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For more great resources on this topic, and to watch the *Circle Time Magazine* professional development talk show series, check us out at:

http://cultivatelearning.uw.edu/circletime-magazine/

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TEACHING EMOTIONAL LITERACY AND REGULATION HIGHLIGHTS AND KEY IDEAS

ACROSS ALL AGES



Emotional literacy is the ability to monitor the emotions of oneself and others, respond to those emotions in healthy ways, and use them to guide thinking and action. Educators can help children grow socially and emotionally by teaching them how to recognize, label, and understand emotions, as well as ways to express and regulate emotions productively.

IDENTIFY CHILDREN'S EMOTIONS

Emotions start in the body. Children need help from experienced adults to learn how to recognize and eventually describe these physical sensations such as energy level, body tension, and variation in breathing and heart rate. Educators can increase children's self-awareness by using a wide variety of words to label and describe the emotions they see infants and young children experiencing.

TEACH SELF-REGULATION STRATEGIES

As young children better understand their emotions, they become more capable of emotional regulation. Infants manage emotions by co-regulating through warm interactions with responsive caregivers. As children develop, they begin to self-regulate. Educators can help children maintain positive feelings—or shift unwanted feelings—by modeling safe and culturally respectful ways of expressing emotions and teaching a variety of regulation strategies.

PRACTICE EMPATHY

Young children calm more quickly when they feel accepted and understood. Supportive educators validate children's feelings and help them determine what may have happened to trigger those feelings. When children make these connections, they are more likely to understand their own emotions and have empathy for others.



TEACHING EMOTIONAL LITERACY – EDITION 3

EQUITYMATTERS

The way emotions are expressed and valued differs across cultures. In some cultures, overt expression of emotions is encouraged while in others, people are more reserved. Sometimes subtle biases

that we might not be aware of can interfere with our ability to interpret and respond to children's emotions, especially when children come from backgrounds and traditions that are different from our own. The process of uncovering these implicit biases takes time and reflection.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What emotions are you comfortable expressing?
- How do you manage strong emotions?
- How do you expect children to express and manage emotions?
- Do you respond to all children's range of emotions with the same amount of patience and guidance?

TIP: Focus on a different child in your care each day. Notice the emotions you feel with each child. Are you showing empathy and responding to each child's unique needs?

POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT AND EMOTIONAL LITERACY

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is a positive approach to challenging behavior that focuses on building social and emotional skills. PBS recognizes that all behavior communicates a message or need. Once educators understand the meaning of a child's behavior they can, together with the family, teach the child more effective ways to communicate their needs.

PBS TEACHING PRACTICES

A Continuum of Support

The Pyramid Model is an established PBS framework for addressing the social and emotional development and challenging behavior of young children. The framework offers a continuum of evidence-based teaching practices that are organized into four levels of support.

One critical set of practices in the third level of the pyramid focuses on teaching children how to understand and manage their emotions.

Adapted from Fox, L., Dunlap, G., Hemmeter, M., Joseph, G. E., & Strain, P. S. (2003). The teaching pyramid: A model for supporting social competence and preventing challenging behavior In young children. Young Children, 58(4), 48-52.

Teaching Emotional Literacy:

Intensive

Social and Emotional Teaching Strategies

High-Quality
Supportive Environments

Nurturing and Responsive Relationships

All children need guidance to learn emotional literacy skills, though some will need more frequent and intensive instruction. When children are able to manage their emotions, they are more equipped to establish healthy relationships, focus better on learning tasks, and engage in positive behaviors.

Give children feeling words and help them learn to recognize, accept, and express their emotions in productive ways.

LEARNING ABOUT MY WORLD



INFANTS EARLY ON

Children at an early stage of development are ready to learn how to:

- Express a variety of emotions.
- Respond to support from familiar adult (e.g., calm down after grasping an adult's finger).
- Comfort self by cooing, babbling, sucking, holding a blanket or favorite toy.



