



Serva Fidem

Emotional Literacy – A brief guide

A child who is emotionally literate.....

- Is aware of and can usually name or explain the feelings they are experiencing
- Can usually understand what causes the feeling
- Knows the best way to behave to deal with the feeling
- Can take other people's feelings into account in any situation

Why is emotional literacy so important?

Anyone who has tried to think clearly when they are really angry will understand the power emotions can have over us. Emotions are an unavoidable part of being human and they need not be a problem if we have tools to allow them to leave nearly as easily as they arrive. Healthy emotions "flow" backwards and forwards and don't get stuck. Emotions are very real and it's unhealthy to pretend they don't exist or affect our children. It's how children learn to manage these inevitable feelings that have a huge impact on their lives.

Children who process their feelings well.....

- Build and maintain healthy relationships
- Communicate positively and not defensively
- Deal with challenges in a more positive and less anxious way
- Have less stress
- Get more out of life

If children cannot process their feelings successfully they become "stuck" and every time they are in a similar situation they will respond by experiencing the same emotion. That situation will always be a trigger for that emotion.

What are the signs of poor emotional literacy?

When a child hasn't learnt how to manage their emotions well they.....

- Cannot describe how they are feeling
- Rarely talk about their emotions
- Don't ask for and don't expect help when they are feeling bad
- Express their emotions in unhelpful ways – for example, hitting, shouting or sulking
- Don't consciously recognise that emotions have got the better of them

Talking about feelings is not just for girls – boys are expected to be "strong" and this often means they get the message that the only acceptable emotion is to show anger. This can leave boys feeling very emotionally "stuck".

My aim is to help the boys manage their feelings in a healthy way by:

- Acknowledging their feelings
- Talking about feelings
- Helping them understand they have a choice when they feel a particular emotion
- Help them to understand what other people might be feeling (develop empathy)

Extract from 'How are you Feeling Today' by Molly Potter

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