

## Emotional Literacy

Emotional Literacy is a key skill that helps us manage our emotions. Children take time to understand emotions and their emotional intelligence needs time to be built.

### But what is Emotional Literacy?

Emotional Literacy is the ability to express our emotions and feelings using speech and other forms of communication. It's an important skill that children must develop from a young age to help establish a stable relationship with their own emotions. A child who can express their emotions and feelings is less likely to suffer from emotional and mental ill health in adolescence.

### How do you develop Emotional Literacy in Children?

There are some simple things that caregivers can do to improve a child's emotional literacy.

- Be a good role model: if your child is expressing their emotions in a negative or inappropriate way, ask them if they can explain what they are feeling and what has happened to make them feel this way. Try not to use the word "why." When children are dysregulated, they may not know why they acted the way they did. Wait until they are regulated and ask what had happened.
- Similarly, if you are experiencing an emotional response to something and your child asks what is wrong, explain to them simply how you are feeling using simple language.
- Promote empathy where you can: now your child is starting to recognise their own feelings, why not encourage them to think about others? For example, when reading a book with your child, ask them questions like, "How do you think that made them feel?" or "How would you feel in that situation?"
- Show your children that you are here to listen: create an atmosphere where children can share their emotions freely by modelling good emotional literacy yourself. If the child is displaying a strong emotion, ask them about it. You could even help them by explaining how you handle the same emotion.
- Encourage them to talk: like the above point, you can let your child know you are there to listen to them, but they need to know the language of emotion first. Some children will need more guidance recognising their own feelings, meaning that they might need more support. Using statements like, "I can see you are happy because you are smiling" to help children link the vocabulary of emotion to what they are feeling.

Being emotionally literate is an extremely useful skill that will help children express their emotions in a healthy and appropriate way to improve well-being.

