

5 Ways to Foster Social-Emotional Skills

Social-emotional skills, such as self-awareness, cooperation and responsible decision-making, are important for the health and success of young people. Whether at home or in school, there are many simple ways adults can help develop social-emotional skills in children and adolescents. To get started, try some of these:



1 Be a role model

Adults and adolescents can positively influence children by demonstrating healthy social and emotional behaviors every day, including being a good listener, acknowledging their own and others' emotions, and working together to resolve a conflict.



2 Involve children and teens in decision-making

Engaging youth in decisions that affect them at school and at home (e.g., setting family agreements, identifying consequences) can improve their well-being and help them develop important leadership skills.



3 Read together

Reading, particularly age-appropriate fiction books, can foster important social-emotional skills such as empathy. Reading to others or together as a family can also facilitate social connection and learning outside the classroom. Bonus: Encourage discussion of diverse characters' feelings and experiences.



4 Help others

Evidence shows that engaging in service-learning programs can increase students' self-confidence and decrease school drop-out rates. Educators and caregivers can encourage kids and teens to volunteer for activities they enjoy, such as tutoring younger children or assisting at an animal shelter. Bonus: Volunteer as a family!



5 Engage in physical activity

Participating in regular physical activity, including active games and free play, can help children develop self-regulation and social competence skills. Youth development leaders should encourage movement opportunities before, during and after school in addition to promoting low-cost family physical activities.