

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)

Social and Emotional Learning: Strategies for Parents

There are many ways parents can encourage emotionally intelligent behavior in their children. Check out this guide to resources for learning more about character development.

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Whether it's called "social and emotional learning" or "emotional intelligence," most people understand it's critical to pay attention to the development of the whole young person, including character education. Parents have a dual role to play in raising a self-aware, respectful child who knows how to manage his or her emotions, make responsible decisions, and resolve conflicts non-violently. At home, you should strive to create an environment of trust, respect, and support. Remember that modeling "emotionally intelligent" behavior at home is the first step in nurturing emotionally intelligent children. At school, you can work with other members of your school community to create a climate that

supports social and emotional learning - in and out of the classroom.

Here are some specific steps you can take to nurture an emotionally intelligent child, and additional resources you can use to learn more about social and emotional learning.

Strategies At Home

Be a good listener. [Joshua Freedman](#), Chief Operating Officer at [Six Seconds](#), a nonprofit organization supporting emotional intelligence in families, schools, corporations, and communities, describes listening as a "core competency skill." Unfortunately, it's not always practiced by parents or children. For a list of strategies and activities for building listening skills, [read Freedman's article on the subject](#), one of the many useful parenting resources at [KidSource Online](#).

Model the behavior you seek. Whether it's apologizing when you're in the wrong or treating others with respect and kindness, children learn a great deal about relationships from observing the behavior of their parents. In the words of Maurice Elias, co-author of two books on emotionally intelligent parenting, parents should remember the "24K Golden Rule: We should always think about the impact of our actions on kids, and be as particular in what we do with our kids as we would want others to be with our kids." Check out an Edutopia interview with Elias about [the role of social and emotional learning at home](#), as well as a video of him talking about [why SEL should be an integral part of academic life](#). Elias is also a [regular blogger for Edutopia on the topic of social and emotional learning](#).

Nurture your child's self-esteem. A child with a good sense of self is happier, more well-adjusted, and does better in school. Strategies for fostering self-esteem include giving your child responsibilities, allowing her to make age-appropriate choices, and showing your appreciation for a job well done.

Respect differences. Every child has his or her own unique talents and abilities. Whether in academics, athletics, or interpersonal relationships, resist the urge to compare your child to friends or siblings. Instead, honor your child's accomplishments and provide support and encouragement for the inevitable challenges he faces.

Take advantage of support services. Seek the advice and support of school counselors or other social services during times of family crisis, such as a divorce or the death of a close friend or family member. Remember that no matter how close you are to your child, she may be more comfortable discussing a troubling family situation with another trusted adult.