Help Children Develop Social-Emotional Skills

Social and emotional development of young children is key to their future academic success. When children can understand the feelings of others, control their feelings and behaviors, get along with others and build relationships with adults they will be better prepared to engage in school and learning activities. A great way to introduce a topic about feelings or social skills is with a book. After reading, try a few of these suggestions to extend their understanding.

1. Ask open-ended questions to encourage children to talk. Open ended questions allow children to elaborate on their thoughts.
2. Use a puppet with children to talk about feelings. Puppets are less intimidating to children, so they are more apt to reveal their feelings to a puppet.
3. Puppets can make helpful suggestions for handling social situations and demonstrate them for children in a fun and playful way. Children might be more open to trying or practicing what the puppet suggests.
4. Talking about feelings is bound to bring out some feelings, so be prepared with a cozy place nearby that has pillows, blankets, stuffed animals and some privacy to help children as they process what they are feeling.

Checkout some of these titles at your local branch. You may also want to take a look at the “I Like Picture Books About” tab at the Early Literacy Resource Center which has booklists about Bullying, Emotions and Fears/Worry.

By Jane Girondo

Checkout some of these titles at your local neighborhood library branch.

Books about Social-Emotional Skills

Fiction

Be Kind by Pat Zietlow Miller
A girl contemplates what it means to kind and explores how a child can act to make a difference and help a friend.

Blocks by Irene Dickson
A simple story about children learning to share their different color blocks.

The Color Monster by Anna Llenas
One day, Color Monster wakes up feeling very confused. His emotions are all over the place and a little girl shows him what each feeling means through color. As this adorable monster learns to sort and define his mixed-up emotions, he gains self-awareness and peace as a result.

Friendshape by Amy Krouse Rosenthal
Presents a story of friends Triangle, Circle, Square and Rectangle as they have fun together and support one another through life.

It’s Tough to Lose Your Balloon by Jarrett Krosoczka
Illustrations and simple text suggest ways to see the positive side of difficulties, from losing a balloon to being left with a new babysitter.

Me and My Fear by Francesca Sanna
When a young girl moves and starts a new school, she must overcome her fear of new things.
The Rabbit Listened by Cori Doerrfeld
When Taylor’s block castle is destroyed, all the animals think they know just what to do, but only the rabbit quietly listens to how Taylor is feeling.

Rude Cakes by Rowboat Watkins
A story about a rude cake who never says please or thank you or listens to its parents, and a Cyclops who is polite.

Theo’s Mood by Maryann Cocca-Leffler
Members of Theo’s class help him understand his feelings about becoming a big brother.

Tiger Days by M.H. Clark
A book about feelings and the resulting message is that no feeling needs to be fixed or corrected; all emotions are normal and bring with them physical sensations and behavioral tendencies.

Time to Say “Please”! by Mo Willems
The author uses an army of mice and a cast of multicultural children to cover the basics of polite conversation.

When Sadness is at Your Door by Eva Eland
A young child experiences sadness as if it were a visitor, acknowledging the emotion and suggesting activities to do with it.

When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really, Angry by Molly Bang
A young girl is upset and has trouble managing her anger but takes the time to cool off and regain her composure.

Who is Happy? by Peter Jarvis
Young readers can look at the pictures and answer the questions to work out who’s feeling what, learning how to understand 12 key emotions and recognize them in others.

Non-Fiction:
Angry by Genevieve Nilsen
This book looks at anger, including what anger feels like, safe ways of letting anger out and how to calm down if you are feeling angry.

Other titles in series—Afraid, Happy, Sad

Hands Are Not for Hitting by Martine Agassi
Positive uses for our hands are suggested such as saying hello, playing, creating and helping.

Listening to My Body by Gabi Garcia
An interactive picture book that guides children through the process of noticing and naming their feelings and the physical sensations that accompany them to build on their capacity to engage mindfully and self-regulate.

Share and Take Turns by Cheri J. Meiners
This book explains what sharing means and provides examples of different ways that two people can share what they both want. It includes information and extension activities for parents or teachers.

Part of the Learning to Get Along series

Library Shout Out: Vox Books

Fairfax County Public Library recently introduced VOX books for children. VOX books are read-along books for children that need no additional equipment. Now available at all branches, these all-in-one read-along books are a fun and easy way to read.

Read-along books:
• Help pre-readers learn the joy of reading.
• Make new ideas and language accessible to emerging readers.

• Allow eager readers to hear their favorite book over and over again.
• With simple, built-in controls and a headphone jack, children can independently listen to the read-alongs.

How to find more read-alongs:
• Search for author: Vox Books
• Search for subject: Read-along resources
For a list of available VOX books, click here.