


Chapter 3


Building Emotions Awareness in the Classroom

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ABSTRACT

Emotional development begins in early childhood, with the school environment and educators playing a crucial role in shaping children's relationship with emotions. Integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) can foster the skills to manage strong emotions and build healthy relationships. Through their daily interactions and structured lessons, teachers can help children identify, regulate, and express feelings appropriately. Children who effectively manage their emotions play a vital role in promoting teachers' well-being and job satisfaction. Emotion regulation doesn't involve blanket strategies that work for everyone. This chapter will explore the variations in emotional development across the Pre-K to 12 age range, highlighting the distinct stages and characteristics unique to each phase. Therefore, the proposed strategies, with a strong focus on parent-teacher collaboration are designed to align with the child's developmental stage, ensuring maximum effectiveness and benefits.

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3373-1067-1.ch003

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INTRODUCTION

Emotional awareness is a fundamental building block of children's social and emotional development, shaping how they perceive, express, and regulate emotions from an early age. It plays a vital role in self-awareness, emotional regulation, and social interactions, ultimately influencing their mental well-being and interpersonal relationships. The concept of emotional awareness was first introduced within the framework of emotional intelligence by Claude Steiner and Peter Salovey (Salovey & Mayer, 1993). They defined it as "*the degree to which children can understand their emotions accurately, to predict it's worth and express it correctly, grounded on emotional knowledge, and to further regulate emotions to enhance emotional and intellectual growth*". Emotional awareness has been identified as the core component of emotional intelligence, which underpins emotional regulation, decision-making, and social adaptability.

Emotional awareness begins to develop in childhood, early life experiences, particularly during the first five years, play a critical role in shaping a child's ability to recognize, understand, and regulate emotions (Kremenitzer & Miller., 2008; Gabard-Durnam & McLaughlin., 2020). During this formative period, children develop emotional awareness through interactions with caregivers, family, and their immediate environment. The school also plays a key role in this process as it offers a setting where interactions with peers and teachers allow them to build empathy, communication skills, and emotional resilience (Hyson, 2004; Spock, 2002). To effectively regulate emotions, they must cultivate a healthy relationship with all emotional experiences, recognizing that positive and negative emotions contribute to their growth, self-awareness, and emotional resilience. Suppressing unpleasant emotions does not make them disappear; instead, they continue to unconsciously influence through patterns, reactions, and relationships. As Deutschendorf (2009) warns "*Repressed emotions do and will continue to hurt us unless they are brought into one's awareness and dealt with*". This underscores the importance of fostering emotional awareness in children, as it enables them to develop healthy coping mechanisms, emotional resilience, and self-expression.

Emotional awareness and emotional intelligence are closely connected with the former serving as a foundation for the latter. Emotional awareness refers to the ability to recognize, understand, and identify one's own emotions, while emotional intelligence expands on this concept by incorporating the ability to regulate emotions, use them constructively, and apply them in social situations (While et al., 2022). Carrying forward the work of previous theorists, Daniel Goleman (1998) expanded the concept of emotional intelligence with a more practical and comprehensive framework. He defined it as "*as a capacity of self-control and control of stress and negative emotions: a meta-ability which determines and influences the*

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