TODDLERS EMERGING SKILLS

Children who are at an emerging stage of social and emotional development are ready to learn how to:

- Use words to describe some feelings.
- Ask about emotions of others.
- Use different ways to calm or comfort self, with adult support.



PRESCHOOLERS INCREASING MASTERY

Children who are increasing their mastery of social skills and emotional development are ready to learn how to:

- Identify and describe more subtle and complex emotions.
- Express feelings in ways that are appropriate to a situation.
- Use a variety of coping strategies to self-regulate, with adult support.

For more guidance on how young children interact with their environment, learn behavioral expectations, and respond to adult guidance, refer to the following resources:

- Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines
 (https://www.del.wa.gov/helpful-resources/washington-state-early-learning-and-developmental-guidelines)
- Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/interactive-head-start-early-learning-outcomes-framework-ages-birth-five)

The ability to recognize, understand, and respond to a wide range of emotions develops gradually and is closely tied to a child's

developmental age.



Infants
express a variety of
emotions through facial
expressions, vocalizations, and
body movement. Responsive
caregivers notice, identify, and
interpret infants' expressions
and cues. Infants will engage in
positive ways with caregivers
and their environment when
in a calm, alert state.



PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Identify Infants Emotions

Educators who carefully observe infants and learn about how each child expresses feelings can accurately label and understand infants' emotions and cues.

Teaching Practices

- ✓ Describe how you think infants are feeling.
- ✓ Label infant's emotions.
- ✓ Match or mirror the infant's affect.

Practice Empathy

Infants are more likely to be calm when caring educators validate their feelings. Educators practice empathy through warm interactions and words that communicate understanding how the child feels.

Teaching Practices

- ✓ Respond calmly to emotional expression.
- ✓ Use culturally respectful language.
- ✓ Use gentle touches to soothe.
- ✓ Interpret cues and talk out loud about why you think the infant is feeling a certain way.

Teach Regulation Strategies

Infants use some self-calming strategies to calm themselves when tired or distressed. When they experience new or stronger emotions, however, they need trusted adults to assist them in managing their body and returning to a calm, alert state.

Teaching Practices

- ✓ Provide physical comfort and talk or sing softly (cradle in arms, gentle rocking).
- ✓ Respond to cues for hunger or fatigue appropriately.
- ✓ Provide a comforting object to suck (infant's hand, pacifier) or hold (adult hand or finger, blanket, stuffed toy).
- ✓ Decrease stimulation (dimming lights, decreasing noise, removing some toys from sight).

Putting these strategies into practice helps infants learn to:

- Express a variety of emotions.
- Respond to support from familiar adult (e.g., calm down after grasping an adult's finger).
- Comfort self by cooing, babbling, sucking, holding a blanket or favorite toy.



Try out these materials and activities to increase infants' awareness of emotions and self-regulation.



BOOKS

Sharing stories and books together in a quiet, comfortable area can be a calming experience for both children and adults.

When I Am/Cuando Estoy

By Gladys Rosa-Mendoza and Dana Regan

This bilingual English and Spanish book describes emotions and suggests ways to deal with feelings. Look at the pictures together with an infant. Encourage the infant to hold and manipulate the book. As you read the book, talk about the pictures the infant is most interested in. Label each emotion and make comments that relate the emotion to the infant's own experiences.

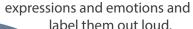
BUBBLES

When an infant shows signs of early distress, blow bubbles nearby. Focusing on the bubbles and tracking where they go often helps infants self-soothe and calm.



MIRROR

Help infants become familiar with their own faces and expressions with a baby-safe mirror. As infants look at their reflection, describe the facial expressions you see and what you think the infant may be feeling. Do the same with your own reflection. Model different





Emotion Dice

To make your own emotion dice, print a dice template on card stock, or use a small square package with all sides taped shut, and put one emotion picture on each side. Use your own photos or drawings or download free *Emotion* pictures from the Head Start Center for Inclusion (HSCI) website*.

