high pitched and inappropriate tones of voice all the time, teach them with sign language or body language as early as possible. When they are able to communicate with words then you need to teach them what is inappropriate at home, otherwise, they will just continue the same way at school.

### **Body Language or Gesture**

Try to observe carefully your children's body gestures or body language as this can tell you a great deal about how they are feeling. You can also teach them some simple sign language before they can talk or express themselves

properly with words. For example, using your hands or shaking your head for yes or no is a signal. And of course the important signals; a kiss and a hug means “I love you.”

When children start to become more active, observe their interaction with other children. Children can learn a lot at home, but also through playing with other young children.

Play can allow children to practice how to interact with others; it is an essential part of their social-emotional learning. Children who are kept always at home without having interaction with peers and other adults or new environments tend to cry more and need longer time to adjust and adapt to new environments or people.

Children can develop a friendly relationship towards people around the house whether it's with a nanny or caregiver, siblings, grandparents or neighbor children.

Every day is a teaching and practicing opportunity for them. If children are always displaying aggression towards others or disrespecting others, it may be a sign that you need to start teaching them more at home, or seek help to understand what is going on with your child emotionally.

You can use storybooks or have talks with children when you have observed certain things that they have done that are inappropriate to other people. Sometimes, you might need to repeat what happened or demonstrate the proper way to behave.

Some children especially boys tend to have bigger physical movements. This might cause them to easily kick or hurt someone near them therefore you need to teach them to watch out for the space between others.

Facial expressions and body language can be a very abstract concept for younger children or those children who have a harder time explaining or expressing their feelings. You can use the Emotes characters to

communicate and teach them the names of different emotions to help them build their emotional vocabulary.

Sometimes children might not do something on purpose but simply might not know the proper way to express themselves. We should not take these moments for granted and rather use every opportunity to teach them what is appropriate.

## **Common Behavioral Challenges**

### **Overly Active Children**

Most boys are more active than girls. They tend to have bigger body movements and when they are young they don't understand "the space" between other children.

They might not do something hurtful on purpose, but simply invade into another person's space because they don't understand the importance of boundaries. In particular, an only child with no siblings or who doesn't have many friends to play with might also need further teaching about respecting space. They need to be taught to be respectful to others or to be careful that their movements could hurt someone else.

Overactive children might not understand that they are acting inappropriately when they run around and knock or push other children around. Even children that are around the same age might have different levels of maturity and awareness. Therefore, these children might need more attention and teaching and extra supervision when they are preschoolers.

Parents sometimes overlook the fact that the foods children eat can also trigger emotions or behaviors. For example, too much sugar can affect some children that have ADHD or are hyper or over-active.

If problems can be identified early, you can get the help you and the child need to make improvement at the earliest stage of development. It is

perfectly fine for children to be active; in fact giving them exercises that consume their energy is a very healthy thing. Teach your children that there is a right place and right time to be active. In class or on the playground, they have to respect teachers and other students.

If punishment is necessary, you need to explain to children that the actions were incorrect but that you still love them. Encouragement can be better than punishment especially when they do not understand the reasons.

### **Introverted or Shy Children**

It is common that some young children are more introverted or shy. You can encourage them by bringing them to more new environments and by showing them how you can interact with other new people. It is perfectly fine and normal for children to have their own individual kind of personalities.

If you are concerned that shyness will be a major problem for you child, you can find some activities that can help to improve their communication skills and participate in more group activities. When children gain positive social experiences it can help them to build courage to try new things.

If possible, try to participate together with them at the beginning. If not, please explain clearly why you cannot stay with them so that they can expect what might come up in the new environment. Children need to build the courage to try out and interact with other people. Then gradually they can leave their comfort zones and feel secure enough to interact with other people.

Some children are more reserved and need more warm up time in new environments. Sometimes, younger or smaller children in a class might be also more timid as they need more encouragement to speak up and play with bigger children.

Shyness might be a challenge for a particular child but this can be improved upon with encouragement and through the practice of communication with new people.

You can start with your own friends or neighbor kids. Try to find some friendly children around the neighborhood so that a shy child can practice how to interact with others. They might need more opportunities to find more interesting things and to meet more people. Another good place would be Sunday school as there are always children with adult supervision.

If you feel that your child is particularly shy or reserved and has severe difficulties in interacting with other children as well as parents/caregivers, it might be a good idea to consult with a doctor or mental health professional for advice and support.

For young children, you might need to consult speech therapists if children have difficulty with speech beyond the typical stage of speech development of their peers. (Also, boys tend to speak a bit later than girls.)

