

PRAISES™



Practicing Restoration and Integrating Social-Emotional Skills™

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FOREWORD

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If we want any plant grow, we must first prepare the ground. Fertile ground is essential. Finding the appropriate sun-related spot is next. The care and watering of that plant are other considerations. The plant should receive regular and predictable attention.

When we raise our children, the same principles apply. In establishing a culture and climate for social-emotional learning, we must first create safe environments. One way to nurture children is by using affective statements and questions, which communicate to another person how their behavior has affected you, either positively or negatively. They offer an alternative to comments that are implicitly judgmental and can lead to confrontation, argument, and further conflict. Nurturing that includes warmth and affective statements and question can help children's self-worth to emerge. The growth will be seen in social and emotional awareness with others. We need to prepare the ground ahead of time just as we would prepare to bring a new baby into our home.

Social-emotional learning thrives in safe environments in which self-worth is acknowledged. Structure and nurturing feed the ground for readiness to learn these skills. Parents or adult caregivers and educators or other professionals have the responsibility to create fertile ground for the seeds of awareness to emerge. What are the best ways to create a safe garden in which the seeds of awareness can grow in our children? Consistency, predictability and unconditional love are key to the development and maintenance of these skills.

Time is a precious commodity. If we plant our seeds of social-emotional learning in desolate or toxic ground, we are wasting time and resources.

As with planting, it is essential to identify the environment in which children thrive. Restorative practices provide the format for processes that allow all voices to be heard. The use of circles invites children to have an opinion in a safe space. With consistency, circles can provide a sense of belonging. The journey toward social and emotional awareness has begun.

Not all communities are ready for social-emotional change. Parents or caregivers, professionals, and administrators must first begin the journey themselves. They must reflect on beliefs and attitudes that provide a restorative milieu. Accountability requires role-modeling the social-emotional attributes that demonstrate care, thoughtfulness, and compassion consistently.

A top-down assessment of the environment is useful in determining whether work needs to be done with the parents and caregivers or professionals who will create the right atmosphere for the environment. Being present with children, attending to their emotional needs, demonstrating affection, and managing relationships with ease and awareness is foremost. If adult caregivers or parents, educators, and administrators are willing to address the culture and climate to make changes for children and their future, they are ready for social and emotional literacy and learning.

Leaders who engage in virtue-based decision-making use collaboration to achieve a fair process of engagement, expectation, and explanation. When beginning a restorative social-emotional journey, we are not adding extra things to the plate. We are enriching the quality of the plate. Our core practice is building relationships with understanding.

We need two factors to operate:

1. **Recognition:** Core humanity and wisdom
2. **Regulation:** Courage and temperance, justice and transcendence

The competencies in social and emotional literacy we want to develop in our children are:

- Self-awareness
- Self-management
- Relationship management
- Social awareness
- Responsible decision-making

Are these not the life skills we wish to pass on to our children? In today's age in which computers provide information in nanoseconds, is this not the gift we wish to give our children? The ability to be self-aware and to self-manage; to recognize and be socially aware of crossing boundaries that are toxic to them; and to manage relationships and make virtue-based responsible decisions in life. This is a win-win story we give to our children.



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