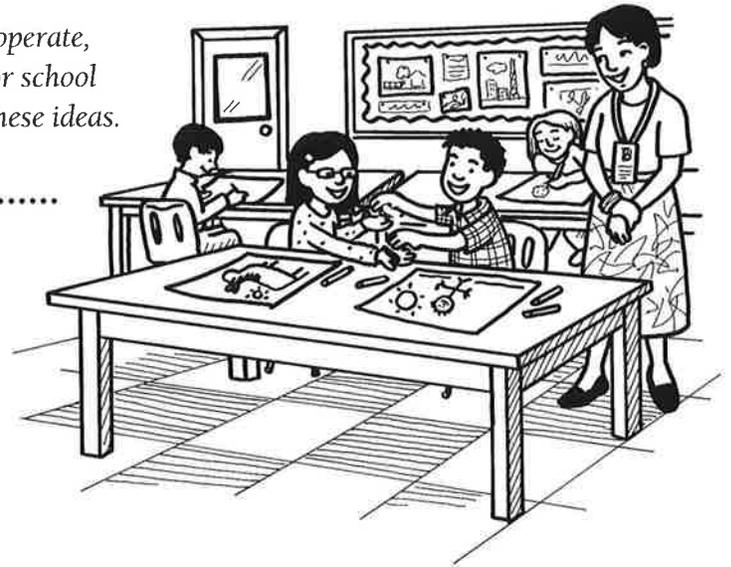


Social and Emotional Smarts

Knowing how to get along with classmates, share and cooperate, handle feelings, and pay attention are all important skills for school success. Boost your child's social and emotional "IQ" with these ideas.



Getting along with others

Create a collage

What does getting along *look* like and *sound* like? This collage can help your youngster understand.

Together, search through old magazines for pictures of children playing or working together peacefully. You might point out two kids turning a jump rope for a third. And your little one may find a photo of classmates playing a board game. Have her cut out the pictures and glue them on paper to make a collage.



Then, help her add sentences people can say to get along with others. *Examples:* "It's your turn." "What do you want to play?"

More tips:

- **Plan ahead.** Before your child's friends visit, have him think of activities they might do so they get along nicely (color, race toy cars). He could practice ways to suggest these ideas. ("Would you like to color with crayons or markers?")

- **Watch and wait.** Let your youngster and his friends try to work out disagreements before you step in—as long as no one is getting hurt or teased. If they call for you to help, respond with questions rather than telling them what to do. You might ask, "What have you tried?" or "Is there another way to solve the problem?"

Sharing and cooperating

Paint a masterpiece

Two artists are better than one in this activity that encourages your child to take turns, build on others' work, and wait patiently.



Get paints and a large piece of paper. First, agree on the scene you will create together—perhaps a beach, a rain forest, or outer space. Then, take turns painting part of the picture. For a beach, your youngster could paint the ocean, and you might paint sand. Alternate adding objects—a red crab scurrying along the sand, a bright yellow beach pail, or a fluffy white cloud in the sky—until your masterpiece is finished.

Sign your names, and hang up your artwork as a reminder of the good things that can result when your child cooperates.

More tips:

- **Play cooperative games.** Change the rules to board games so that players work as a team to win. For example, share all the tokens in *Trouble*. On each turn, players choose any color token to move. Everyone wins when all the tokens reach "finish."

- **Use a timer.** Have siblings decide how many minutes to set the timer for when they take turns playing with the hula hoop or the purple play dough. They'll practice giving up their turns and moving on when time's up.

continued

Managing emotions

Use feelings puppets

Being able to recognize and name emotions gives your child a way to talk about his feelings—an important step toward expressing them appropriately. These puppets can help!

