

What is Emotional Literacy?

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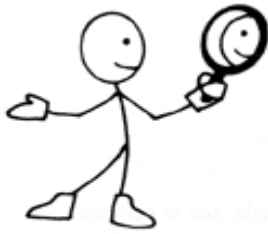
There are five main aspects of emotional intelligence to develop in order to become emotionally literate. These were identified by Daniel Goleman in his book *Emotional Intelligence*, and they relate closely to the ideas in the Nurturing Programme. They are:

- **Knowing our emotions**
Self-awareness - recognising a feeling as it happens - is the first stage. We can eventually learn to stay aware, simply noticing the emotion rather than being overwhelmed by it, however turbulent we may be feeling at the time. This takes a lot of practice!
- **Managing our emotions**
Handling our feelings builds on our awareness of them. It's helpful if we have ways of reassuring ourselves when we're feeling anxious, calming down when we're angry, soothing ourselves when we are upset, and so on. Every feeling has its value and significance - they're signposts to what's going on in our lives. The ratio of comfortable to painful feelings determines our emotional well-being.
- **Motivating ourselves**
Harnessing our emotions to help us identify our goals and reach them helps us to achieve our aims. If we are kindly in charge of our emotions, rather than being overwhelmed by them, we can also take charge of our actions. We can guide our behaviour positively, and also resist the lure of instant gratification - in other words, we develop self-discipline.
- **Recognising emotions in others**
Empathy, the ability to be sensitively aware of what another person is feeling, is the most important 'people skill' of all, and essential for satisfying relationships. Children who are treated with empathy and respect will grow up to be empathic and respectful towards others.
- **Handling relationships**
Building on empathy, the art of relationships is based on skill in coping with emotions in others while also managing and expressing our own effectively - having good communication skills. Emotionally skilled people are great to be with because we enjoy their rapport. People who have these skills are easy to trust with our feelings, and learning these skills ourselves enhances all our relationships.

Emotional literacy and the Nurturing Programme

These five elements of emotional literacy reflect the key principles of the Nurturing Programme. Self-awareness and empathy are two of the **Four Constructs**, the building blocks of the Nurturing Programme. The Programme explores many ideas for managing our emotions; learning these skills improves our motivation and helps us to feel good about ourselves - building self-esteem, which is another of the Four Constructs. All of these have a positive effect on relationships.

The Nurturing Programme promotes emotional health in adults and in children. Everyone is born with emotional intelligence - it's a capacity wired into the brain. How this capacity develops is a person's emotional literacy, and this depends on the kind of relationships they have, initially with the adults caring for them. Emotional literacy leads to emotional health; emotional health helps us fulfil our potential in every aspect of life.



Self-awareness
and self-esteem

Self-awareness and self-esteem

The art of self-awareness is to know ourselves well - what we do and don't like, what our needs are, how we feel. If we are sensitive towards ourselves, it's easier to look after our needs. Nurturing ourselves by meeting our own needs helps to boost our self-esteem, making it easier for us to nurture others and particularly to help children develop their self-awareness and a healthy, positive self-esteem.



Appropriate
expectations

Appropriate expectations

Children grow up in different ways: physically, intellectually, socially and emotionally. We need to match our expectations to what they can actually do. They learn all the thousands of skills at different rates. What one child finds easy another child of the same age might find hard. If we expect too much or too little of them, children tend to become rebellious, frustrated and angry, or to give up in despair. It is helpful to them if we recognise each small step in their learning.



Positive discipline

Positive discipline

All children need discipline to learn what behaviour is OK and what is not. Positive discipline focuses on praise, rewarding their efforts, giving choices, negotiating and awarding responsibility. There are also fair penalties for poor behaviour. It makes life more enjoyable for adults and children, and helps to build self-esteem. Negative discipline, on the other hand, uses punishment and fear; it is stressful for everyone.



Empathy

Empathy

This is the cornerstone of the Nurturing Programme. Empathy is the ability to sense how someone else is feeling, to tune in to their emotional point of view. We don't have to agree with what the other person *thinks* - just to be sensitive to the way they *feel*, and to accept it. An empathic response to a child's inner world, to their excitement, frustrations and fears, fosters a close, trusting relationship, and helps them learn to respond sensitively towards others.