

Pyramid Model

Strategy of the Month

EMOTIONAL LITERACY

What is emotional literacy?

Emotional literacy is a big word that means the ability to identify, understand, and respond to emotions in oneself and others in a healthy manner.

Talking with children about emotions and teaching them the words to label their emotions helps to support their “emotional literacy.” Children will begin to label their own emotions, express it with words, and read it on others’ faces. This helps them become empathetic and gives them positive strategies for dealing with how they feel.

How does your child use this strategy?

Our classrooms talk with children about emotions and teach them the words to label how they are feeling. We go beyond happy and sad and include emotions such as frustrated, jealous, angry, and proud. Photographs and drawings that depict these emotions are all around the classroom for children to see and talk about. Teachers talk with children about how they are feeling, model their own feelings, help them recognize the emotion in themselves and other people, and give them healthy strategies for how to deal with what they are feeling. Direct instruction using storybooks and role playing help children learn and expand their emotional vocabulary.

How does it help support their social-emotional development?

Research tells us that children with a strong foundation in emotional literacy tolerate frustration better, get into fewer fights, and engage in less self-destructive behavior than children who do not have a strong foundation. These children are healthier, less lonely, less impulsive, more focused, and they have greater academic achievement.

How can you try this at home?

Making feeling words part of your daily conversation with your child is the best way to support their emotional literacy. Labeling emotions in yourself, your child, in books, in media, and in others helps children learn how to recognize what these feelings look like and act like. Discussing healthy ways to cope with emotions also helps them learn positive strategies for communicating how they feel and how to handle this feeling. Modeling appropriate communication and follow through of emotions is the most powerful tool families can use to support their child’s emotional literacy. Children learn best by watching us, and will do what we do more often than what we tell them to do.

*Ask your child’s teacher more about **emotional literacy** and how you can use this strategy with your own child!*

For more information visit www.csefel.vanderbilt.edu