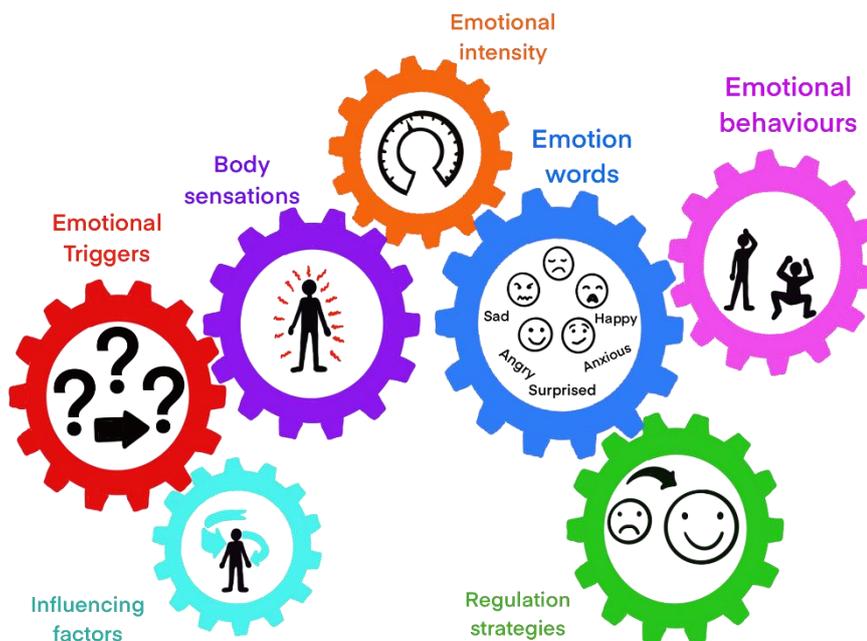


# Let's Talk about Emotions and their impact on Learning.



If you're reading this then I'm guessing you're interested in developing emotional literacy with the children you teach. You either think it is important or you want to find out more. The research has shown how developing emotional literacy in children and young people is increasingly important. So what do we do in schools? Interestingly in 2003 Southampton Local Authority launched their Emotional Literacy Guidelines for schools.

[http://www.complexneeds.org.uk/modules/Module-3.4-Emotional-well-being-and-mental-health/All/downloads/m12p070b/selig\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.complexneeds.org.uk/modules/Module-3.4-Emotional-well-being-and-mental-health/All/downloads/m12p070b/selig_guidelines.pdf)

They were one of the first LA to recognise the importance of emotional literacy to academic achievement and wellbeing.

So what is emotional literacy? In schools, the term emotional literacy is used rather than emotional Intelligence. This is mainly due to a range of traditional views on intelligence which suggested that intelligence was something that you were born with and was unchangeable. It was also something that but could be measured by various IQ tests.

Howard Gardener in the 1980's proposed that intelligence should have a much broader definition. Which had a really important impact on what we now believe. From his work emerged the theory that people must be emotionally intelligent. Some believe that emotional intelligence involves perception, integration, understanding and management of emotion (Mayer Cobb 2000) and that it is an ability. Daniel Goldman then wrote his book Emotional Intelligence. Within this he defined emotional intelligence as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. (Goleman 2004). This continued the debate as to whether emotional intelligence is a skill or an ability. Tricky one! So what's the difference? Well a skill is 'the ability to do something well, having the expertise.' Whereas an ability is 'the possession of the means or skill to do something.'

A subtle but important difference. Weare (2004) uses the term emotional competencies, which include the ability to understand, express and manage our own emotions and respond to the emotions of others, which is much more helpful.

