



Kinship Link

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Social-Emotional Competence of Children

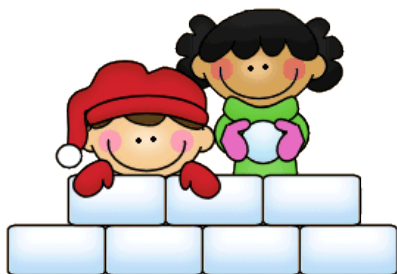
Pro Kinship for Kids

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Pro Kinship for Kids
 Lower level Our Saviors
 Lutheran Church
 1400 S. State Street
 P.O. Box 666
 New Ulm, MN 56073
 Phone 359-2445 or
 1-800-642-5779
 Website:
www.prokinship.org

Newsletter by
 Kari Beran, Director



There is a link between children’s social-emotional competence and their cognitive development, language skills, mental health, and school success. The dimensions of social-emotional competence include:

- **Self-esteem** - good feelings about oneself
- **Self-confidence** - being open to new challenges and willing to explore new environments
- **Self-efficacy** - believing that one is capable of performing an action
- **Self-regulation/self-control** - following rules, controlling impulses, acting appropriately based on the context
- **Personal agency** - planning and carrying out purposeful actions
- **Executive functioning** - staying focused on a task and avoiding distractions
- **Patience** - learning to wait
- **Persistence** - willingness to try

again when first attempts are not successful

- **Conflict resolution** - resolving disagreements in a peaceful way
- **Communication skills** - understanding and expressing a range of positive and negative emotions
- **Empathy** - understanding and responding to the emotions and rights of others
- **Social skills** - making friends and getting along with others
- **Morality** - learning a sense of right and wrong

These dimensions of social-emotional competence do not evolve naturally they depend on the quality of the nurturing attachment and stimulation that a child experiences. A relationship with a consistent, caring and attuned adult who actively promotes the development of these dimensions is essential for healthy social-emotional outcomes in

children. Actively promoting social-emotional competence includes activities such as:

- Creating an environment in which children feel safe to express their emotions
- Being emotionally responsive to children and modeling empathy
- Setting clear expectations and limits like “people in our family don’t hurt each other”
- Separating emotions from actions like “it’s okay to be angry, but we don’t hit someone when we are angry”
- Encouraging and reinforcing social skills such as greeting others and taking turns
- Creating opportunities for children to solve problems

Children who have experiences such as these are able to recognize their and others’ emotions, take

Social-Emotional Competence of Children continued

the perspective of others and use their emerging cognitive skills to think about appropriate and inappropriate ways of acting.



Parental Resilience

Being a parent can be a very rewarding and joyful experience. But being a parent can also have its share of stress. Parenting stress is caused by the pressures that are placed on parents personally and in relation to their child:

- Typical events and life changes like not being able to soothe a crying baby or moving to a new job
- Unexpected events like discovering you or your child have a medical problem
- Individual factors like substance abuse or traumatic experiences
- Social factors like relationship problems or feelings of loneliness
- Community societal or environmental conditions like poverty or a natural disaster

Parents are more likely to achieve healthy, favorable outcomes if they are resilient. Resilience is the process of managing stress and functioning well even when faced with challenges, adversity, and trauma. Some stressors parents face can be managed easily so that problems get resolved for example calling a friend to pick-up a child from school when a parent is delayed. But some stressors cannot

be easily resolved for example parents can not “fix” their child’s developmental disability, or erase the abuse they suffered as a child. Rather, parents are resilient when they are able to call forth their inner strength to proactively meet personal challenges and those in relation to their child, manage adversities, heal the effects of trauma, and thrive given the unique characteristics and circumstances of their family.

Demonstrating resilience increases parents’ self-efficacy, because they are able to see evidence of both their ability to face challenges competently and to make wise choices about addressing challenges. Parental resilience has a positive effect on the parent, the child, and the parent-child relationship. By managing stressors, parents feel better, and can provide more nurturing attention to their children, which enables their child to form a secure emotional attachment. Receiving nurturing attention, and developing a secure emotional attachment with parents, in turn, fosters the development of resilience in children when they experience stress.

Sometimes the pressures parents

face are so overwhelming that their ability to manage stress is severely compromised. As a result, these parents may display symptoms of depression, anxiety, or other clinical disorders that inhibit their ability to respond consistently, warmly, and sensitively to their child’s needs. Depressive symptoms in either mothers or fathers are found to disrupt healthy parenting practices so that the child of a depressed parent is at increased risk of poor attachments, maltreatment and poor physical, neurological, social-emotional, behavioral, and cognitive outcomes. But parents can be helped to manage reactions to their own histories from adversity and trauma as best they can and to provide more nurturing care that promotes secure emotional attachment and healthy development in their children.

All parents experience stress from time-to-time. Parental resilience is a process that all parents need in order to effectively manage stressful situations and help ensure they and their families are on a trajectory of healthy, positive outcomes.

Strong people alone know how to organize their suffering so as to bear only the most necessary pain.
- Emil Dorian