### **Big Feelings (“Temper Tantrums”)**

“Temper Tantrums” is another way of saying “Big Feelings.” Children are allowed to have their feelings, but it is never okay for a child to scream, damage things or hurt the bodies of others.

When children are tired and can’t sleep well, they tend to be in bad mood. Please allow them to have sufficient sleep and rest in a comfortable place so that their mood can be kept more calm.

Children can be sensitive to things that they don’t understand or get upset with things that seem not fair to them. Try to find out the causes of their emotional reactions and then explain to them the proper way to handle the situations.

It is normal that children have big emotions or get very angry sometimes. However we need to teach them how to control themselves and know the ways to express these big feelings at an early age.

Teach children to calm down by taking deep breaths, having a sip of cold water or bringing them to another quiet place so that you can talk and have a time-out break together. Then try to find solutions for the issues that your child is upset about.

Some parents are afraid to upset or trigger children in bad moods. Therefore, they will accept whatever ways children behave. This is actually not helpful to them as they will never learn.

Children would like to have immediate gratification of their desires, but we need to react to their requests thoughtfully. Bribing them is the worst way to satisfy them, as this will never end. Sometimes, by helping them to delay their gratification, it becomes a good way to start helping children have more realistic expectations. This is especially true with children who form a habit of unreasonable expectations or requests; those that when they do not get what they want then throw a bad temper tantrum as a threat.

An only child in a family can find it particularly difficult to understand the meaning of sharing. They can be more self-centered; “Me, Me, Me” is their only perspective. These children can be more demanding with all the attention as well as their expectations. It is necessary for them to learn to interact with friends to learn the concept of sharing beginning at an early age.

Even infants or toddlers can respond or react to how parents treat them. If you do not handle them in the appropriate ways, they can manipulate adults for their own desires! When they cry, they will be fed more often or adults will hold them more often! Try to understand their temperament early on and find ways to help them to change if necessary.

We need to teach children at a very early stage that there are boundaries and limits and they cannot just throw a temper tantrum or go out of control.

In some cases, children can be spoiled between parents, grandparents or family members. When they do things wrong no one tries to correct them and teach them. This is not in the best interest of the child or the family.

Children that throw temper tantrums publicly might cause embarrassment to parents. Please bring them to a private place and then teach them. If it is not an appropriate time, please try to follow up with them at home. Do not take it for granted and let children continue to take advantage of the situation.

Parents need to be patient to find every possible way to teach children in creative ways. But please examine your own temperament before you talk to your children; make sure that you are calm and patient and are being a good emotional role model.

## **Communication Tools And Methods to Handle Emotional Challenges**

### **Good Reference Books**

Books have the value of communicating concepts or correct perspectives. If you have trouble explaining something to your children you can try to research and find the appropriate kind of books about that topic to share with your child.

You can read books together or let them read the books on their own. This giving of a book can be a subtle way but also an effective way to help give children emotional lessons.

Emotes have a variety of books and products about a wide range of emotions and social-emotional challenges and have suggestions how to handle the issues with which children struggle. Some of these lessons may be able to be helpful for you as well!



## **A Smile, Hug or Gratitude**

When children are young, we need to form the habit of talking to them face to face with eye contact. If they make a little mistake, we need to tell them what they did wrong, but then praise them when they do right the next time. This positive reinforcement can help children learn from their mistakes and build confidence. This also helps them to gain experience on how to face mistakes or failures.

A smile or a hug can make a very big difference to children when they try to make corrections for a mistake they have made.

Parents can be good role models if you always yield to other people, wait in line showing the appropriate etiquette or even when we show our love towards our spouse.

It's important that we teach children to have a kind and generous heart towards other people.

## **“Happy Hours”**

During the weekend, Sunday brunches or dining out at restaurants which are in a more relaxing atmosphere, can also be good times to share thoughts and talks with children.

Children can listen and better accept the point of view of parents when they are enjoying a good time together.

Children will receive the teachings as more about your caring instead of just giving them discipline.

## **Cute Notes**

When children can read, we can write them a little note. You can make it more memorable if you just draw a heart or the face of the Emote Bubba

“the happy.” Cute playful reminders of your love can be very special and important to children.

### **Letters or Emails**

As they grow older, a letter or nice note could be an excellent way to communicate some important matters or complicated situations that you would like your children to remember or make changes about.

I find this is very effective and yet not many parents are doing it any more. I write letters or emails to my grow-up sons as there are advantages in doing this in that we will think through more thoroughly whatever topics we are discussing.

If there are issues that you cannot seem to agree with each other about, emails and letters are a good way to avoid emotional confrontations as you could explain more clearly your perspectives.