Roll the dice and talk with infants about the emotions they see. Ask families how they express and label the different emotions.

*HSCI visual supports and teacher tools: http://headstartinclusion.org/teacher-tools#visual

TALK ABOUT IT

Meaningful back-and-forth conversations with trusted adults help infants better understand their feelings and emotions. Make comments, ask open-ended questions, and use novel words as you talk about feelings and emotions with infants during daily caregiving activities.



COMMENTS	OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS	NOVEL WORDS	
You're smiling. You seem so happy to play with your friend!	What are you telling me with your big smile?	Happy Calm	Tired Upset
What a big yawn. You look like you're feeling tired.	You look sad. I see a frown and tears on your face. What happened?	Excited	Bored
I see that you're crying. It looks like you're upset by all of the noise. Let's move to a quieter space.	Look at you, waving your arms and kicking your legs! Why are you so excited?		



PARTNER WITH FAMILIES

Families have the greatest impact on their child's emotional well-being and development. Build solid, trusting, and reciprocal relationships with families. Talk with families to learn more about their child and work together to support their child's learning. Be sure to validate each family's perspective, though it may be different from your own, and be open to trying new ideas.

- Notice how families talk about and show emotions with each other.
- Invite families to share how they talk about and express their emotions.
- Ask families to share labels for emotions in the child's home language and use those familiar words with children.
- Find out from families how their infant communicates distress and what they do to offer comfort.



Toddlers
are experiencing
an increasing
range of emotions.
They continue to need
caring and supportive
adults to help them
identify, understand,
and express their
emotions.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Identify Children's Emotions

Toddlers are expanding their emotional awareness. They benefit from learning a variety of *emotion* words to identify their feelings and the feelings of people in their world.

Teaching Practices

- ✓ Be attentive to each toddler's expressions and behaviors.
- ✓ Give labels to the child's emotions and those shown by other children.
- ✓ Help children identify and communicate their own emotions by using visuals showing a variety of emotions.
- ✓ Label and talk about your own emotions throughout the day.

Practice Empathy

Educators can help toddlers understand that all feelings are OK—neither good or bad. They can help toddlers describe what they are experiencing, and possible reasons, through conversations and simple activities.

Teaching Practices

- ✓ Use a warm, calm voice to show empathy and convey acceptance.
- ✓ Talk about why the child or a peer might be having a certain feeling.
- ✓ Read books, sing songs, and use puppets to help toddlers explore emotions and their causes.

Teach Regulation Strategies

Toddlers are beginning to play a more active role in managing their emotions. Educators can help toddlers practice and expand their regulation skills by modeling and providing gentle reminders.

Teaching Practices

- ✓ Teach regulation strategies such as taking deep breaths, reading a book, hugging a soft toy, finding a safe and quiet space, or pushing on a wall.
- ✓ Model or use puppets to show safe emotional expression and self-regulation strategies.
- ✓ Guide toddlers through a regulation strategy when you notice a strong feeling.
- Help toddlers remember strategies by modeling and using visual reminders.

Putting these strategies into practice helps toddlers learn to:

- Use words to describe some feelings.
- Ask about emotions of others.

Use different ways to calm or comfort self, with adult support.



TRY IT OUT

Try out these activities and materials to teach toddlers about emotions and self-regulation.



BOOKS

In your book corner, include several books about emotions and read them aloud to

prompt conversation about feelings and ways to manage those feelings.

When I Am/Cuando Estoy

By Gladys Rosa-Mendoza and Dana Regan

This bilingual English and Spanish book describes emotions and suggests ways to deal with feelings. Use the book to teach vocabulary words for emotions. Make comments and ask questions to help toddlers think about why a child might be feeling a certain way. Help them relate the emotions in the book to their own feelings and experiences.