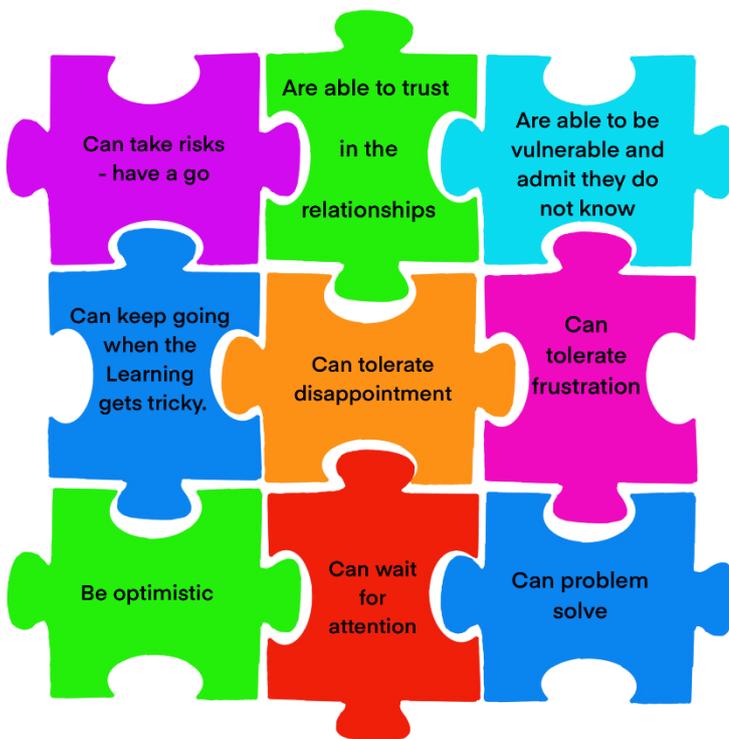
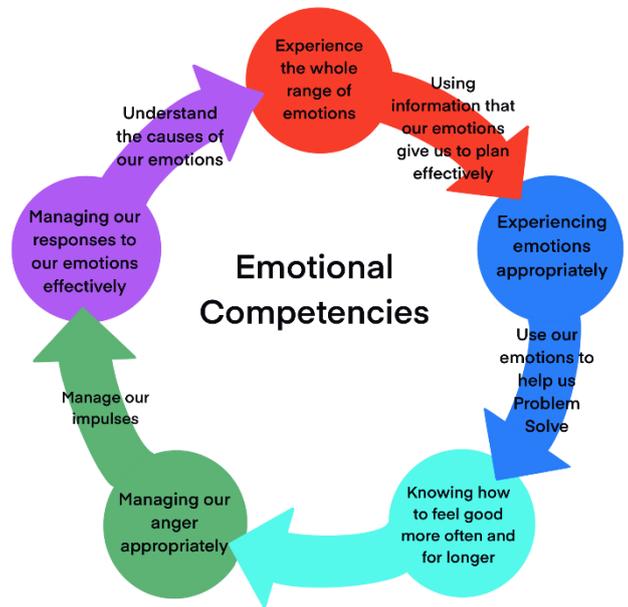
If we think about it, learning is completely interwoven with emotions and the ability to work with others. Therefore, social and emotional competencies cannot be separated from the learning task.

The neurological processes, social interaction and the ability to manage emotions become the three strands, which run throughout the learning process, and have to be managed by the learner. For some children and young people their emotional responses to learning, or the learning interaction, can trigger a range of difficulties, which then prevent them from learning. To be an effective learner a wealth of emotions have to be managed and regulated.

Children enter the learning environment with an array of different experiences and beliefs created from their interaction with the world and the people they have met within it. These experiences have already

influenced them, and had an effect on their learning. Have they learnt that it is safe to be curious and ask questions? Is learning a pleasurable thing or is this an area that is fraught with danger? Have they been encouraged to find out about the world in which they live or been shut down? Is making a mistake a step to succeeding or is it something that is punished and frowned upon? Is it safe to take risks? Has their experience been of an adult who supports them, or of trying to manage on their own? Is it safe to ask for help or is it something that they have learnt will get them shouted at or ignored? These are just some of the situations that many trigger

an emotional response to learning. If the emotions are overwhelming then they create barriers to learning.



