

Emotional Intelligence and Coping Skills Across Childhood

Audience: Parents of Early Years, Primary, and Secondary

Facilitator: Sarin Sony, School Counsellor



Welcome

Why We're Here

- Emotional Intelligence (EI) is the foundation for healthy relationships, learning, and resilience.
- Research shows EI predicts long-term success more strongly than IQ (Goleman, 1995).
- Today we'll explore how EI develops, why it matters, and how to nurture it at home.



Workshop Overview

Today's Goals

1

Understand what emotional intelligence (EI) means.

2

Learn how EI and coping skills develop through childhood.

3

Recognize common emotional challenges at each stage.

4

Discover practical, age-appropriate tools for parents.



Core Idea: EI isn't fixed — it grows through modeling, connection, and practice.



What is Emotional Intelligence?

Definition:

EI is the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's emotions — and respond effectively to others' emotions.

Five Core Skills (Goleman, 1998):

1. Self-awareness
2. Self-regulation
3. Motivation
4. Empathy
5. Social skills

Why EI Matters

Children with strong EI have better mental health, academic performance, and social adjustment.

Emotional regulation predicts long-term resilience and well-being.

EI can be taught through everyday interactions, not special lessons.

Key Thought: Children learn *how to feel* by watching how adults *handle feelings*.

The Science of Emotional Development



Emotional Brain

The emotional brain (amygdala) matures early.



Logical Brain

The logical, regulatory brain (prefrontal cortex) develops into the mid-20s.



Co-Regulation

This explains why children — and even teens — need co-regulation from adults.



Co-Regulation Before Self-Regulation: Children learn calm by *borrowing* yours first.



The Power of Co-Regulation

- **Definition:** Co-regulation is when a caring adult helps a child manage their emotions by modeling calm, supportive responses.
- **Practical Strategies for Parents & Teachers:**
 - **Stay calm:** Your calm response helps the child feel safe.
 - **Acknowledge feelings:** “I see you’re upset, and that’s okay.”
 - **Guide coping:** Offer simple strategies: deep breaths, counting, or grounding activities.
 - **Model regulation:** Demonstrate managing your own emotions in real situations.
- **Tip:** Co-regulation works best when consistent — repeated supportive interactions build emotional resilience.

Research Insights

Age 5 to Age 10

Children who can label emotions at age 5 show fewer behavior issues and stronger friendships at age 10 (Denham et al., 2012).

Emotion Coaching

Emotion coaching from parents lowers stress hormones and strengthens empathy (Gottman, 1997).

Reflection: When your child is upset, what emotion do *you* feel first — frustration, worry, or helplessness?



Emotional Intelligence Across Ages

Overview

Emotional intelligence unfolds differently across childhood. Each stage brings its own strengths and challenges — and each requires a different kind of parental support.

An illustration of a parent and a young child in a garden. The parent, a woman with dark hair in a bun, is smiling and holding the child. The child, a young girl with curly hair, is looking up at the parent with an open mouth, as if speaking or crying. They are surrounded by large, stylized flowers in shades of green, yellow, and white, and some wheat stalks.

Early Years (Ages 3–6)

Milestones:

- Identify and name basic emotions (happy, sad, angry, scared).
- Begin showing empathy and imitate adult emotional responses.

Challenges:

- Tantrums, fear of separation, frustration, sharing difficulties.

Parent Tips:

- Label emotions out loud ("You're sad because your toy broke").
- Stay calm, model breathing.
- Validate before correcting ("It's okay to be sad, let's fix it together").

Primary Years (Ages 7–11)

Milestones:

- Expanding emotional vocabulary.
- Start linking thoughts, feelings, and actions.
- Begin understanding different perspectives.

Challenges:

- Peer conflict, perfectionism, frustration with failure.

Parent Tips:

- Encourage problem-solving ("What could you do next?").
- Praise effort over outcome.
- Normalize mistakes as learning moments.

Secondary Years (Ages 12–18)

Milestones:

- Complex emotions, identity exploration, empathy deepens.
- Seek autonomy but still need emotional anchors.

Challenges:

- Stress, self-image, peer pressure, mood swings.

Parent Tips:

- Keep communication open.
- Normalize stress ("Everyone feels overwhelmed sometimes").
- Encourage coping tools — journaling, exercise, setting digital limits.



Key Research on Adolescence



Emotional Intensity

Emotional intensity increases ~40% in adolescence
(Steinberg, 2014).



Brain Development

The reward system is more active than the control system
— explaining impulsivity.

Takeaway: Patience, modeling, and consistency matter more than perfection.

Practical Tools

Overview

Here are 5 research-based strategies to nurture EI and coping at home:

01

Emotion Coaching

02

Calm-Down Toolbox

03

Family Check-Ins

04

Modeling Emotional Honesty

05

The Coping Equation

1 Emotion Coaching (Gottman, 1997)

Four Steps:



Notice emotions early.