This direct communication can help to avoid misunderstandings and give time to your children to think through things from your perspective. Talking to each other is still the most direct and best way to go but this is a good alternative.

Make sure that we remind ourselves that the aim of our communication is to help our children to improve and not to ruin their trust or our relationship.

### **Disappointment or Failures**

It is actually a good thing for our children to experience some kind of failure at a very early stage! Children have to learn from trials and also learn how to handle failures.

In real life, there will be lots of times that things won't go smoothly or in the ways that we expected. There can be times of disappointment and

anxiety at certain stages at school or in career. Children need to learn how to go through those complex feelings and properly manage them.

To children, sometimes even a very small matter or unimportant thing can bother them and challenge their self-esteem. These moments can hurt their esteem in the long run if they are not guided properly. Therefore, we need to explain and encourage them to form the habit of sharing their feelings. This is a good way to prepare them to communicate better in future.

Do not underestimate the impact on children when they make a mistake or do not succeed at something, as these moments can affect their future behavior or personalities. Children need to know that making mistakes and failing is just a part of life and a good opportunity to grow!

### **Hints for Discipline to Avoid Resentments**

**Be Patient** is the #1 golden rule for parents!

Sometimes we need to take a few deep breaths or sip a glass of cold water to cool ourselves down before we talk to our children. We need to carefully think through a strategy to communicate better without letting our emotions overtake us.

Relationships can be fragile if you do not build a good foundation of trust and understanding when children are young.

We have to observe the changing moods of children while we are teaching them. If the child gets too emotional, then you can give the child a glass of water before you continue. Take a break and then continue the conversation. Sometimes, you might need to choose another time to continue the conversation again.

It is best to explain things to children on the spot when an incident occurs or else follow up in the same day or as soon as possible. If it is not the appropriate place or time, then it is better to wait until you are back home

in a private area where you can try to make suggestions that they can use to better handle the situation.

Do not criticize your child in front of others or their siblings as this can be harmful to self-esteem. It is no different than a boss criticizing a staff member in front of co-workers!

Start off with a gentle nice conversation before you talk about the mistakes of the child, so that that they are less defensive in their response to you.

It is also more effective sometimes if the dad instead of the mom (or vice versa) talks to the son or daughter. If mom is the one spending the most time with the children, it can be helpful for dad to reconfirm the importance of an issue. This need good communication between your spouse before talking to the children.

Control your own temperament and make sure that you do not approach your child aggressively and avoid conflict right upfront. Mind your own manners, eye contact, body gesture and tone of voice as well.

Children can be sensitive, so we must help them to understand the facts of the situation which is much easier for them to accept and reflect upon.

You can help your children to find ways to prevent making the same mistakes again by giving them logical and calm advice.

Avoid “labeling” your children in a certain way as this can be really destructive and might force them to think that there is no hope for them to make improvements or grow.

There is a fine line between forgiveness and ignoring the mistakes of children. We need to build their trust and assurance that we will forgive their mistakes. However, we have to help them to admit that they did something wrong and try to avoid doing these wrong things again.

Especially with teenagers, there needs to be a clear understanding around limits and boundaries and that they have to follow the rules such as no drinking alcohol and driving!

You will spoil a child if they make a mistake and you do not correct them. If children do not learn a lesson from a small mistake than these mistakes can grow into bigger problems in the future. Let children know what are the possible consequences or making certain mistakes.

You can help teens to avoid falling into dangerous traps with prevention talks such as choosing the wrong group of peers, drugs, alcohol, sexual information and safety as well as the inappropriate use of culture or social media. Children of all ages *do* need your protection and so please try to provide all necessary information about prevention before they find themselves getting into problems or troubles.

Responsible parents will do every possible thing to protect and avoid pitfalls for their children. If you don't give them advice up front it will be like arriving too late and allowing them to fall over the cliff unknowingly and then just complain to them after they get hurt. This will just create conflicts, confrontation and a destructive relationship. It might be hard to convince children that it is in their best interest when you apply boundaries while some of their peers enjoy their destructive "freedom".

This will rely on the good foundation that you build up when they are young and when you are the first one to teach them the right path.

Positive reinforcement does work well and a lot of the time it works better than punishment. Inappropriate punishment can cause a destructive relationship between parents and children. Also, physical punishment is never okay to use with children as it is not only physically dangerous but emotionally shaming and destructive for a child.

## **Healthy Family, Healthy Children**

The most vulnerable victims of family instability are the children. Children will feel insecure if they see that their parents are often in conflict.

