

3 Do's and Don'ts for Raising Emotionally Intelligent Kids

[April Eldemire, LMFT](#) // October 10, 2016

As parents, we want the very best for our kids. We work hard to raise strong individuals who will go on to lead happy lives and have good moral standing. Sometimes, however, we find ourselves questioning our parenting choices, crossing our fingers and hoping we're doing this whole parenting thing right.

Our hopes, dreams, and fears about parenting will never cease, but as it turns out, we don't have to wing it and rely on hope alone anymore. With [Emotion Coaching](#) we now have a science-based roadmap for how to raise well-balanced, higher achieving, and emotionally intelligent children.

Research by Dr. John Gottman shows that emotional awareness and the ability to manage feelings will determine how successful and happy our children are throughout life, even more than their IQ. Being an [Emotion Coach](#) to our kids has positive and long-lasting effects, providing a buffer for the complexities of life that allows them to be more confident, intelligent, and well-rounded individuals.

Below are three do's and don'ts for building your child's emotional intelligence.

1. Do recognize negative emotions as an opportunity to connect.

Use your child's negative emotions as an opportunity to connect, heal, and grow. Children have a hard time controlling their emotions. Stay compassionate, loving, and kind. Communicate empathy and understanding so that your child can begin to understand and piece together their heightened emotional state. Try saying, "It sounds like you're frustrated! I totally get it," or, "You seem so angry right now. Is it because Sandy took your toy? I completely understand why you'd be angry."

Don't punish, dismiss, or scold your child for being emotional.

Negative emotions are age appropriate and will eventually subside as kids grow. By disregarding their feelings as insignificant or sending the message that their feelings are bad, you are in effect sending the message that they are bad. This damaging perception can stay with them throughout adulthood.

2. Do help your child label their emotions.

Help your child put words and meaning to how they're feeling. Once children can appropriately recognize and label their emotions, they're more apt to regulating themselves without feeling overwhelmed. Try using phrases like, "I can sense you're getting upset" or, "It sounds like you're really hurt."

Don't convey judgment or frustration.

Sometimes our kids can do or say things that are downright unacceptable and it's hard to understand the emotions that seem unwarranted or irrational. But try putting yourself in your child's shoes. Ask questions, seek understanding, and convey to them that you're on their side, you support them, and you're there to hold their hand through those moments where things feel overwhelming and tough.

3. Do set limits and problem-solve.

Help them find ways of responding differently in the future. Enlist their help in seeking alternative solutions to their struggles. Kids yearn for autonomy, and this is a great way to teach them that they are capable of self-regulating themselves in a world that seems unfair and particularly upsetting. Remind them that all emotions are acceptable but all behaviors are not. Here's a great phrase to set limits and aid in problem solving: "I understand you're upset, but hitting is not okay. How can you express your feelings without hitting next time?"

Don't underestimate your child's ability to learn and grow.

They have an innate capacity to develop into high functioning adults who can problem-solve and respond intelligently to life's dilemmas. As children, however, they need a listening ear, a hand to hold, and a parent who can

challenge them to reach from within and respond accordingly.

Being a parent is a challenging and never-ending job. With just three small steps, you can raise children who are bright, self-confident, and better able to navigate the intricacies of life with ease and confidence.

Subscribe below to receive useful tools for raising emotionally intelligent children directly to your inbox.

[More in *The Archives*](#)

April Eldemire is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, Bringing Baby Home Educator, and couples expert in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. She is passionately devoted to helping couples achieve thriving relationships. For information on a Bringing Baby Home workshop, counseling services, or to subscribe to her Tip Sheet, visit [her website](#).