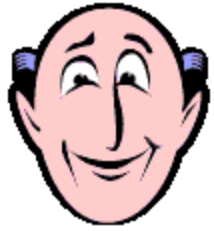


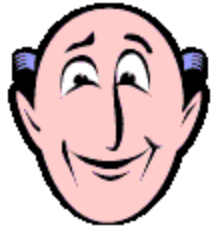
EMPATHY:

Building Nurturing Families for
the Prevention of Child Abuse
and Neglect



Empathy

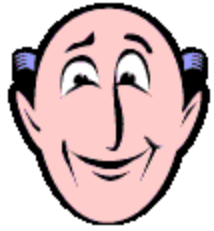
- Empathy is the ability to be aware of another person's needs, feelings, and state of being.
- It is the ability to place the needs of another as a priority. Empathic parents are sensitive to their children and create an environment that is conducive to promoting children's emotional, intellectual, physical, social, spiritual, and creative growth.
- Empathic parents understand their children from the inside, not from the outside as an interested observer.



Empathy

- Parents lacking sufficient levels of empathy find children's needs and wants as irritating and overwhelming.
- Everyday normal demands are perceived as unrealistic resulting in increased levels of stress.
- The needs of the child come into direct conflict with the needs of the parent, which are often similar in magnitude.





Empathy



- Lacking an empathic home life, children often fail to develop a solid moral code of conduct. Right and wrong, cooperation, and kindness are not important because they are not recognized as important values.



- The impact of one's negative actions on another is muted as the ability to care about the needs or feelings of another is not important. Children with low levels of empathy are often labeled as troublemakers, disobedient, and often engage in acts of cruelty to themselves, others, and animals.



Empathy is the
fundamental

“Parenting”

characteristic

An empathic parenting response is an attempt to put ourselves in a child's place in order to perceive the subjective experience of the child.

Nature

vs

Nurture

positive and negative
nurture

Human beings are born biologically predisposed to form and sustain long-term positive nurturing relationships.

There are approximately 157,776 hours of life in
the first 18 years of life ...

Positive	Negative	Dysfunctional Hours
20%	80%	126,221
30%	70%	110,443
50%	50%	78,888
70%	30%	47,333
80%	20%	31,555
90%	10%	15,778
95%	5%	7,889
99%	1%	1,578
100%	0%	0

Principles of Nurturing Parenting

Positive and negative life events carry both cognitive and affective cellular memories.

Over time, repeated events create neural pathways.

The brain normalizes
repeated experiences.

Neurological networks and pathways are created in childhood that influence our life.

Philosophy of Nurturing Parenting

Events develop personality *characteristics*.

Personality characteristics lead to
personality *traits*.

Personality traits lead to full blown
personalities.

Much of **human behavior** is
driven by two neurological
responses:

COGNITIVE

thoughts and memories

(pre-frontal lobes)

AFFECTIVE

our **feelings**

(limbic system)

Empathic responses

contain both **cognitive** and

affective dimensions:

a cognitive attempt to
understand another's
feelings and perspective

the **affective** capacity to
share in another's
feelings.

There are **four** critical
attributes of
empathy:

1. **Awareness** of the state
of another.

2. Understanding of this condition.

3. Personal Identification with the situation.

4. **Appropriate** affective and
cognitive **response**.

American psychologist E. B. Titchner first used the word in the 1920's.

Motor mimicry observed
in one-year olds who imitated
the distress of another child.

“A sort of imitation of the distress of another which then evokes the same feelings in oneself.”

Natural progression of
empathy:

At one, a child feels distress when another child falls or cries.

After one, infants become more aware that they are distinct from others and try to soothe another crying child.

Around two:

- Someone else' s feelings differ from their own
- Become sensitive to cues revealing what another child feels.

Late childhood, children can understand distress beyond the immediate situation.

Positive attributes of empathy

Parental empathy forms a
positive bond at birth
between baby and parents
(bonding) ...

Benefits of Bonding

- Healthy brain development
- Proper socialization
- Trust and belonging
- Safety and security
- Growth and development

... which continues as the child
grows older
(attachment).

Attachment is a reciprocal relationship between parent and child.

Attunement is the process of being present and responsive to the child's needs.

Empathic parents are:

- **Attuned** to the subtle and overt signals of children's needs or wants.
- **Respond** in empathic ways that maintain that child's dignity.
- **Consider** the child an equal in respect to the feelings

Child rearing practices that positively correlate with empathy

- **Responsive**, nurturing (non-punitive, non-authoritarian) parenting behaviors.
- Using real life situations in **understanding** behavior.
- **Encouraging** children to discuss their feelings and thoughts with parents.