Adults are role models for children. If a family cannot live together in harmony it is very hard for children to experience and grow up with a warm and secure family life. Please avoid screaming and yelling at your spouse and your children.

When your children express aggression or unacceptable behavior, please reflect on your own behavior between yourself and other family members that may have served as a model for your children to act with their own inappropriate behavior.

Especially those adults that struggle with destructive behavior themselves such as alcoholism or drug use need to be mindful of how these negative behaviors will negatively influence their children. Bad smoking habit will be harmful to your children's health as well as set a bad example to them.

Be creative and thoughtful in how to explain things to children in effective ways. Teach them about your own positive and supportive family values before they can become negatively influenced by destructive messages in the culture and society.

## **Precious Time Together**

### **Early Reading Habits**

In today's technology driven world, parents are not gaining any extra time for their lovely children.

Think about how much a child can learn and gain every night from bedtime stories! This is precious to them and brings a lot of good memories.

A lot of children have a hard time to develop good reading habits. In fact, these early reading habits create a literacy foundation that they can build a lot easier upon in the future.

Children can experience a lot of things through reading a story. Children will not be bored easily if they enjoy reading. Also, if you would like your children to have good academic achievement, encouraging reading is the most important starting point.

It is a great thing to expose children to a variety of books with interesting topics. Choosing good reading material will benefit not just reading skills, but it helps tremendously in thinking skills as well.

Good reading habits also help children to learn patience and increases their ability to be attentive.

### **“Little Helper” vs. “Little Prince” or “Little Princess”**

A lot of parents do not want their children to work or help out at home. Here is some good news for busy moms or dads; *you can teach your kids to be good helpers!*

Children can do some simple household work such as washing fruits or vegetables or other simple tasks. Children are curious in the kitchen with cooking or food preparation. Also, if something around the house needs to be fixed, please let your children observe and try to be involved with small repairs and tasks. This involvement can improve motor skills and coordination and can also be quality time that you can spend together nicely while they are learning real life skills.

In Montessori early childhood teaching, there are many sessions help children learn how to take care of themselves and do little household tasks. Through all these processes, they learn motor skills, thinking skills and emotional skills to handle new challenges. You are teaching them new life skills one day at a time!

### **Activities That You Can All Participate In Together**

There are a lot of activities that can cost very little and allow you and your children to have quality time together.

Spending an afternoon in the park with a family picnic or perhaps a visit to a zoo or aquarium. We used to go fishing with our young children and they had so much fun! (Believe it or not, fishing requires quite a lot of patience from children!)

How about hiking, swimming or camping together?

Children love to enjoy nature, even playing in a puddle of water in the rain, a pile of sand in a sand box or in the snow or the trees in the woods. There are a lot of things that can be explored in nature and much teaching to do about the variety of plants and animals. You might be amazed at what things inspire the curiosity of your children!

As children grow older, visiting museums, games, concerts or participating in school activities together can be a great way to further build your relationship. You can also do volunteer work together with your children. Sometimes this can be rewarding on many levels as children can also gain leadership skills and learn how to work as a team and find ways to be supportive and to help others in need.

### **Seeking Professional Advice or Support**

When children are sick, we will bring them to doctors right away. And so, if children are constantly having problems with emotional issues or abnormal behaviors, then that is the time that you need to seek for professional advice as well.

Prevention is the best way to help or avoid getting into serious problems in the future. Sometimes we can find ways from good books and good advice from other parents.

Sometimes, school psychologists might give suggestions and then you follow up with medical doctors or other specialists such as speech



therapists, educational psychologists, clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, and family therapists.

The following are some of the more serious disorders that need early attention; speech delinquency and delays, ADD, ADHD, learning disorders, anxiety disorders, mood disorder, autism and depression.

As their parent you know your children better than anyone else and can clearly identify when a major change has occurred in their habits or behaviors.

Worry cannot solve problems, therefore think positive and seek action for help in detecting early symptoms and finding the help that you and your children need. There is no shame in seeking help. We all need help sometimes!

### **Common Symptoms That May Indicate Seeking Further Help**

- Unable to cope with day to day activities
- Major changes in sleeping or eating habits
- Significant weight loss or gain
- Sudden and recurrent angry or violent outbursts
- Significant decline or failure in school performance, difficulty in focus or putting forth effort
- Constant depressed moods
- Hyperactivity
- Loss of interest; suddenly spending more and more time alone
- Constant temper tantrums; often that arise for no reason
- Constant worry and anxiety; bad nightmares
- Older kids will often begin abusing drugs or alcohol, damage property, begin skipping school and defy authority. These could be indicators that the child is struggling with some emotional issues that need attention.