

Kudos to CPS's Social Emotion Learning Program

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Issue: Does emotional intelligence play just as big a role in a person's success as their IQ?

View: Yes. Researchers have found that IQ isn't the only predictor of a person's achievements. Emotional intelligence is another determinant of a person's success in life. We have all heard of IQ, or intelligence quotient, but are we as familiar with emotional intelligence? Your IQ is a score derived from one of several standardized tests designed to assess intelligence. The scores are used as predictors of educational achievement or special needs, but emotional intelligence is more complex.

Emotional intelligence is a different way of being smart. It includes knowing how you feel and using your feelings to make good decisions in life. Those with high emotional intelligence are able to manage distressing moods, as well as control impulses. Emotion intelligence, also known as social intelligence, revolves around five types of skills: self-awareness, emotion management, motivation, empathy and social skills.

Both your IQ and emotional intelligence are important in different ways. Researchers have found that IQ contributes about 20 percent to the factors that determine life accomplishments. That leaves 80 percent for other determining factors. Research has also shown that emotional intelligence can make a difference in life's successes. For example, boys in the second grade who are impulsive and always getting into trouble are six to eight times more likely than other children to be violent in their teens and commit crimes.

Sixth-grade girls who confuse feelings of boredom and anger with hunger are the ones most likely to have eating disorders when they become teenagers. These children are unaware of how they are feeling and what it's called. So if a person doesn't have these skills, he or she can get into trouble, especially as a child transitions into adulthood.

If a person does have these abilities or emotional intelligence, it can help him or her throughout life. These abilities affect everything from success in marriage to how well someone does on the job. Emotional skills also help a person academically. Children who can stick with tasks and finish homework or assignments do much better later in life than those children who are easily distracted and go off to do something else.

For all these reasons and more, the newspaper is happy to commend Carlinville Primary School for its Social Emotional Learning Program, which is teaching students how to develop and use self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship skills. Students are also taught the importance of making responsible decisions.

The program aims to reduce risky behavior in students, such as drug use and teen pregnancy, and is funded by an early childhood grant obtained by the Carlinville School District. As a part of the program, CPS holds family fun nights and parent workshops. Recently, Jill Molli, a Conscious Discipline expert, was a featured guest speaker at a parenting workshop held in the CPS library.

Molli gave parents tips on Conscious Discipline, which was developed by Becky A. Bailey. Teachers have been trained on the Conscious Discipline methods, and the methods have been implemented at CPS since the start of the 2009-2010 school year. The methods emphasize setting routines for children, keeping good relationships between parents or teachers and children, and promoting the use of encouragement.

Conscious Discipline is based on current brain research. Molli said to understand Conscious Discipline we must first understand the three different states of our brains. First, there is a survival state. It comes from the brain stem. In a survival state, we feel triggered by threat; these skills are flight, fight or surrender. For example, we can't do arithmetic when a tiger is chasing us. So, we cannot expect children to learn in this state.

The second state is the emotional state and it comes from our limbic system. Similarly, an emotional state is triggered when someone does not get his or her way. It limits our ability to comprehend different points of view and make rational decisions.

The third state is where we all want to be, the executive state. It comes from our prefrontal lobes. When in this state, we are empowered to make wise decisions. The executive state frees us from poor parenting habits we learned from others, makes us more empathetic, allows us to remain focused enough to achieve goals and allows us to consciously respond instead of automatically reacting to life events.

Molli likened the three states to a car. When you are in the survival state, you are in the trunk of the car fighting to get out. The emotional state is similar to a brother and sister fighting over territory in the back seat, and the driver of the car is in the executive state, making decisions. When we respond from the survival or emotional states, we are teaching our children to do the same. But, if we respond from the executive state, we are teaching our children to think with clear minds and make good decisions.

Positive benefits of the program are already being seen. Because of the program, students' tattling has decreased. When someone is victimized by bullying, he or she is allowed the chance to tell the bully not to be mean and how the bullying makes him or her feel. The bully still faces consequences for what he or she has done, but the bully also realizes the outcome of his/her behavior.

A big part of Conscious Discipline is natural consequences. Natural consequences are situations that are not controlled by anyone. Children learn through natural consequences. For example, the child who refuses to eat goes hungry, and the child who does not wear mittens in cold weather has cold hands. In order for natural consequences to teach children, parents stand aside and do not become involved.

The Social Emotional Learning Program is a great asset to children and parents. The newspaper will continue to report on the program and its progress. Those wanting more information on Conscious Discipline may visit consciousdiscipline.com.