

Emotional Literacy



Emotional Literacy Session Aims

- Dispel emotional literacy myths
- Describe what emotional literacy is
- Discuss the impact on mental health when we are not emotionally literate
- List the benefits of being emotionally literate
- Identify ways to develop emotional literacy



Emotional Literacy Quiz

True or false statements
(Please circle)

1. Being emotionally literate is about ignoring challenging and difficult emotions	True/False
2. You can control your feelings	True/False
3. Emotional literacy is something that you have or don't	True/False
4. Emotionally literate people are less likely to get into fights	True/False
5. You can't be emotionally literate if you have a mental health condition	True/False

1. Being emotionally literate is about ignoring challenging and difficult emotions

False: Emotional literacy is experiencing all of life's emotions and dealing with them. This includes how we deal with the more challenging emotions without being overwhelmed by them.

2. You can control your feelings

False: We can't always control how we feel. What we can control is our reaction to those feelings. By becoming aware of how our emotions affect us, and then focusing on our thoughts can help prevent our emotions from causing us to behave irrationally.

Our emotions are our own, no one can tell us how we are feeling, no one can make you feel anything. They can influence the situation however your emotional response is your own

3. Emotional literacy is something that you have or don't

False: Emotional literacy isn't a trait or natural talent. It is a skill that anyone can learn.

4. Emotionally literate people are less likely to get into fights

True: Individuals who are emotionally literate are able to control extreme emotions and manage them in a healthy way and tend not to lash out or display violent behaviour.

5. You can't be emotionally literate if you have a mental health condition

False: If you have a mental health condition, being emotionally literate can improve your ability to cope.

Activity: How are you
feeling today?

Activity: How are you
feeling today?

FINE

What is Emotional Literacy?

- “Our ability to recognise, understand and appropriately express and handle our feelings and emotions but also includes an understanding and awareness of others feelings”



4 Key Areas of Emotional Literacy

Self-awareness – e.g. mental awareness, our own thoughts feelings and life, physical awareness of the impacts on our bodies and emotional awareness.

- Self-management – e.g. motivation skills, planning, self appreciation, emotional resilience & relaxation skills

- Awareness of others – e.g. understanding body language, empathy, trying to better understand how others see themselves and their situation

- Relationship Management – e.g. communication, listening skills, negotiation skills, sharing and having fun

Activity: What can be the impact on mental health and wellbeing if we do not recognise and manage our emotions effectively?

- Stressed • Anxious • Depression • Irrational
- Negative thought patterns • Less tolerant
- Risk taking behaviours • Distracted • Lack of concentration • Can't deal with the day to day ups and downs • Overwhelmed • Less tolerant • Get into arguments/fights

Activity: What are the
benefits of being
emotionally literate?

• Good communication skills • Motivated • Not perfect • Balanced • Curious • Embrace change • Stress tolerant • Good role model • Good at forming relationships • More sensitive and understanding to other people • Optimistic

How can we develop emotional literacy?

Accept that it is ok and healthy to feel ups and downs

Don't block your emotions out, accept them and deal with them

Make talking about feelings part of everyday life

Acknowledge your emotional triggers

Understand what motivates you

Encourage optimistic thinking

How can we develop emotional literacy?

Set realistic goals

Avoid telling people how they should feel.
Instead try to acknowledge their feelings

Show sensitivity and understand others
perspectives

Find ways to relax

Use humour and play to relieve stress

Why Teens Might Lack Emotional Intelligence

- Part of being emotionally intelligent is the ability to be conscious or present with your emotions, and this requires a certain degree of awareness. Typically, teens are still developing parts of the brain that might inhibit their ability to be aware. The pre-frontal cortex (the part of the brain which governs reason and logic) is still developing. For the most part, because teens lack a fully developed pre-frontal cortex, they can be emotional and impulsive, and lack some degree of emotional intelligence.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qFTljLo1bK8>

How to Teach Teens Emotional Intelligence

- Talk openly about emotions
- The first step to cultivating emotional intelligence in teens is being comfortable talking openly about emotions. Outdated phrases like ‘boys don’t cry’, for instance, stifle emotional intelligence and growth, and promote toxic masculinity. So, if your household tends to sweep emotions under the rug, it’s time to take steps to get everything out in the open.
- Start by calling out and labelling emotions in everyday conversations. At the dinner table, you could begin a tradition of asking each other how your day was (you might even already do this) but start your responses with “today I felt X because X”, or “today I did X and it made me feel X”. This is a simple way to start recognising and validating emotions. It may feel a little odd to begin with, but it will soon become natural for you and your family.
- Simple exercises like this will help your teen reflect on how certain situations, people or events make them feel. Recognising emotions is the first step towards understanding how to manage them.