EMOTIONAL LITERACY VISUALS

Use the visual supports below to teach toddlers new emotional vocabulary. Help them discriminate between facial expressions, recognize emotions, identify their own emotions, and communicate their feelings. To make them, use your own photos or drawings, or download free *Emotions* pictures from the Head Start Center for Inclusion (HSCI) website* and print or paste them on cardstock or thick paper.

Emotion Cards

Make your own emotion cards with pictures of diverse people showing different emotions. Play simple games so toddlers practice recognizing different facial expressions.

Lay cards face down on the floor or put some in a bag. Let children take turns flipping one over or drawing one from the bag. See if they can label the emotions. Encourage conversation about what might have happened to trigger the feeling.

How I Feel Chart

Make a feelings chart with faces showing a range of emotions. Use the chart to check-in with toddlers about how they are feeling each day. Help toddlers point to and label the face that best shows the way they are feeling by asking questions (e.g., Which one shows how you're feeling?) or providing choices (e.g., Do you feel calm or excited?). Model identifying your own feelings.



MIRROR

Toddlers are beginning to recognize their faces in a mirror. Take turns looking at their faces in a mirror. Talk about facial parts and expressions and how to identify feelings (e.g., Look at my mouth. You can see I'm happy because I'm smiling!). Let them call out an emotion and make the expression with your face.





TALK ABOUT IT

Meaningful back-and-forth conversations with trusted adults help children better understand and cope with their feelings and emotions. Make comments, ask open-ended questions, and use novel words as you talk about feelings and emotions with toddlers during daily activities and routines.

COMMENTS	OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS	NOVEL WORDS	
It's hard to wait for something you really want. I can see why you feel frustrated. Oh! You feel sad because the hat reminds you of the one you have at home, and that reminds you of how much you miss your mom! First, I'm going to take a deep breath. Then watch how I blow the bubbles. This makes me feel calm.	You look very mad right now, what happened? Shall we jump up and down or cuddle up in the book corner?	Glad Sad Mad Scared	Loved Safe Frustrated Worried

PARTNER WITH FAMILIES

Families have the greatest impact on their child's emotional well-being and development. Build solid, trusting, and reciprocal relationships with families. Talk with families to learn more about their child and work together to support their child's learning. Be sure to validate each family's perspective, though it may be different from your own, and be open to trying new ideas.

- Invite families to share how they talk about and express their emotions.
- Ask families to share labels for emotions in the child's home language, then use those familiar words with children.
- Find out what works well with their toddler to reduce stress, such as a favorite object, music, singing, moving.
- Share examples of deep-breathing strategies: blow bubbles, pretend to smell a flower and blow out a candle.



TEACHING EMOTIONAL LITERACY – EDITION 3



Preschoolers
 are ready
 for more complex
language about emotions
 and more advanced
 regulation strategies.
 Modeling and teaching
 these skills helps them
 manage their behavior
 and engage in
 learning.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Identify Children's Emotions

Preschoolers need exposure to *feeling* words that go beyond the basics of *happy, sad, mad*. Learning words for more complex and subtle feelings helps children better understand emotions and increases their awareness of self and others.

Practice Empathy

Acknowledging and respecting all emotions communicates to children that feelings are not good or bad. Sometimes, positive acknowledgment is all a child needs to feel calm again. Validate what a child is experiencing by encouraging preschoolers to articulate their feelings and listen attentively.

Teach Regulation Strategies

Preschoolers are ready to learn more complex strategies and use them with more independence. Providing subtle reminders and using props will increase their ability to self-regulate.

Teaching Practices

- ✓ Stay close and respond quickly to children's emotional states.
- ✓ Label a wide variety of emotions in children, yourself, others, and in books.
- Encourage children to describe what they are feeling and what others might be feeling.
- ✓ Identify your own emotions using a variety of complex emotion words.