Child rearing practices that negatively correlated with empathy

- Threats and physical punishment to “behave” properly.
- Rejection and withdrawal in response to children’s needs.
- Home situations in which children’s mothers are abused by their fathers.
- Extrinsic rewards used as bribes aimed at eliciting “good” behavior from children.

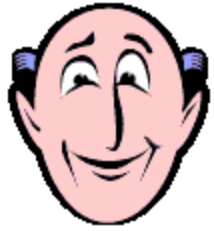


Understanding Feelings



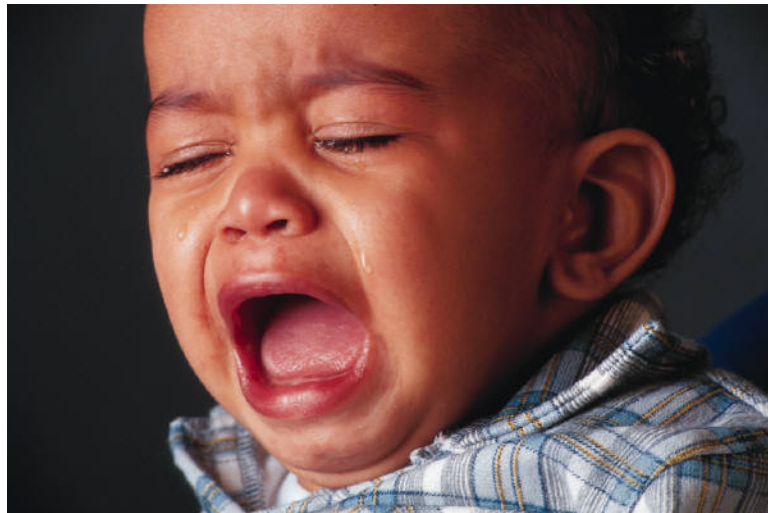
Family Development Resources, Inc.





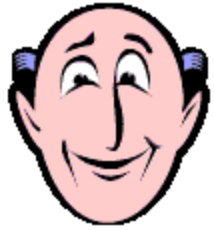
Feelings

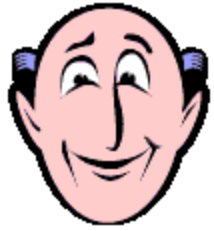
- Most people have learned that there are two types of feelings: Good and Bad.



Feelings

- There is no such thing as a bad feeling since all feelings are an expression of an experience.
- When we categorize feelings as good or bad, we also categorize the people who have them as good or bad.

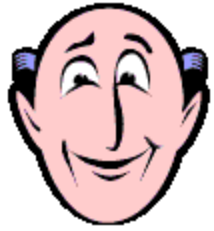




Feelings

- Instead of referring to feelings as good or bad, we can group them into **feelings of comfort**, and **feelings of discomfort**.
- That way it's the feelings we are labeling, not the people who have the feeling.





Feelings of Comfort

- **Feelings of comfort** include:
 - Love.
 - Peace.
 - Joy.
 - Contentment.
 - Happiness.
 - Satisfaction.
 - All other feelings that influence the person in a positive way.



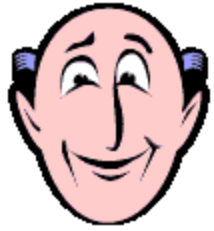
Feelings of Discomfort

- **Feelings of discomfort** are feelings create an unsettled feeling inside.

For example:

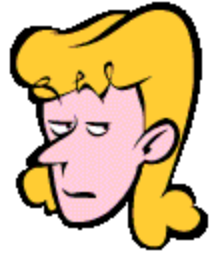
- Hate.
- Envy.
- Jealousy.
- Anger.
- Frustration.
- Sadness.

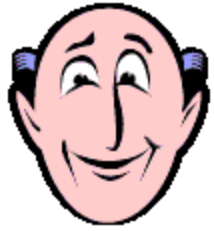




Feelings of Discomfort

- The goal is not to deny feelings of discomfort.
- The goal is to manage the feelings so the feelings do not take over your life.
- Exercise

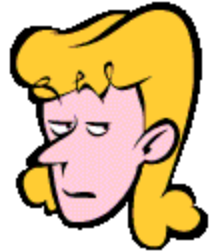


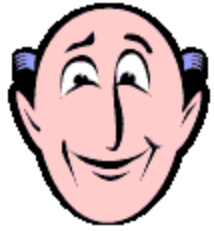


How To Manage Feelings

- **Awareness**

- The way your body responds to a feeling.
- The name you give the feeling.
- Awareness of the situation or similar situations that generate specific feelings.



