

Parenting: Social and Emotional Learning

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Social and emotional learning involves the way in which children get and use knowledge, attitudes, and skills to effectively:

- learn to manage their own emotions
- develop empathy for others
- set and achieve positive goals
- establish positive relationships with other people and,
- make responsible decisions.

Children who successfully learn to manage their emotional health are successfully prepared to enter school and engage with others responsibly. Further good social and emotional health are indicators that children will less likely participate in risky behaviors like drug use, violence, bullying, or dropping out of school.

PARENTING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH SKILLS

All parents dream of raising children who are socially and emotionally responsible. But how can families do that? Author and teacher Stephen Covey uses a powerful metaphor called the “Emotional Bank Account” to demonstrate how a person can promote positive interactions with others. Here is how the emotional bank account works. Each one of us has an emotional bank account with

everyone with whom we interact closely. We have one with our spouse, our children, with friends and co-workers, and they have one with us. When we have a large balance in our emotional bank account with others, relationships are strong and trust is high. When the balance is low or our account is overdrawn, relationships and trust suffer.

We make withdrawals from our account with others when we are jealous, angry, disappointed or disloyal. We make deposits when we keep our commitments, when we exceed expectations, when we meet needs and when we do little things that show our love and commitment.

Parents may help their children to develop good social and emotional skills by making deposits into their children’s emotional bank accounts.

SIX WAYS TO MAKE DEPOSITS

1. ***Understand the child.*** Each child has his or her own preferences about what kinds of activities and actions make deposits into their emotional bank account. Knowing what deposits may motivate your child is important. Take time to listen and listen before you respond to your child.
2. ***Making and keeping commitments.*** One of the best ways to make deposits in your child’s emotional account is to make and keep promises. If you tell



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your child you will attend their event do it. If you don't attend you make a withdrawal. Giving your word is a big deal, but only if you keep it.

- 3. Clarify expectations.** One of the biggest challenges as a parent is to make sure that your expectations of your children are clear to them. For instance, telling your child to clean their room is not sufficient to create the understanding of the task. Be specific. Walk through your child's room with them and tell them the tasks you would like to have completed like, "When you clean your room you should, make your bed, pick up all dirty clothes, clear and clean your dresser, and vacuum the carpet like this. If your child clearly understands what they are being asked to do you can give them specific feedback of how they completed the task of cleaning their room and praise them for their success.
- 4. Remember that little things are big things.** A smile, a warm greeting, making breakfast, going for a walk with your child are all positive small interactions that demonstrate to your child that you care about them. Take time for the small stuff.
- 5. Show personal integrity.** Your emotional bank account with your children is all about trust. Showing personal integrity in every relationship is important. For example, don't talk about other people behind their back

with your children. The message it sends them is that when they are not there, you will likely talk about them in the same way. Integrity is the foundations for any good relationship and you will make big emotional bank account deposits when your children see your personal integrity at work.

- 6. Apologize sincerely.** Withdrawals from your kid's emotional bank accounts are inevitable. There will be times when you have to make decisions or you respond in ways that violate their trust. If you make a withdrawal, take your child aside and apologize. Never make excuses, just let them know that your relationship is important to you. It may not entirely erase the withdrawal, but it will make a quick deposit.

Your children value your relationship with them above most others. Making deposits and minimizing withdrawals from their emotional bank accounts by you will help that relationship improve steadily.

APEC IS HERE TO HELP

APEC provides free training, information, and consultation to families. Visit our training calendar for more information about learning opportunities at www.alabamaparentcenter.com or call our center.

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