



Are you raising Emotionally Intelligent kids? Emotional Intelligence (EI) – a vital skill that leads to future success

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Tears started to roll from his eyes as soon James sat in car. At this time, he just wanted to hide from everybody even from his mother who loved him so much. He knew if his mother sees his tears, she would feel devastated, cry herself, and complain to his father.

His father would get angry and argue with his mom about not changing his school last year or, he would just ask him to 'toughen up' if he was busy with work.

Problem was that James had no idea how to 'toughen up' to school bullies. However, at the age of 11 he did learn how to suppress his emotions in front of others specially his parents.

This is not just a story of one boy.

Unfortunately, this is the case with majority of kids to varying degrees. Some had to face extremely harsh emotional stress on regular basis while many others just cannot cope with small distresses like getting a bad grade in a test, or fear of being excluded from friends' group.

It is not that James parents do not love him; rather they are not equipped with skills needed to help their kid. This has been the case in overwhelming majority of such situations.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is a set of skills that teach individuals to understand their emotions, be able to regulate their emotions, better understand people and their emotions to build strong relationships, be more socially aware and have empathy.

These are core skills to learn to succeed in any aspect of life like personal growth, career growth, and relationships with spouse, family, friends, colleagues and superiors and to inspire and lead teams and companies.

However, the need of learning these skills as parents (as well as teachers; more on that in some other blog) and ultimately teaching your kids is not emphasized enough.

Most of the parents do care about their kids' upbringing and spend huge amount of time, energy and money to have them learn reading, writing, and analytical skills, math, art and they are all very useful life skills but often teaching emotional skills are ignored due to lack of awareness.

On top of that, schools neither emphasize nor are equipped with teaching kids these skills (as a teacher with over a decade of experience with multiple cultures, unfortunately this is the general case). It is thus parents' responsibility to spend time, efforts and money to teach emotional intelligence to their kids to help raise strong, resilient kids.

Here are some practical steps to start with:

1. Be more mindful while being with your kids.

Lot of us do not realize that our kids are very smart in observing and replicating what they see us doing. It helps them learn to give undivided attention and improve focus.

Being mindful can be as simple as being with them in present.

Focus on what you are doing with your kid whether playing, listening, helping them with their work etc. A one-hour mindful play with your kid would fill more of your kid's love bucket than two hours of mindless presence.

2. Listen to them with intent of understanding not just with intent of replying.

Many of us are guilty of just listening to never-ending story of our child with casual drops of “hmm”, “ok”, “interesting”, “wow” in between while doing our chores or worst being on our phone.

Our kids can see through us of how connected we are with them.

Slowly and gradually, they stop discussing their day or things of their interest with us and “suddenly” we feel disconnected with our pre-teens or teens.

Nothing was sudden; we just did not pay attention.

3. Observe our own emotions and learn to regulate them on our own.

Our kids will slowly start picking on it with less from talking and elaborations but more from practical manifestation in our lives.

Warning: This is quite difficult part especially if we are ourselves not raised as emotionally intelligent beings, but hey bravo for starting.

4. Teach your kids emotional vocabulary.

If they know the name of their feelings, they are better equipped to observe them and later with practice manage them.

Sometimes, even with the grownups, many of us have short emotional vocabulary that we can only identify few emotions.

Too many of us find it difficult to distinguish between basic emotions like angry, irritated and frustrated.

Providing them with an emotional vocabulary helps them understand and express their feelings more clearly.

5. Tell them to acknowledge their emotions.

Reiterate repeatedly that emotions are okay to have (any emotion really) but teach them to regulate.

Use phrases like “it is normal to feel upset when something unfair happens” or “it is okay to be scared of trying something new”.

Acknowledging emotions reassures them that emotions are not wrong or to hide but rather natural responses to their experiences.

Nobody is perfect and it is good to self-reflect and share. Normalize apologizing to your kids if you had emotional outburst. Share your emotional response with them and tell them how you should have managed in better way.

Raising emotionally intelligent kids is not that easy, but so is every aspect of parenting.

Most of us are like James parents that we care about our kids but feel ill equipped or sometimes clueless about what to do.

If you are up for challenge and willing to put some efforts for your kids' future, I can guarantee you the journey is worth taking.

Cherry on top is that it would make you as an individual more mindful and emotionally intelligent person.