

# Makeover Minutes

## Quick tips for your learning environment



## Supporting Social Emotional Learning

The goal of social emotional learning (SEL) in early childhood is to develop the skills that are necessary to understand and regulate one's own emotions, as well as respond to the emotions and actions of others. By explicitly teaching SEL, children learn important skills that will lead to healthy relationships and positive interactions with one's self and others throughout life.



Watch Video:  
[Supporting Social Emotional Learning](#)

## Environmental Tips

### Model and label emotions

Throughout your day, explicitly discuss feelings with children. Ask them to check in with themselves and identify how they are feeling. Use different words for emotions and introduce new vocabulary. For example, instead of using the word *happy*, try other descriptive words such as *ecstatic*, *contented*, *elated*, or *delighted*.

### Use displays and visual supports

Emotion posters and other visual aids reinforce emotion-regulation strategies. Free resources are available to support emotional regulation, building social skills, teaching feelings, and more. Introduce and teach visual supports, model them, and refer back to them often to support children's independent use of the strategies.

### Role play stories, songs, and activities

Stories and songs can be used to discuss emotions. When reading or singing, allow children to role play. Ask them to identify how characters are feeling, act it out, and problem-solve ways to manage difficult emotions.

### Offer a calming area

Setting up a designated space where one or two children can play without being interrupted helps children learn to manage their emotions before blow-ups happen. Provide comforting objects, such as soft toys, photo books, and fidget items like stress-balls and sand timers. SEL books and visual aids can also be included in this area. Encourage children to use this space at times when they feel the need to relax or calm down.

### Validate emotions of children

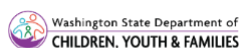


When children display emotions, even difficult ones, avoid dismissing what they are feeling. Show empathy by listening and offering verbal and/or physical support. Provide ideas of ways to solve the problem and model what that might

look like. Support children by using the calming area, visual supports, and other SEL strategies that are in place in your learning environment.

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Visual supports show examples of facial expressions, provide new vocabulary, and can be used individually or with the whole group.



This well-defined safe space supports children's social emotional development by providing a dedicated space for a single child to relax, free from interruptions by other children.



This emotional support area promotes emotional self-management for children by providing soft cushioning, headphones, visual supports, and books.



This visual support was turned into a game to help children identify a variety of emotions.



Books that discuss a wide range of feelings are included in this emotional support area. These can help children understand that strong emotions are normal and okay.



Even very young children benefit from social emotional learning. By using real photos of the children in their group, these toddlers are learning to connect their own feelings to the images.

## Additional Resources

Access a range of free printable visual supports on the [Head Start ECLKC website](#).

Visit the [Meaningful Makeover](#) website for full episodes and more great tips!

## References

Harms, T., Cryer, D., Clifford, R. M., & Yazejian, N. (2019). *Family child care environment rating scale, third edition (FCCERS-3)*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Head Start/ECLKC. (2018, July 16). *Classroom visuals & supports*. <https://bit.ly/3f6pbO6>

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