



Teaching Children about Emotions

Cara D. Bosler, Ph.D.
Rogers State University

Laura Hubbs-Tait, Ph. D.
Extension Parenting Specialist

Teaching children about emotions and coping is important. Children who cope well with their emotions are less likely to be aggressive, depressed, or physically ill due to stress. They are more likely to have higher grades, better self-esteem, and other positive outcomes. This fact sheet gives the definition of emotional intelligence and includes tips on what to do and what not to do to teach your child about emotions and coping.

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Fact Sheets are also available on our website at: <http://osufacts.okstate.edu>

What is Emotional Intelligence?

Emotional intelligence includes three abilities:

1. to label and talk about your own and others' emotions;
2. to show emotions in appropriate ways; and
3. to adjust to emotions in a healthy manner.

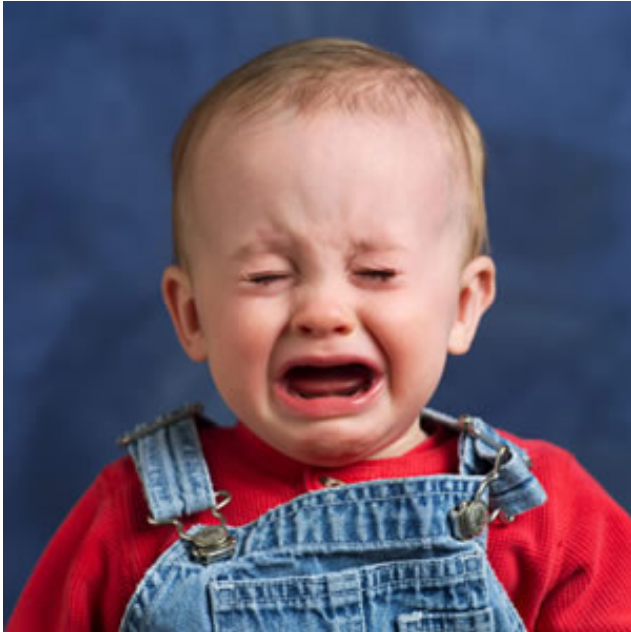
Children with the ability to calm themselves down rarely overreact with temper tantrums or outbursts.

Dos for Teaching Emotional Intelligence

(Carter, 2009)

- Empathize with your child. Try to understand what they are feeling and why.
- Help your child build up their emotional vocabulary. Help them to label their emotions using more than only "mad," "sad," and "happy." You can use posters like the one here to teach your child how these emotions look.
- Let your child know that their emotions are important to you. Encourage your child to talk about their feelings. Ask them how they feel and why. Show them that their feelings are understood.





- Deal with bad behavior if necessary. Help them to understand that their emotions are okay, but that there are rules about how they should behave even when feeling a negative emotion.
- Problem-solve with them. Help them to get to the root of their emotions. Encourage them to come up with solutions to the problem or ways to prevent similar problems in the future.

Don'ts for Teaching Emotional Intelligence

(Eisenberg, Cumberland, & Spinrad, 1998)

- Don't make your child feel ashamed of their emotions.
- Don't punish or make fun of your child for their emotions.
- Don't tell your child how they should feel.
- Don't make your child's feelings stronger.
- Don't encourage behaviors such as aggression as ways to deal with emotions.

References:

- Carter, C. (2009). Emotion coaching: One of the most important parenting practices in the history of the universe. *Raising Happiness: Science for Joyful Kids and Happier Parents*. Retrieved from: http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/raising_happiness/post/emotion_coaching_one_of_the_most_important_parenting_practices_in_the_histo
- Eisenberg, N., Cumberland, A., & Spinrad, T.L. (1998). Parental socialization of emotion. *Psychological Inquiry*, 9, 241-273.
- Mayer, J.D. (2012) Emotional intelligence. Retrieved from: http://www.unh.edu/emotional_intelligence/ei%20What%20is%20EI/ei%20definition.htm
- Katz, L. F. & Hunter, E. C. (2007). Maternal meta-emotion philosophy and adolescent depressive symptomatology. *Social Development*, 16, 343-360.

Credit for Images:

- <http://susandayley.wordpress.com/2011/05/09/increasing-your-child%E2%80%99s-emotional-iq/>
- <http://childhood101.com/2011/02/kids-music-101-music-and-emotions-music-for-calming/>
- <http://www.loveplayandlearn.com/2012/07/diy-emotions-board-book.html>

Oklahoma State University, in compliance with Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 11246 as amended, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and other federal laws and regulations, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, age, religion, disability, or status as a veteran in any of its policies, practices, or procedures. This includes but is not limited to admissions, employment, financial aid, and educational services.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director of Cooperative Extension Service, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma. This publication is printed and issued by Oklahoma State University as authorized by the Vice President, Dean, and Director of the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources and has been prepared and distributed at a cost of 20 cents per copy. 0414 GH.