

Practical Suggestions for the Classroom Teacher or Parent: Facilitating Emotional Development

(Adapted from Dr. Barbara Fatum, 2013: <http://www.6seconds.org>)

As a program manager, there are practical suggestions you can give to parents and staff members to help children develop emotional skills. These suggestions are also good for examining your own emotional growth and development. Here are several suggestions from school psychologist Barbara Fatum:

1. **Observe your classroom and home environment**

Taking notes can help you determine a child's learning style, approach to learning, and ability to manage their emotions and relationships.

2. **Create stories that will become a part of the fabric of your classroom and home.**

Creating family stories about family members, special family experiences, and the family's culture build a sense of "we" and emotional intelligence. Classroom stories can be written that highlight special events, ways the children care for one another in the classroom, and how all members of the classroom work together as part of one community. This fosters a sense of interdependence.

3. **Give choice, encourage connection**

Classrooms and homes that allow children to make age-appropriate choices, within boundaries that allow feelings of safety, can encourage self-efficacy and independence.

4. **Emphasize emotional meaning and model the importance of emotions**

When reading stories discuss the character's emotions and label your own emotions (for example: "I feel sad because I was ill and had to stay in bed all weekend").

5. **Create an active and cooperative atmosphere**

Engage children in fun, active, and cooperative games and activities. Allow peers to help one another create art, a craft, build a project.

6. **Make time each day for journaling and reflecting**

Model for staff and families how reflective journaling and thinking about the day can help them get in touch with feelings and process difficult emotions.

7. **Reframe mistakes**

Demonstrate how mistakes can be teachable moments and times of great learning.

8. Celebrate feelings

Focus on the positives and celebrate accomplishments by staff, families and children. Point these out during program events, in newsletters, and in the family corner of your program.

9. Take children's aspirations seriously

Children and youth have goals and plans that should be taken seriously and nurtured by staff and families. Children who learn to set goals and work toward them build executive function which is important for positive life outcomes.

10. Consciously model and teach emotional intelligence skills

Be conscious of your role as a leader and manager and how you model positive emotional expression and facilitate emotional intelligence in your interactions with children, staff and families.