Label the emotion.



Validate it.



Guide problem-solving.

📄 **Example:** Child says, "I hate school." »→ "It sounds like today was tough. Want to tell me what happened?"



2 Calm-Down Toolbox

Create a personal kit to help your child self-soothe:



Stress ball, soft toy, headphones, coloring items, photos.



Let your child choose what goes inside.



Use it when emotions feel "too big."

Family Check-Ins

Hold a short family meeting once a week:

One High

(something good)

One Low

(something tough)

One Goal

(something to work on)

This builds empathy, emotional vocabulary, and trust.



4 Model Emotional Honesty

Children copy what we *do*, not what we *say*.

Try narrating your own regulation:

"I'm feeling stressed, so I'll take a deep breath before I continue."

Modeling emotional awareness teaches them that feelings are normal and manageable.

5 The Coping Equation

Teach this simple formula:

$$\text{Feeling} + \text{Strategy} = \text{Regulated Self}$$

❏ **Example:** "I feel angry + I listen to music = I feel calmer."

Helps children link emotions with healthy actions.



When Friends Don't Want to Play

Supporting Your Child Through Social Exclusion

Key Points:

- **Validate Feelings:** “It sounds like you’re sad that your friend didn’t want to play.”
- **Label the Emotion:** Helps your child understand what they are feeling — “You feel left out and disappointed.”
- **Normalize the Experience:** Everyone faces rejection sometimes; it’s part of learning resilience.
- **Problem-Solve Together:** Brainstorm alternative solutions: invite another friend, play solo, or practice asking peers to join.
- **Build Resilience:** Celebrate small successes and bravery in social situations.

Age-Specific Tips:

- **EY:** Use stories or role-play to practice sharing and inviting others.
- **Primary:** Encourage peer negotiation and group problem-solving.
- **Secondary:** Discuss perspective-taking and alternative social groups.

Understanding Bullying

Why Kids May Stay Silent

Key Points:

- **Fear of Retaliation:** Worry bully might escalate if they tell.
- **Fear of Social Consequences:** Afraid of being labeled a tattletale.
- **Fear of Adults Overreacting:** Concern adults will punish excessively.
- **Internalizing Blame:** Sometimes children think the bullying is their fault.

Counsellor Insight:

“Many students don’t tell anyone for weeks because they fear making things worse. Parents can help by creating a safe, judgment-free space.”



Guiding Your Child Through Bullying

Steps:

1. **Listen and Validate:** “It’s understandable you feel scared and angry.”
2. **Empower Choices:** Offer options — report together, self-advocate, or use coping strategies.
3. **Collaborate With School Calmly:** Ask for supportive interventions, not just punishment.
4. **Practice Coping Skills:** Role-play assertive responses, teach calming techniques.
5. **Monitor Recovery:** Check in regularly to reinforce safety and self-worth.

Parent Strategies Without Escalation

Age-Specific Tips:

- EY: Use calm-down tools and storytelling to illustrate assertive behavior.
- Primary: Role-play scenarios, encourage verbal expression.
- Secondary: Teach journaling, peer-support strategies, and mindfulness.



Understanding the Bully

Not Excusing Behavior

Understanding the bully doesn't mean tolerating harm — it means seeing the full picture.

School's Role

Schools are learning environments. Part of their role is to teach **coexistence, empathy, and healthy social habits.**

Balanced Approach

Combine support for the targeted child **and** interventions for the child exhibiting bullying.

Behavior Often Reflects Unmet Needs

Bullies may be struggling with emotional regulation, family stress, or social challenges themselves.

Long-Term Perspective

Expelling or harshly punishing may remove immediate conflict but does not teach emotional skills or prevent future harm elsewhere.

Counsellor Insight:

“In my experience, children who bully often need guidance as much as the child being bullied needs protection. Our goal is to teach everyone how to navigate conflict, manage emotions, and co-exist safely.”



Quick Age-Specific Ideas



Early Years:

Emotion stories, "feelings thermometer," comfort corners.



Primary:

Gratitude journaling, emotion word-of-the-day.



Secondary:

Journaling, physical outlets, mindfulness apps, peer discussion.

Summary — 3 Big Takeaways

Emotional intelligence grows through modeling and practice.

Coping skills develop gradually — through connection, **not control**.

Parents' emotional literacy shapes children's future resilience.

Parent Resources

Raising Emotionally Intelligent Children — Quick Guide

Early Years

- Label emotions
- Stay calm
- Read stories about feelings

Primary

- Encourage "I feel..." language
- Praise effort
- Teach coping tools

Secondary

- Normalize stress
- Discuss emotions
- Encourage balance

Recommended Reading

- Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child — John Gottman
- The Whole-Brain Child — Daniel Siegel & Tina Bryson
- Emotional Intelligence — Daniel Goleman

Thank you!

and see you in November 😊

