

THE RULER APPROACH TO TEACHING EMOTIONS



THE SOCIAL CONNECT MODEL

The RULER approach is an evidence based approach for integrating social and emotional learning for schools, developed at the Yale Centre for Emotional Intelligence. RULER skills help people of all ages to use their emotions wisely, opening opportunities for us to succeed in school, at work, and in life. These skills are both personal and social, such that a network emerges with positive changes reinforced. While this is a whole school initiative, the acronym presents a valuable path for emotional learning for any child.



RECOGNIZING EMOTIONS IN ONESELF AND OTHERS

Teaching a child to recognise emotions will begin with static pictures, before moving to actual faces. This is an important foundation for emotional comprehension and must not be underestimated.



UNDERSTANDING THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF EMOTIONS

This encompasses anticipating, managing and preventing unwanted emotions in ourselves and others. In a nut shell, this means understanding the WHY of emotions. You can build these lessons into story time but also use kids favourite movies to point out reasons that emotions arise. In your own time you can model expressing the reasoning behind your own emotions e.g. "I'm feeling very angry because the traffic was bad and I was late for work and my boss was cross with me"



LABELLING EMOTIONS ACCURATELY

Having a wide range of emotional words allows an individual to communicate emotions effectively, manage emotions and recognise the wide range that others can have. In order to facilitate this step in the emotional learning path, it is important to vary the emotional language you use to accurately depict the exact emotion you are experiencing. Are you happy? Glad? Cheerful? Joyful? Find the best word to describe your emotion and encourage the child to do likewise. You can discover new feelings words in books, cartoons or movies. There are also lists of emotional words available online. Remember the RULER system is a scaffolded process, so you must start at the beginning and make sure each step is achieved before moving to the next.



EXPRESSING EMOTIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH CULTURAL NORMS AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

This means helping children to express their emotions appropriately. Learning to express emotions in a process which is best aided by frequent modelling of appropriate expression of your emotions for your children. You will need to articulate why you are acting in that manner, while using clear unambiguous language. The more often your child sees you acting in that manner, the more likely they are to begin to comprehend and demonstrate the skill.



REGULATING EMOTIONS WITH HELPFUL STRATEGIES

When we develop strategies to regulate our emotions we can reach goals more effectively and make wise choices about how we respond to emotional situations. To aid this step, try to model appropriate reactions to emotions wherever possible and verbally say why you choose to respond that way. Talk to your child about the different ways in which they can respond to emotions and how they can decide when they use them. It is vitally important that we validate children's emotions and not dismiss them. Reassure them that it is okay to feel any emotions, but how you respond to it is the most important thing. If they react inappropriately, discuss their reaction after the event when the initial emotional surge has calmed. Find things that they did well, not matter how small, then point out ways they could act differently next time.