

How can I support my child's Emotional Literacy

Following on from last week's article introducing our ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistants) programme, here is some further information as to how we as parents/carers can support our child's emotional literacy.

Emotional literacy is the ability to understand, express and cope with emotions. It is a skill that children will develop as they grow, but can also be nurtured throughout childhood. There are lots of ways to help your child in this area.

Label their emotions for them

Accept their emotion and label it for them. For example, you could say 'You seem so excited' or 'You are crying, you must be sad'.

When children learn the words for their emotions, they can tell you what they are going through. This means they are less likely to use their behaviour to show you how they are feeling.

Use games to explore emotions

Try playing games to help your child understand different types of emotions:

- If your child is still a baby, playing 'feelings peekaboo'. Every time you show your face, use a different expression and say the word out loud*
- If your child is a little older, explore expressions with crafts or cooking. Using paper plates to create masks or puppets, or make faces with playdough or homemade pizza*
- Play 'Simon says' to get your child to show you what they understand about different emotions. You could say 'Simon says look worried' or 'Simon says show me how you would feel if you won a game'*
- Play 'Feelings Charades'. Act out different emotions. Or get older children to act out an event that would make them feel that emotion.*
- Make a playlist and talk about how music makes you feel.*

Help them express themselves

As your child grows, encourage them to express their emotions in a positive way. Try asking questions like 'How can you let me know you are angry without hitting?' or 'Can you think of a different way to let me know you are frustrated?'

For older children, talk to them about how to handle emotions. Help them see why they are feeling a certain way.

Give them tools for managing emotions

Teach your child ways they can cope with more difficult emotions. For example:

- *Create a calm down box to help your child feel safe*
- *Describe an object to calm anxious thoughts*
- *Activities to help them practise mindfulness*
- *Make a glitter bottle for a calming experience*
- *Draw a worry tree of offload concerns*

Use books and TV to help your child understand others

Use them as starting points for discussions about different emotions. Here are some resources to try

- **Everybody Feels.** An introduction for toddlers to emotion words and facial expressions.
- **How Do You Feel?** Connecting words, facial expressions and real-world examples.
- **The Colour Monster.** Links emotions to colours and explores how confusing they can feel
- **Tiger Days.** Connects emotions to animals and different behaviours.
- **In My Heart.** Uses descriptive languages to explain how emotions can make us feel.
- **The Big Bright Feelings series.** Each book covers a different emotion and the impact it can have.
- **All About Feelings.** Explores facts about our own emotions and those of others.
- Let your child watch **Storybots.** Or if your child is a little older, watch the Pixar film **Inside Out.**

Ask questions to teach empathy

When reading, watching or playing, ask questions about how the character might feel. You can also do this when talking about school and friends. This can help your child empathise with others. Questions could include:

- *How do you think they feel?*
- *How would you feel if that happened to you?*
- *How do you think your friends felt when that happened?*

Show empathy in your own actions?

Be with you child when they have difficult emotions. Find ways to show that you want to understand. This could include:

- *Offering eye contact*
- *Giving them a hug (ask consent first i.e. may I give you a hug?)*
- *Saying soothing words*

Stay calm and practise self-care

Show you child how you cope with more difficult emotions, and they will learn from you. Let them know what you are doing as you are doing it. For example, you could say 'I am feeling tired today so I am going to go for a walk outside'.

Taking steps each and every day will go towards building that emotional literacy for your child and building that emotional resilience to cope with the ever increasing demands on us all.

Please look after yourselves this half term and try to embrace LEPS's '5 to Thrive' wellbeing tips everyday and:

1. *Connect*
2. *Learn*
3. *Be Active*
4. *Notice things*
5. *Be Grateful and show Gratitude.*



working together to keep our children safe and happy.