Teaching Practices

- ✓ Acknowledge and identify how a child seems to be feeling as a first response to behavior.
- ✓ Tell stories of your own experiences and feelings that relate to the children's experiences.
- ✓ Ask open-ended questions to help children express their feelings more clearly.
- ✓ Role play familiar scenarios with children or puppets to help them think about why they and others might have certain feelings about the scenarios.

Teaching Practices

- ✓ Model and practice coping strategies: deep breaths, count to 10, draw a picture, find a safe and quiet space, go for a jog outside, blow bubbles.
- ✓ When you notice strong emotions, encourage the child to choose a strategy.
- ✓ With children or puppets, role play scenarios and safe ways to express and act on emotions.
- ✓ Use visuals and props to support self-regulation strategies.

Putting these strategies into practice helps preschoolers learn to:

- Identify and describe more subtle and complex emotions.
- Express feelings in ways that are appropriate to a
- situation
- Use a variety of coping strategies to relax and



TRY IT OUT

Try out these activities and materials to teach preschoolers about emotions and self-regulation.



BOOKS

Reading books aloud about emotions is a great way to help children learn to understand,

express, and manage a variety of more complex feelings.

When I Am/Cuando Estoy

By Gladys Rosa-Mendoza and Dana Regan

This bilingual English and Spanish book describes emotions and suggests ways to deal with some of the feelings. Invite children to identify the feelings. Focus on unfamiliar vocabulary for more complex emotions (e.g., worried, frightened, lonely). Encourage children to share examples of when they may have experienced these feelings.

EMOTIONAL LITERACY VISUALS

Use these visual supports to teach preschoolers new emotional vocabulary. Help them discriminate between facial expressions, recognize emotions, identify their own emotions, and communicate their feelings. To make them, use your own photos or drawings, or download free *Emotions* pictures from the Head Start Center for Inclusion (HSCI) website* and print or paste them on cardstock or thick paper.

Emotion Faces and Dice

To make your own emotion dice, print a dice template on cardstock or use a small square package with all sides taped shut, and put one emotion picture on each side. Have children take turns rolling the dice and labeling or acting out the emotions. See if they can make up their own emotion game using the dice.

Emotion Cards

Make your own emotion cards with pictures of diverse people showing different emotions. Play games, such as those suggested below, so preschoolers can practice recognizing and discussing different emotions.

- Invite children to draw an emotion card, label the feeling, and talk about a time when they experienced that feeling.
- Have children pair up and role play the emotion on their card. One child acts out the feeling while the other child acts how they might respond to their partner's emotion.
- Use emotion cards to create and play children's favorite games: bingo, memory, charades.
- Ask children how their families express the emotions in the pictures.

How I Feel Chart

Make a feelings chart with faces showing a range of emotions and post it in your arrival area. Invite children to check in each morning by choosing the face picture that best illustrates the way they are feeling. Encourage them to talk more about how they are feeling. Provide opportunities for children to check back in throughout the day. Talk about how feelings may change many times in one day.





CALM DOWN KIT

A calm down kit includes visuals and props to help children manage their emotions. First teach preschoolers how to use the kit by modeling and practicing the strategies when they are calm. Then when feeling overwhelmed by an emotion, they can pick a prop from the kit and try calming down on their own. Eventually, encourage them to access the kit independently.

- Dragon Brain and Smell the Flower, Blow Out the Candle. Read the HSCI* Dragon Brain social story to teach deep breathing. To teach the same idea, encourage children to take a deep breath in while holding a flower prop, then breath out holding a candle prop. Look at the HSCI* Emotion Regulation flower and candle picture for a visual reminder.
- HSCI* Emotion Regulation pictures: Use the visuals and strategies to remind preschoolers of the different ways they can calm themselves.
- Bubbles: Ask children to blow bubbles by taking deep breaths and a slowly exhaling.
- Stress Balls: Teach children to recognize when they feel fidgety, or overstimulated. Encourage them to use a stress ball as needed, squeezing and releasing energy so they can stay engaged.
- Notebook and Markers: Coloring or making notes can help some children stay calm and engaged.

