POSITIVE PARENTING
for peace at home and success in school

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE:
What is emotional intelligence and how can we teach it to our children?

"The key to successful parenting is not found in complex theories, elaborate family rules, or convoluted formulas for behavior. It is based on your deepest feelings of love and affection for your child, and is demonstrated simply through empathy and understanding." (John Gottman, 1997).

What is emotional intelligence? The ability to:

- Understand my own emotions
- Manage my own emotions
- Understand others' emotions
- Take perspective on others' emotions

Why is emotional intelligence important?

- Increases child's self esteem
- Increases child's cooperation
- Increases communication between parent and child
- Decreases conflict
- Impacts all the child's future relationships including those outside of the family

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What can parents DO?   Start feeling!!!

♥ Until you are able to **recognize, understand and manage your own emotions** you will not be able to teach your child to be emotionally intelligent.

♥ We need to **start with ourselves** but sometimes this can be difficult depending upon how our parents raised us. If you were raised in a home where being sad was not acceptable, then it will take some time and work to begin to understand and accept this emotion in yourself. And after that you may be able to accept those feelings in your child.

♥ **Do not allow YOUR emotions to dominate** your child's emotional situations.

♥ Parents who **model emotionally intelligent behavior** tend to have children who are more emotionally intelligent.

5 Steps to become an "Emotion Coach:"

1. **Recognize and accept your child's emotions.** Notice when your child is having an emotion. If you are having trouble understanding your child's emotions, look at his/her behavior. Observing your child's behavior can help you learn more about what your child might be feeling.

2. Begin to **view your child's expression of emotion as an opportunity to learn more about his/her world.**

3. **Listen and validate your child's emotions.** Do not try to fix or change how your child is feeling; sometimes the opportunity for the child to express an emotion uninterrupted impacts the child positively.

4. **Help your child label his/her emotions.** This will tell the child his/her feelings are valid and containing it with a name may help the feeling seem less scary to the child.

5. Work with your child to **brainstorm solutions**. Assist your child in thinking of possible solutions for coping with how they might be feeling.

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Continue to be firm and friendly:

Parents who create an environment with rules and boundaries in which children feel accepted, tend to have more success with emotion coaching.

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What are some barriers to emotion coaching?
- **Parents' own feelings**—parents do not want to see their children be sad or upset
- **Parents do not believe young children can have "real" emotions.** Children have very real feelings and can recognize when others are having emotions. Children can be emotion coached as early as ages 2 and 3.
- **Time and energy**—between work and other demands parents may feel they do not have time to talk with their children about their emotions. Taking a minute to validate how a child might be feeling can stop an emotional "meltdown" before it even happens. **If you do not have the time or energy** to go through all 5 steps of emotion coaching in the moment that the child is upset, **simply validate the child's emotion**, assist the child in calming him/herself, and ask the child if it is okay to postpone the brainstorming of solutions until later in the day. Be sure to talk with the child later that day as you promised.

Resources on emotional intelligence:
Emotional Intelligence by Daniel Goleman (1995)
Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child by John Gottman (1997)
How to Talk so Kids will Listen and Listen so Kids will Talk by Faber and Mazlish (1980)
Emotionally Intelligent Parenting by Maurice Elias, Steven Tobias & Brian Friedlander (2000)
How to Raise a Child with a High EQ by Lawrence E. Shapiro (1997)