Emotions are said to operate the on off switch to learning and so by teaching children and young people about emotions and ways of managing them they are more able to manage the learning task.



So what does the research say? Research has demonstrated that young people show enhanced social and emotional learning skills and attitudes and positive social behaviour after interventions that support emotional competencies, as well as fewer conduct problems and lower levels of emotional distress.

We can clearly see that teaching emotional competencies within schools has a wide range of educational and social benefits including educational and work success, improved behaviour, increased inclusion, improved learning and improvements in mental health. When we have good emotional literacy, we are able to recognise our own emotions and regulate the intensity of them and we are able to recognise and manage the emotions of others in a thoughtful way. These skills make for a much better working and school environment. So what can we do?

Use lessons based on developing emotional literacy to support children and young people develop these skills. [https://www.amazon.co.uk/Emotional-Literacy-Supporting-Wellbeing-Teacher/dp/1138370274/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?dchild=1&keywords=alison+waterhouse+emotional+literacy&qid=1618054698&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Emotional-Literacy-Supporting-Wellbeing-Teacher/dp/1138370274/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=alison+waterhouse+emotional+literacy&qid=1618054698&sr=8-1)

### **Whole School strategy**

Communication is a key component to emotional literacy. As a school staff team creating a Communication Policy can be a very useful activity to undertake with far reaching benefits to the whole school community.

Meador, Derrick. "School Communication Policy." ThoughtCo, Aug. 26, 2020, [thoughtco.com/school-communication-policy-3194670](https://www.thoughtco.com/school-communication-policy-3194670). <https://www.thoughtco.com/school-communication-policy-3194670>

Developing an emotionally literate school written by Stuart Boon. The Bridge: Journal of Educational Research-Informed Practice Volume 1, Issue 2: December 2014.

<https://journaleducationalresearchinformedpractice.files.wordpress.com/2014/12/4boon2014dec.pdf>

But what about in the classroom?

### **Classroom Strategy:**

Ask yourself how, as a practitioner, do you:

*Help children and young people (CYP) to identify and deepen their understanding of the feelings they regularly experience?*

*Help CYP develop their emotional vocabulary*

*Help CYP empathise with others and become aware of how their personal feelings and behaviours can impact on others?*

*Encourage CYP to be reflective and to understand the consequences of their actions and behaviours?*

*Help CYP to develop a range of strategies and encourage them to express emotions in appropriate ways?*

You might like to set up a quiet area in your classroom for children to use if they need some time out. It can have a range of resources for them to use including fiddle toys, books, comics, soft toys, lava lamps and colouring sheets. This will enable them to calm and reach a point where they can talk about things they need to discuss. It also allows you the time to introduce the lesson and get children working before you work with the child or young person. Sometimes other children can take the role of Wellbeing Champions and help a child while you are teaching.

### **Resources:**

What Works in Developing Children's Emotional and Social Competence and Wellbeing? Article · July 2003  
Katherine Weare

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242610650\\_What\\_Works\\_in\\_Developing\\_Children's\\_Emotional\\_and\\_Social\\_Compentence\\_and\\_Wellbeing](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242610650_What_Works_in_Developing_Children's_Emotional_and_Social_Compentence_and_Wellbeing)

**Emotional Literacy dice** to develop games and stories within the classroom that focus on emotions and how they can affect our behaviour.

**Reflection Sheet** to support children talk about an incident and link their emotions and the emotions of others to what happened.

The use of A **Thermometer Activity Sheet** to help children think about emotional words and then what strategies they can use to reduce the strength of the emotion and make it more manageable.

Assessment:

<https://czone.eastsussex.gov.uk/media/4593/emotional-literacy-checklists-pages-123-133.pdf>



**Always remember Small changes can make a big difference**

**Circles for Learning** - Using evidenced based strategies and interventions in schools to build positive foundations for Mental Health and Wellbeing in children and young people.

### **Contact us**

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