YOGA CARDS

Practicing yoga offers an opportunity for children to slow down, connect with their bodies, and reflect on their feelings. Use a deck of yoga cards or make your own with photographs to teach poses and practice deep breathing, balance, relaxation, stretching, and twisting.



Begin with explaining to children how a pose can help them become stronger, feel more relaxed, and control their body and emotions better. Remind children that everyone's body works differently. Give permission to modify the poses so they feel safe and comfortable. After each pose, invite children to talk about how they felt during the pose.

MIRROR

Invite children to look in a mirror and to make different feeling faces. Children can choose a face on their own or they can select an emotion card and match the face on the card. Discuss the faces they make in the mirror and what these show. Children can also use the mirror to draw or paint their own feeling face.

*HSCI visual supports and teacher tools: http://headstartinclusion.org/teacher-tools#visual





TALK ABOUT IT

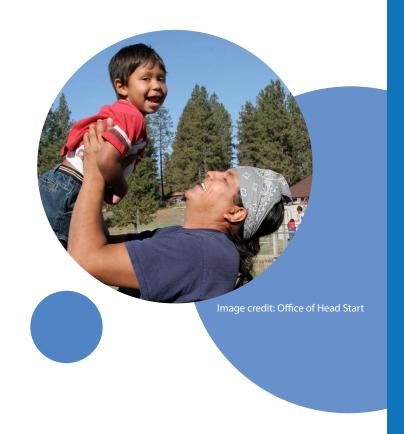
Meaningful back-and-forth conversations with trusted adults help children better understand and cope with their feelings and emotions. Make comments, ask openended questions, and use novel words as you talk about feelings and emotions with preschoolers throughout the day.

COMMENTS	OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS	NOVEL WORDS	
Sometimes I feel embarrassed too when I make a mistake. I see you are counting to 10 and trying a new strategy to calm down! I noticed that when you walked away your friend looked disappointed. Let's go check on her.	Can you tell me why you look so confused? How did that make you feel? What strategy should we try first?	Proud Peaceful Joyful Pleased Surprised Enthusiastic Relaxed Friendly Shy	Bored Disappointed Uncomfortable Stressed Frightened Lonely Embarrassed Anxious Confused

PARTNER WITH FAMILIES

Families have the greatest impact on their child's emotional well-being and development. Build solid, trusting, and reciprocal relationships with families. Talk with families to learn more about their child and work together to support their child's learning. Be sure to validate each family's perspective, though it may be different from your own, and be open to trying new ideas.

- Invite families to share how they talk about and express their emotions.
- Ask families to share labels for emotions in the child's home language then use those familiar words with children.
- Share ways that families can help children lower stress: cuddling, deep breathing exercises, yoga, dance, singing, music.
- Ask families how they lower stress at home. Practice some of these strategies with the children.



IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU



BUILDING RESILIENCE

Caring for and educating young children is physically and emotionally demanding work. By taking time to learn resiliency practices and self-care, you can increase your feelings of happiness and satisfaction. These positive emotions can help you face daily stressors such as challenging behaviors with empathy, patience, and intention. The good news is that people can start learning resilience at any time; it develops with practice.

MOVE YOUR TELESCOPE!



Focusing on positives is a way to cope with discouraging feelings and build resilience. When things don't go quite the way we planned, we tend to focus on the negative. It's like looking through a telescope that's stuck.

- Move your telescope around. What else do you see?
- Look for the positives in the situation—good things that are happening, or opportunities you hadn't thought about before.
- Make a note of how a new perspective made you feel. Refer to this the next time you feel stuck focusing on the negative.

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Set a personal goal or note the strategies you

are excited to try.	
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HOW DID IT WORK?

Jot down what worked well and how you felt about trying it. Is there something you'd like to do differently next time? Note that too!