



Emotional Literacy...

...is the ability to identify,
understand and express emotion
in a healthy way.

Strategies to Develop Emotional Literacy in Infants and Toddlers

I. Using the adult/child relationship to expand an individual child's awareness of his emotions or feelings:

- Verbally acknowledging and labeling emotions expressed by children in care
- Assisting infants and toddlers with regulating their emotions
- Talking about the fact that feelings can change
- Using questions about feelings and wishes to see if a child can respond




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II. Finding opportunity in the group setting to talk about feelings:

- Taking advantage of teachable moments when children experience difficulties with peers and need adult support to resolve them
- Staying close to support children in difficult encounters with other children



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II. Group setting (cont.):

- Showing positive feelings for both children in conflict
- Letting children know through your calm approach that conflict is to be expected and that it can be resolved with help
- Helping children learn to put into words how they think others are feeling and to express empathy for those feelings
- Encouraging negotiating so that each child feels that she/he has been heard and that their feelings have been taken into consideration
- Clarifying rules




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III. Using enriching language tools:

- Choosing books, music, finger plays with a rich vocabulary of feeling words
- Using puppetry or felt board stories that retell common social experiences and that emphasize the feeling vocabulary and conflict resolution
- Reading stories about characters that children can identify with who express a range of feelings
- Encouraging toddlers to draw pictures of their difficult or scary emotions



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IV. Modeling Positive Relationships


- Between adults in the care setting
- With other children



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Using Books to Support Social Emotional Literacy in Infants and Toddlers

- Think about how you would children's books in your work
- Make a list of the feeling words in the book or feeling words you would use to enhance the book for infants and toddlers




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Social Emotional Wellness

The ability to:

- Experience, regulate and express emotions
- Form close and secure interpersonal relationships
- Explore and learn from the environment



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CSEFEL Definition of Challenging Behavior

What we are referring to when we say "challenging behavior:"

- Any repeated pattern of behavior that interferes with learning or engagement in pro-social interactions with peers and adults
- Behaviors that are not responsive to the use of developmentally appropriate guidance procedures



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Communication Expresses...

- What the infant or toddler is experiencing
- What it is like to be in that child's body
- What it is like to be in that child's world



Infants Communicate in Many Ways

- Gazing or gaze aversion
- Yawning
- Expressions
 - Pushing out of the lips
 - Wrinkling the brow
 - Lip grimace; lip compression
 - Smiling
 - Tongue show
 - Brow raising
 - Dull look
- Vocalization
 - Giggling
 - Crying
 - Squealing



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Infants Communicate in Many Ways (continued)

- Movements
 - Pulling away
 - Joining of hands
 - Arching back, stiffening
 - Clinging posture
 - Lowering the head
 - Hand to eye
 - Hand halt
 - Hand to ear
 - Hand to mouth
 - Hand to stomach
 - Reaching for caregiver



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Expression of Emotion



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- Intensity
- Frequency
- Duration




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Continuum of Emotional Expression

Social withdrawing.....Aggression

Two different and extreme forms of emotional expression



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Acting-Out Behaviors

- Fussing
- Inconsolable crying
- Frequent or intense tantrums
- Pushing
- Hitting
- Biting
- Frequent throwing of things or knocking things down or destroying property
- Persistent refusal to allow or participate in activities
- Harm to self or others



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Social Withdrawing Behaviors

- Pulling away while being held
- Rarely cooing
- Rarely babbling or talking
- Looking sad
- Not showing preference for caregiver
- Not making eye contact
- Whining
- Being overly compliant or avoidant with the caregiver
- Diminished efforts to use communications skills that have previously been used



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Focusing on the Child

- Makes us more likely to be able to respond with empathy to her needs
- Helps us be more intentional about problem solving
- Will assist us in restoring the child's sense of well being
- Will enable the child to spend his emotional energy on development
- Will help us keep our own emotions in check



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Responding to Distress

- Acknowledge distress
- Offer comfort
- Use words
- Be attuned (in sync) to child's individual needs
- Help the baby/toddler achieve the understood intention
- Be developmentally appropriate



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Hypotheses

- What happened that caused the child to react with challenging behavior?
- What was the child experiencing or feeling?
- What has caused the shift in the child's pattern of behavior?
 - What happened before the behavior?
 - With whom did the behavior occur?




