Nurturing Children’s Social and Emotional Competence: The Role of Parents

Mark Greenberg Ph.D.

Penn State University
mxg47@psu.edu
What I will discuss

- Family Process that Influence Children’s Social and Emotional Competence
- The Impact of Hearing Loss on Families
- Family Processes and Coping
- The Importance of Language and Regulation for Learning and Social Outcomes
- Role of Parents in SEL Development
Four Essential Factors For Healthy Development

- Early and Continued Family Attachment and Communication
- Being Able to Think for Yourself (Independent Thinking Skills)
- Child’s Social and Emotional Competence (Kind, Competent & Caring)
- Development of a Healthy (Deaf) Identity
Always: be BIGGER, STRONGER, WISER, and KIND.

Whenever possible: follow my child’s need.

Whenever necessary: take charge.
Parenting and D/HI

- For all of us parenting is one of life’s greatest challenges.
- Parenting a D/HI child is an even greater challenge.
- For most parents it creates ongoing, chronic stress – this stress may be either painful and debilitating or a challenge that is overcome.
- Crises – Challenge and Opportunity.
Parenting Stresses and H/DI

What are they?
Stress of HI/D for Parents

- New Things to Learn
- Difficult Decisions to Make
- Meetings to Attend (like this one!)
- Always being vigilant (watching out for your child)
- Making sure programs are high-quality
- Advocating for HI/D children and families
Stress of HI/D for Parents

- Communication is more difficult
- Professionals become a part of family life
- Parents often feel they are put in the role of a teacher
- Cross-cultural issues arise
- May divert time or cause conflict in relationships/marriage
- May divert time from other children
HI/Deafness shatters the illusion that we have control over the course of our lives.

The initial reaction is a loss of power over one’s life.

This crisis challenges our own self-awareness and coping.
Our Studies of Seattle and BC families found most important coping skills for parents

1. Good problem solving skills
   “Nothing is more dangerous than idea, when it is the only one you have!”

2. Strong Social Support Systems
Coping Resources

Experience of a Stressor -> Social Supports/Relationships -> Problem Solving Skills -> Existential and Religious Beliefs -> Current Health/Morale -> Instrumental Supports -> Social Supports/Relationships

Outcome
Effective Problem Solving

- Knowing How You Feel
- Having Others to Talk To and Talking with Them
- Calming Down to “Think Clearly”
- Using Problem Solving Skills Effectively
- These are the same skills we teach children
Self-Talk
A Key Process for Learning:

- Two Functions of Language
  - Communicating With Others
  - Communicating with Oneself
    - The Role of Self-Control and Regulation
    - The Use of Sign and Self-Talk
Incidental Learning

- What is it?
- Why is it important?
- How does it affect your child?
The Big Picture: Public Health Outcomes

Undesired Related Outcomes
- Poor School Achievement
- Poor Mental Health
- Aggression/Violence
- Substance Use/Abuse

Underlying Shared Constraints
- Impulsive Action
- Emotion Dysregulation
- Insecure Relations
Resilience Factors that may be Targets of Preventive Interventions

- Communication Skills
- Cognitive Abilities
- Self-Control/Emotion Regulation
- Relations with peers and adults
Core SEL Competencies

- Social & Emotional learning
  - Self-awareness
  - Self-management
  - Social awareness
  - Responsible decision-making
  - Relationship Skills

Recognizing one’s emotions and values as well as one’s strengths and limitations

Managing emotions and behaviors to achieve one’s goals

Showing understanding and empathy for others

Making ethical, constructive choices about personal and social behavior

Forming positive relationships, working in teams, dealing effectively with conflict

From www.CASEL.org
Why SEL?

- Emotions affect how and what we learn
- Student who have higher trust in their teacher are more ready to learn
- SEL Programs reduce problem behaviors
- Positive effects on academic performance
- Benefits to physical health
- Demanded by employers
- Essential for lifelong success
Essential Social Skills in the Preschool Years and Beyond

**Making Friends**
- Establishing common ground, communication skills, positive attention, entering groups of peers.

**Cooperative Play**
- Sharing, taking-turns, helping, team work, following rules, understanding roles.

**Fair Play Skills**
- Deciding who goes first, avoiding teasing or put downs, inhibiting aggression.

**Frustration Tolerance and Self-Control**

**Conflict Resolution/Problem Solving**
The first effect of every mediation of an impulse is to check or arrest that impulse. Reflection means postponement; it is delayed action. Through this delay the impulse is brought into connection with other impulses, habits, and experiences. Now that a due balance is kept, the result is that the original impulse is harmonized with the self, and, when expressed, it realizes not only its partial nature but that of the whole self (p.244).

John Dewey, 1894
ABCD Model
(Affective-Behavioral-Cognitive-Developmental)

Stages of Developmental Integration

1. Infancy: (Birth to 18 months)
   * Emotion = Communication
   * Arousal & Desire = Behavior

2. Toddlerhood: (18 months to 36 months)
   * Language supplements Emotion = Communication
   * Very initial development of emotional labeling
   * Arousal and Desire = Behavior

3. Preschool Years: (3 to 6 years)
   * Language develops powerful role
   * Child can recognize/label basic emotions
   * Arousal & desire > symbolic mediation > behavior
   * Development of role-taking abilities
   * Beginning of reflective social planning & problem-solving
Words provide a moment of recognition and delay in which discomfort over feeling might have a chance of being handled in ways other than denial or immediate discharge through action. Words facilitate coping-emotions that are identifiable, known to and shared by others.

Fred Pine (1985)
Language and Emotion

Verbalizing our feelings makes our sadness, anger and pain less intense by altering brain activity.

Labelling the emotion “Angry”

Increased Activity in the Amygdala

Decreased Amygdala
Increased Right Ventrolateral Pre-Frontal Brain
4. **School Years**: (6 to 12-13 years)
   * Thinking in language has become habitual
   * Increasing ability to reflect on & plan sequences of action
   * Developing ability to consider multiple consequences of action
   * Increasing ability to take multiple perspectives on a situation

5. **Adolescence** (12-13 years and beyond)
   * Utilize language in service of hypothetical thoughts
   * Ability to simultaneously consider multiple perspectives
The parent who labels feelings for the child brings them into the region of social communication—they are shared, the child is not unique and alone with them, they are capable of being understood, the power of words and the psychological achievement words facilitate can be applied to them.

John Dewey (1894)
SEL SKILLS REQUIRE SELF-REFLECTIVE FUNCTIONS

Language/Communication

Inhibition/Self Control

Planning and Problem-Solving
Deaf/HI Children and Emotional Understanding

- They have a less complex vocabulary for emotions
- They are less likely to label emotions correctly
- In general, better language = better emotional understanding
Responsibility and Attributions about Oneself: Deafness and Identity

- Using D/HI as an “excuse”
- Paternalistic attitudes and “rescue fantasies” can be the root of later problems for teens
- Solving problems for D/HI kids may reinforce the idea that “they could not do it themselves”
Problem-Solving with Kids

- What is the problem?
- How do they feel?
- How does the other person/people feel?
- What kinds of things could they do to solve the problem?
- How do they plan to carry out the solution?
- Encourage them to try their best solution.
- Ask them later how their solution worked.