How to Teach Teens Emotional Intelligence

- Encourage self-awareness
- Once your teen can recognise their emotions, they'll start to foresee how certain situations may make them feel and react, and why. This kind of foresight can be very valuable, especially if your teen experiences other mental health conditions such as [anxiety](#).
- A self-aware teen can admit when something makes them feel a certain way. For example, your teen might commonly feel anxious when meeting new people. Once they recognise this about themselves, they'll be able to see upcoming situations where their anxiety may kick in and learn to prepare for these – for instance, when a new teacher takes one of their classes at school, or they join a new sports team. Preparing for emotional responses can lead to effectively managing emotions, perhaps even adopting strategies that will lessen their anxiety.

How to Teach Teens Emotional Intelligence

- Help them find the best way to manage heightened emotions.
- They might play video games to de-stress or have a creative outlet such as painting or playing music when they're feeling frustrated.
- If they know they're entering a situation that will make them feel emotional, they might try some calming breathing techniques beforehand to prepare themselves. The important thing is that they can recognise when they're feeling heightened emotions or discern when a situation may arise where there is the potential for them to get emotional, and put processes in place that will soften the blow of these emotions.

How to Teach Teens Emotional Intelligence 1

- Demonstrate good listening
- Emotional Intelligence is not only about being aware of one's own emotions, but also empathising with the emotions of others. We recognise other people's emotions mostly through sight. The expression on people's faces and the way they act are often the strongest indicators of how they're feeling. But being a good listener is critical to understanding and empathising with what others are feeling.
- It's so important, however, to let your teenager know they don't have to take on the emotions of others to show empathy.
- While empathy is about being able to understand and relate to how another person is feeling, there are forms of empathy ([cognitive and compassionate](#)) that allow you to connect with an emotional person without being consumed by their emotions. Often the best way to do this is by listening and [perceiving](#).
- Teenagers can find it all too easy to [get caught up in the emotions of others](#) and be at risk of derailing their own emotional stability and mental health. Teaching them to be a good listener will allow them to recognise emotionally charged situations with others and show them that they can be supportive without carrying the weight of everyone else's emotions.

How to Teach Teens Emotional Intelligence 2

- Sometimes what people going through a hard time need most is for someone to sit with them and listen. Often, they don't need a response, advice or reassurance – simply validating someone's emotions and showing support by allowing them to verbally vent can be enough.
- You can teach your teenager to be a good listener by demonstrating this yourself. If they need to have a rant about something that happened at school, listen patiently and remember to validate their emotions. Practise your own cognitive empathy by attempting to put yourself in their shoes and understand their frustration. You don't have to agree with your teen to empathise with them, but you do need to understand where they're coming from and why.
- Your teen will pick up on your listening skills and hopefully emulate this in their relationships with others. Some young people may need a more obvious push towards practising good listening. If your teen cuts you short when you're speaking to them, pull them up on it and remind them of the importance of listening. Have an open conversation with them about mutual respect and empathy, and make a pact to focus more on listening to one another.
- In time, your teen will learn to empathise rationally with others by being a good listener.

How to Teach Teens Emotional Intelligence

- Practise
- Emotional intelligence in teenagers can be difficult to teach, but remain patient and persistent. As with any other skill, developing emotional intelligence takes time and practice. Continue recognising emotions in everyday conversations and working your way through the advice above.
- Developing emotional intelligence early will help your teen move smoothly into adulthood, will strengthen their relationships, and could even improve their employability.

Emotional Intelligence Doesn't Happen Overnight

It's important to remember that emotional intelligence is a skill that grows over time. It's like working out at the gym – those muscles will take time to build. Similarly, those emotional muscles will take a few months (sometimes years) to grow stronger. Although your teen may be taking classes and practicing at home, they may need time to talk about feelings, explore feelings, and become more accustomed to experiencing feelings. More importantly, they will need to find a way to be with feelings in a mature way. Parents might remember to give their teens the time they need to develop this skill, necessary for a healthy adulthood.

Apps for managing emotions

- [MoodKit](#): helps to manage negative feelings, keeps track of mood shifts and promotes mindfulness activities.
- [Smiling Mind](#): provides meditation assistance to young people and encourages calmness, contentment and clarity.
- [Calm](#): offers guidance on calming breathing techniques to employ when feeling heightened emotions.
- [Spotify](#): While this isn't a specific mindfulness or wellness app, music is sometimes the best therapy for helping a teen to manage their emotions. Encourage your teen to put together playlists that will counteract negative emotions, e.g. a playlist of soothing, calm songs for when they're feeling angry or irritable.
- <https://study.uq.edu.au/stories/how-teach-your-teenager-emotional-intelligence>