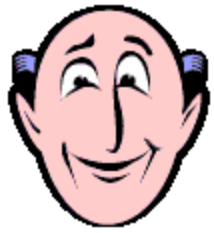


How To Manage Feelings

- **Acceptance**

- The second step in managing feelings is a general acceptance that whatever you are feeling is OK, and that you are not a bad person for having such feelings.
- Instead of accepting a feeling, many people deny, pretend or mask the feeling.

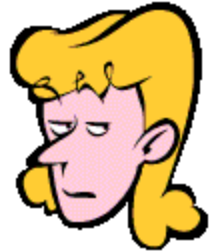


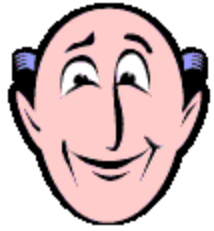


How To Manage Feelings

- **Communication**

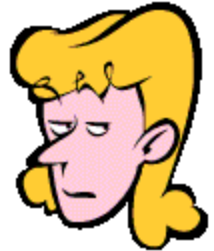
- When it comes to expressing feelings, such communication can either be verbal or non-verbal.
- All feelings have energy which gives the feelings life.

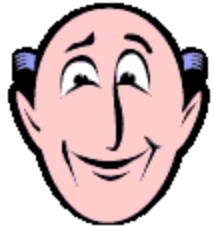




How To Manage Feelings

- Three helpful rules in expressing energy are:
 - **Respect yourself** - don't hurt others.
 - **Respect others** - don't hurt others.
 - **Respect the environment** - don't destroy property, animals, or nature.

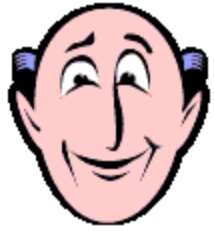




Hiding Your Feelings

- When past experiences in our lives have been very painful, there is a tendency for many of us to avoid dealing with the pain.
- Examples are the death of a loved one, the breakup of a meaningful relationship, a bad investment of money, or some painful experience in childhood.

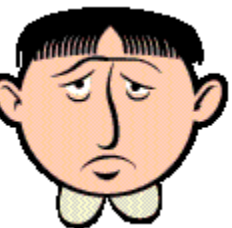
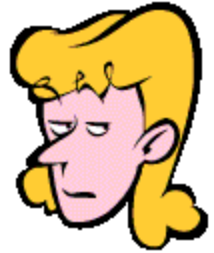
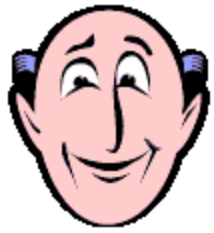




Hiding Your Feelings

- We will either try to forget the experience altogether, or we will attempt to get rid of the painful feelings by stuffing them inside.
- Neither works very well in the long run. The painful feelings do not go away; they are just out of sight.

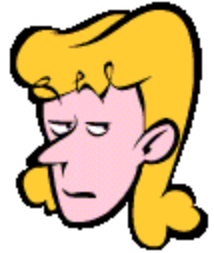
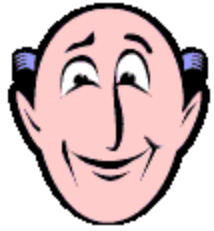




Hiding Your Feelings

- We learn very early in life not to deal with pain or other feelings of discomfort.





Letting Go of Past Pain

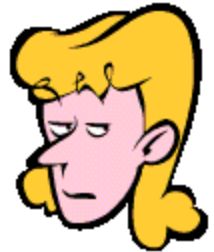
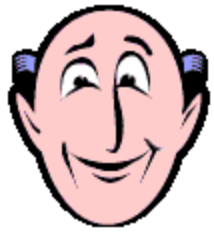
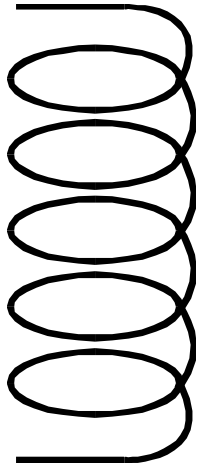
- An unpleasant experience we have had that we are unwilling or unable to deal with acts as a giant spring.
- We have to squash by applying pressure to it.

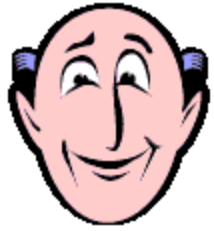


Letting Go of Past Pain



- The moment we let up on the spring, it becomes fully extended.
- This is just like the painful feelings that come leaping into our mind.
- When that happens, we relive the experience again.

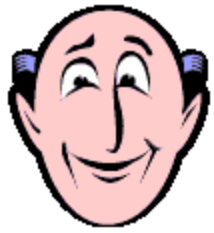




Letting Go of Past Pain

- The first step is to use healthy strategies to express your feelings of discomfort, and not hide them.
- The effort involved in feeling free and being able to nurture yourself and others may not be easy, but it is certainly worth it.

