



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.

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What is Emotional Intelligence?

Emotional intelligence includes three abilities:

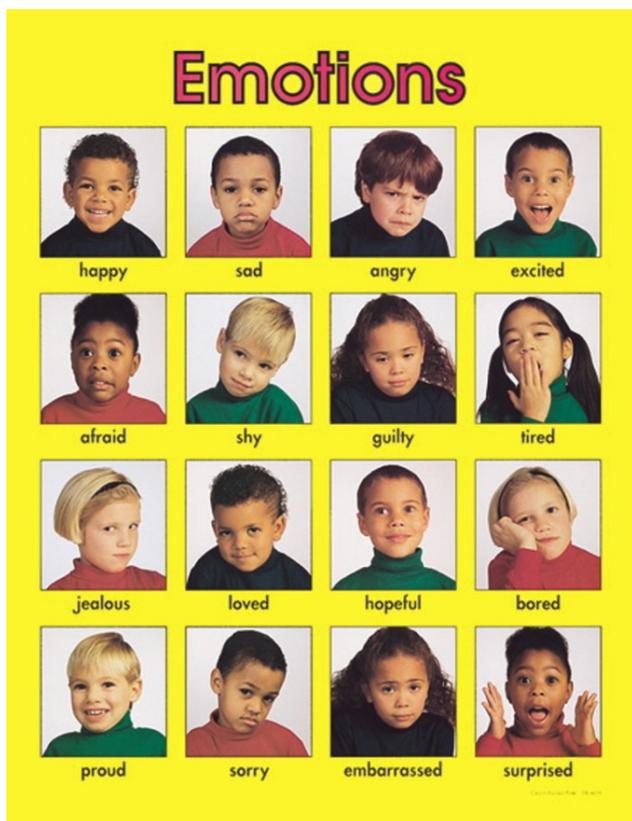
1. to label and talk about your own and others' emotions;
2. to show emotions in appropriate ways; and
3. to adjust to emotions in a healthy manner.

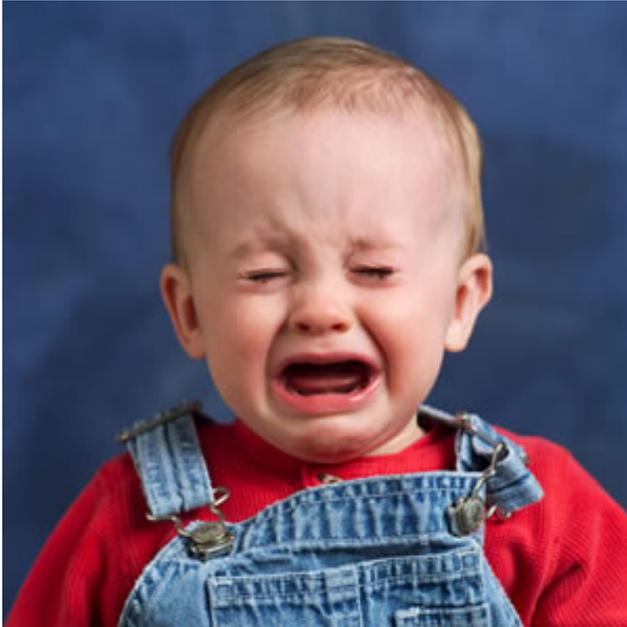
Children with the ability to calm themselves down rarely overreact with temper tantrums or outbursts.

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.

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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>

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