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Reasons for Challenging Behavior

- Developmental surge
- Medical reasons
- Biological differences
- Social emotional environment
- Discontinuity between care program and home
- Lack of skill in communicating and interacting with others
- A combination of more than one above



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clip 3.3

Reflection – Self Awareness

- What is this child's behavior bringing up for me as her caregiver?
- What emotions do I experience when I care for this child?
- What can I do for myself to address my emotional response to this child?



Primary Characteristics of a Program Process

- Reflective, rather than reactive
- Focus is on assisting child in getting needs met rather than eliminating the challenging behavior
- Goal is to help the child with developmental appropriate self-regulation so that developmental momentum is not slowed down or disrupted




Program Protocol

- Outlines clear steps in developing plan to address the behavior
- Identifies role/participants on the team
- Lays out how progress will be reviewed, how changes, if any, will be made in the plan
- Stipulates how decisions will be made about ending or modifying the intervention



Sample Protocol for Addressing Challenging Behavior in Infants and Toddlers


1. Observe and document
2. Assemble a staff team or reflective supervision meeting to review detailed questions about the meaning of the child's behavior.



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Additional Protocol Components


3. Meet with the family to share information, deepen understanding and collaborate on strategies.
4. Determine a consistent plan for intervention.
5. Continue observation and documentation to provide data for evaluating improvement and ensuring the consistency of the plan.



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Questions to Ask About the Meaning of the Behavior

- What is the child experiencing?
- What is the child's perspective on the situation?
- What strengths can be observed in the child's development or behavior patterns.
- What, when, where, how and with whom is the undesirable behavior occurring?



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Questions to Ask About the Meaning of the Behavior (continued)

- What is the child communicating that he wants or needs?
- What is the purpose of the child's behavior?
- What is the meaning of the child's behavior?
- What do I want the child to do?



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Parent Interview Questions


- What is your infant's or toddler's challenging behavior like for you?
- What have you done in response to his behavior?
- How do you feel when he acts this way?
- When and where does the infant or toddler behave in this way and what has typically happened before or after?
- Is this behavior new or has the infant or toddler been acting this way for some time?



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Parent Interview Questions (continued)


- Does the child act this way with others (e.g. father, grandmother or others) and what does that person say about the behavior?
- How do you think the infant or toddler feels when he is engaging in this behavior? Why do you think he feels that way?
- Do you have any ideas about why the infant or toddler is acting this way?



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Parent Interview Questions (continued)


- Have there been any changes at home that might help us understand how the infant or toddler feels?
- How have these changes affected your relationship with the infant or toddler?
- How has the behavior affected your relationship with the infant or toddler?



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Potential Team Members

- Parents/Family Members
- Teacher(s), Home Visitors
- Assisting Teacher/Paraprofessional
- Therapists
- Administrative Staff
- Mental Health Consultant
- Others



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Additional Protocol Components

6. Consult with a mental health professional if the child is not responding and the intensity, frequency, and duration of the behavior is not improving.
7. Determine whether further referral to a community resource is necessary through discussion with family, the supervisor, and the mental health consultant.



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What Goes Into a Support Plan?

- Hypothesis
- Prevention strategies
- Action plan for changes
- Responses to behaviors
- Timeframe and method for evaluating changes in the challenging behavior



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Case Study Instructions

- Read child descriptions
- Discuss the descriptions with the group
- Use the Infant-Toddler Behavior Review to organize the information from the child descriptions and the observations
- Develop the hypothesis and consider possibilities for intervention
- Develop an Action Plan and Support Plan



Major Messages to Take Home

- It is important to understand that behavioral problems in infants and toddlers are very often the child's way of communicating emotional distress.
- A collaborative, reflective process leading to an understanding of the meaning of the individual infant's or toddler's challenging behavior followed by a plan of action is an effective intervention.
- A partnership with parents or other primary caregivers is an essential element of any effective intervention for infants or toddlers.
- A formal protocol to resolve challenging behavior in infants and toddlers is a necessity.



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