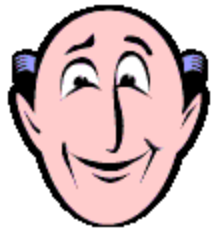




Helping Children Handle Their Feelings

- How we prepare our children to handle their feelings will affect the quality of their life more than any other element of parenting.
- The worst thing we can do as parents is to not prepare children for the tasks and challenges of life.

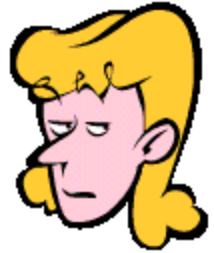
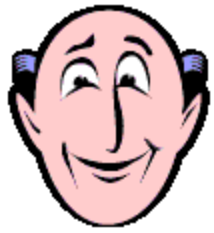




Children and Their Feelings

- Help children handle their feelings, and the world is theirs.
- Let them struggle in their ways to recognize, express and handle their feelings, and difficulty will be theirs.

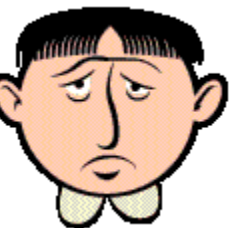
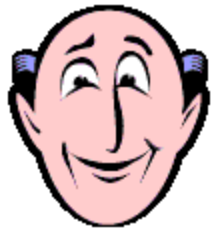




Children and Their Feelings

- Children that learn to handle their feelings develop a sense of competence.
- Children who think they are competent are easier children to parent and to be around.





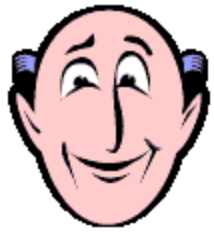
Emotional Competence

- Emotional competence is the ability for parents and children to be able to recognize and express their feelings in appropriate ways.



Ways to Build Emotional Competence

- Let children know all feelings are OK.
 - Children have to believe that all feelings are good and useful in communicating.
 - It is HOW the feelings are communicated that can either be OK or not OK.



Ways to Build Emotional Competence

- Label the feeling you see or think you see.
 - For example, “You look “happy.”
 - This will give the child a feeling of being believed and respected.



Ways to Build Emotional Competence

- Do not dominate the conversation.
 - Let the child do the talking.
 - Encourage sharing by looking interested in what your child is saying.



Ways to Build Emotional Competence

- Promote rationale behind feelings.
 - Ask the question, “Why?” For example:
 - “Why do you think he is feeling that way?”
 - “Why are you feeling so sad?”



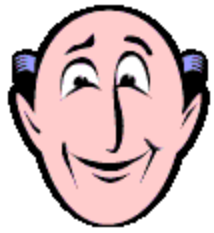
Ways to Build Emotional Competence

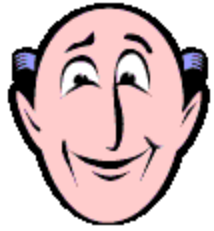
- Brainstorm with the child what, if anything, needs to be done.
 - Sometimes comforting a child is all that needs to be done, or simply just listening.



Ways to Build Emotional Competence

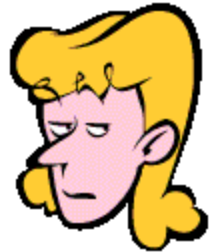
- When a child wants something, honor their desire.
 - Children feel you understand and appreciate their desires.
 - Once children realize that their feelings are honored, they are more open to listening to the logic why they cannot have what they want.





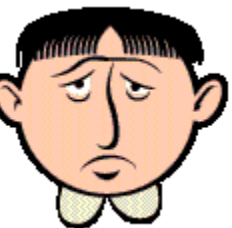
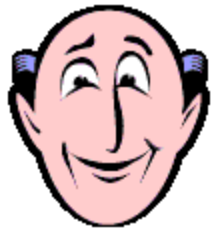
Ways to Build Emotional Competence

- Teach children how to express their emotional energy.
 - All feelings have energy that need expression.
 - Brainstorm a list of physical things children can do to release their energy.



Ways to Build Emotional Competence

- Praise, praise, praise.
 - When children are expressing their feelings appropriately, let them know you like what you hear.
 - Remember, the behaviors you pay attention to are the behaviors that are being reinforced.
 - Catch your children behaving well.



Empathy

- Nurturing Skills Curriculum
- Lesson 9.1 Understanding Feelings

Empathy

- -What objections to this construct do you think the families you are working with will have?
- - Are there current families you are working with that need work in this area?
- -Facilitator techniques that can be used to overcome objections