

Top Ten Ways to Raise Emotionally Intelligent Kids

By Mark Brandenburg, adapted from <http://www.familyresource.com/parenting>

Having a high level of emotional intelligence in your children is the best way to ensure that they live a happy, successful and responsible life as an adult. Here are ten ways to help your kids attain a high degree of emotional intelligence:

1. Model emotional intelligence yourself. Your kids are watching very closely. They see how you respond to frustration, they see how resilient you are and whether you are aware of your own feelings and the feelings of others.

2. Be willing to say "no" to your kids. There is a lot of stuff out there for kids, and your kids will ask for a lot of it. Saying no will give your kids an opportunity to deal with disappointment and to learn impulse control. Your job as a parent is to allow your kids to be frustrated and to work through it. Kids who always get what they want typically are not very happy.

3. Be aware of your parental "hotspots." Know what your issues are -- what makes you come unglued, and what is this really about? Is it not being in control? Not being respected? Underneath these issues lies a fear about something. Get to know what your fear is, so you are less likely to come unglued when you are with your kids. Knowing your issues does not make them go away -- it just makes it easier to plan for and to deal with.

4. Practice and hone your skills at being non-judgmental. Start labeling feelings and avoid name-calling. Say, "He seems angry," rather than "What a jerk." When your kids are whiny or crying, saying things like, "You seem sad," will always be better than just asking them to stop. Depriving kids of the feelings they are experiencing will only make them stronger.

5. Start coaching your kids. Beyond the toddler years, you can start coaching them to help them to be more responsible. Instead of "Get your hat and gloves," you can ask, "What do you need to be ready for school?" Constantly telling your kids what to do does not help them to develop confidence and responsibility.



6. Always be willing to be part of the problem. See yourself as having something to do with every problem that comes along. Most problems in families get bigger when parents respond to them in a way that exacerbates the problem. If your child makes a mistake, remember how crucial it is for you to have a calm, reasoned response.

7. Get your kids involved in household duties at an early age. Research suggests that kids who are involved in household chores from an early age tend to be happier and more successful. Why? From an early age, they are made to feel they are an important part of the family. Kids want to belong and to feel like they are valuable.

8. Limit your kids' access to mass media mania. Young kids need to play, not spend time in front of a screen. To develop creativity and problem-solving skills, allow your kids time to use free play. Much of the mass media market can teach your kids about consumerism, sarcasm and violence. What your kids learn from you and from free play with others will provide the seeds for future emotional intelligence.

9. Talk about feelings as a family. State your emotional goals as a family. These might be no yelling, no name-calling, be respectful at all times, etc. Families that talk about their goals are more likely to be aware of them and to achieve them.

10. See your kids as wonderful. There is no greater way to create emotional intelligence in your child than to see them as wonderful and capable. One law of the universe is, "What you think about expands." If you see your child and think about them as wonderful, you will get a lot of "wonderful." If you think about your child as a problem, you will get a lot of problems.

Having a high IQ is nice, but having a high "EQ" is even better. Make these 10 ideas daily habits and you will give your kids the best chance possible to be happy, productive and responsible adults.