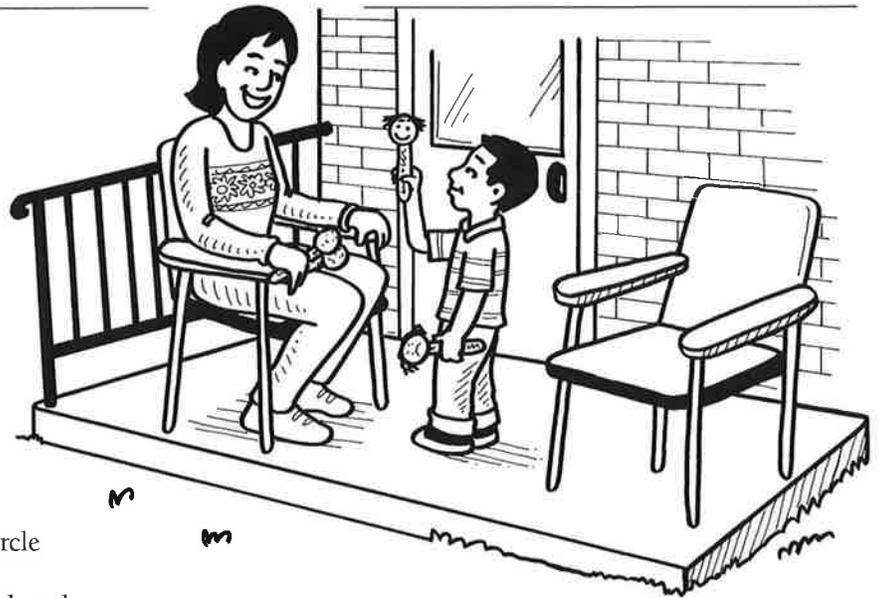
Help your youngster write emotions on separate craft sticks. *Examples: happy, sad, scared, mad, confused, disappointed, annoyed, nervous, thrilled.*

Together, cut circles out of paper, and ask your child to draw a face to match each emotion. He could even add buttons for eyes and yarn for hair. Finally, he can glue the correct craft stick on each circle and act out the emotions with his puppets.

Idea: If your youngster is mad or upset, let him select the puppet that most closely matches his emotion. Then, talk about how he's feeling. ("I know it *annoys* you when your brother hugs your teddy bear. What could you do when that happens?") Help him think of solutions like politely asking his brother to stop.

More tips:

- **Use books.** When you read aloud to your child, discuss how the characters might be feeling. Ask her to describe a time she



felt the same way. Maybe she was *scared* like Peter Rabbit or *lonely* like Rainbow Fish. This will help her talk about emotions—and encourage her to feel empathy for others.

- **Share emotions.** Tell your youngster how you feel, and explain how you're handling that feeling. "I'm *disappointed* that I got a cold and can't go to my friend's birthday dinner. I'll invite her over next week." Your child will learn ways to express and manage emotions.

Staying focused

Take a "pay attention" walk

A key factor in success at school—and throughout life—is the ability to stay focused. Let your youngster practice by setting and achieving goals when you go for a walk.



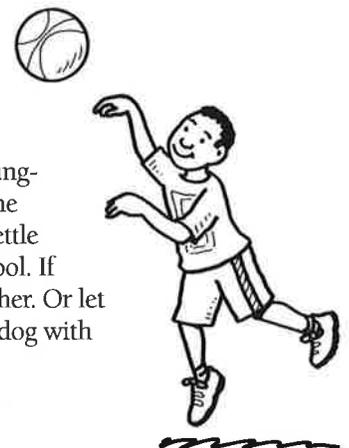
Help her make a list of what to pay attention to on a hike, such as the scent of flowers, the breeze, and objects that are blue. Then, every time she smells flowers, feels a breeze, or sees something blue, she could make a tally mark on her list.

More tips:

- **Healthy habits.** Your child will focus better if he is not tired or hungry. Make sure he gets 10–13 hours of sleep each night and eats a balanced diet. A healthy breakfast that includes protein (yogurt, milk), whole grains (oatmeal, whole-wheat toast), and fruit (banana, strawberries) can help him concentrate in class.

- **Wiggle and stretch.**

Teachers know that recess lets kids release energy so they return to class ready to focus. Have your youngster "get the wiggles out" in the morning before he needs to settle down and concentrate in school. If possible, walk to school together. Or let him shoot hoops or walk the dog with you after breakfast.



Early Years