

# SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING AT HOME



# WHAT IS SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING?

“Social and emotional learning (SEL) is an integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions” (Casel, 2020<sup>1</sup>).

<sup>1</sup><https://casel.org/>

# WHY IS SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING IMPORTANT?

Decades of research studies demonstrate the following benefits of SEL:

- Sets the foundation and provides long term benefits well into adulthood.
- Improvement in students' social and emotional skills, attitudes, relationships, academic performance, and perceptions of classroom and school climate
- Decline in students' anxiety, behavior problems, and substance use
- Long-term improvements in students' skills, attitudes, prosocial behavior, and academic performance (Casel, 2020<sup>1</sup>)

Being aware of your child's social and emotional needs is just as important as their schoolwork, especially during these periods of at-home learning.

<sup>1</sup><https://casel.org/>

TRY THESE STRATEGIES AT HOME!!



# STARFISH BREATHING

- Have your child spread out fingers on one hand. This will be our Starfish hand!
- Place the index finger of their other hand onto the base of the thumb of the Starfish hand.
- Begin slowly tracing fingers starting with the thumb. As they go up the finger breathe in and as they go down their finger breathe out.

Breathing techniques help to regulate the mind and body. It also provides a brief break for children who can become overwhelmed with emotion. Reminding children to take a breath before reacting can help with emotion regulation.



CHECK OUT THIS WEBSITE TO TRY MORE DEEP BREATHING EXERCISES:  
<https://copingskillsforkids.com/deep-breathing-exercises-for-kids>

# MINDFULNESS

- Have your child look around the room they are in and identify:
  - 5 things they can see
  - 4 things they can feel
  - 3 things they can hear
  - 2 things they can smell
  - 1 thing they can taste

This mindfulness technique can be used as a grounding exercise when children need help managing big emotions. This technique can work well if your child is already upset and needs help regulating their emotions.



# JOURNAL WRITING

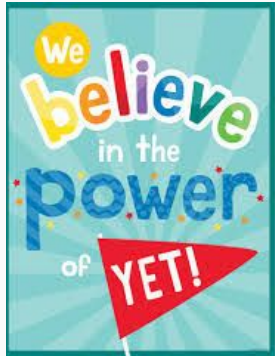
- Encourage your child to create a journal entry.
- If needed, you can also provide open-ended prompts:
  - What are some things that make you feel mad? Sad? Happy?
  - Describe a time and situation you needed help.
  - What is something you are good at? Something you want to get better at?
  - What are some goals you have in school or at home?
  - Write about a time you disagreed with a friend. How did you handle it?
  - What are some qualities that you want in a friend? How would you describe a good friend?
  - Write about a time you had a conflict. How did you feel? How did you resolve it?
  - What is something you have done this year that you are proud of?

Having your child write for 5-10 minutes can help them express feelings and thoughts. You can also encourage your child to discuss their thoughts afterwards if they feel open to sharing.



# THE POWER OF "YET"

- If your child becomes frustrated or discouraged, try reassuring and encouraging them by adding in the word "YET" (e.g. If your child says, "I don't know how to do this math problem" try adding the word "YET" to the end of their sentence).



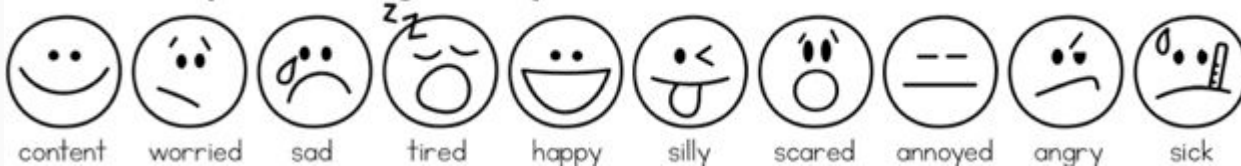
Remind your child that everything is hard before it becomes easy. Tell them a story about a time in the past where they learned something difficult and persevered. (e.g. learning to walk, learning to ride a bike, learning how to read.) They now do that skill without even thinking about it! You can also talk about a time that you struggled to learn how to do something and now they see you excel at it. Adding the word "yet" to their self-talk encourages a growth mindset and reassures your child that our brains get stronger by trying new and challenging things!



# IDENTIFYING EMOTIONS

- Children can often struggle with identifying and verbalizing emotions. Having an easy-to-use emotion chart can help children identify their feelings while associating the feeling with a facial expression.
- Ask your child to identify how they feel and then prompt them to answer why they may feel that way (e.g. “**I feel** proud **because** I got an A on my math test”).

How are you feeling today?



This strategy also builds social skills by helping children be able to recognize the emotions of others!

# UNDERSTANDING HOW OUR BRAIN WORKS

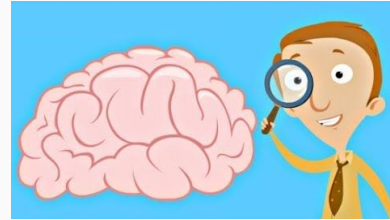
- The following two video clips are great for parents and kids to watch together! It will give you and your child some of the same language to use when you're dealing with Big Feelings. *Screen the videos first to determine age appropriateness and relevance to your child.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3bKuoH8CkFc>

This video explains "Flipping Our Lid" and why we sometimes lose control of our emotions. It's a great visual demonstration of how our brain works and is appropriate for all ages.

<https://vimeo.com/109042767>

This video talks about the brain like it has two parts: A Barking Dog and a Wise Owl. It explains why you need a Wise Owl before you can begin to solve a problem and illustrates why our "Barking Dog" brain scares the problem-solving "Wise Owl" away. (The second half of the video is geared towards a younger audience, so fast forward to that part to show if your child is younger than Grade 2 or 3.)



All of us struggle with Big Feelings from time to time. The Big Feeling might be frustration, anxiety, anger, or another uncomfortable emotion. Understanding WHY we struggle when we have Big Feelings helps children and their grown ups to understand what's going on and what to do to help.

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- The WRDSB prepared a document specifically aimed at helping students who are dealing with anxiety-related concerns. The entire document can be found here:  
[https://www.wrdsb.ca/wp-content/uploads/Anxiety-Guide\\_Parents\\_June25\\_2019.pdf](https://www.wrdsb.ca/wp-content/uploads/Anxiety-Guide_Parents_June25_2019.pdf)
- WRDSB@Home has compiled a list of mental health resources for Parents and Caregivers:  
<https://schools.wrdsb.ca/athome/mental-health-resources/mental-health-resources-for-parents-and-caregivers/>