

# 10 THINGS YOU CAN DO AT HOME TO IMPROVE SEL



## 1 BE PRESENT.

You are the most important person to your child, so free up space and time for quality play with your child - have fun! Play allows lots of opportunities for children to practice self-management strategies and gain a greater awareness of self and others.

## 2 CONNECTION IS KEY.

Physical touch can foster secure connections so don't neglect opportunities for skin-to-skin touch whether it be hugging, kissing, or simply holding your child's hand. Comfort and reassure your child when they are upset.

## 3 ASK CHILDREN HOW THEY FEEL.

When you ask your child about his or her feelings, the message is that feelings matter and you care.

## 4 ENCOURAGE THE EXPRESSION OF EMOTIONS.

You can help a child manage their emotions by asking them to express how they feel, why they feel that way, and then offer a solution to respond to those feelings.

Avoid dismissing your child's feelings by saying things like "you're fine or okay" or "stop crying", this can have a negative impact on your relationship with your child. Instead, try using "I" messages or "I" statements for example, "I feel you're sad because you're crying" or "When I see you being unsafe, I feel scared."

## 5 ASK QUESTIONS THAT HELP CHILDREN SOLVE PROBLEMS ON THEIR OWN.

When you hear your child has a problem, it's tempting to step in and take over but this can harm a child's ability to find solutions on their own. A helpful approach is to ask good questions. Examples include, "What do you think you can do in this situation?" and "If you choose a particular solution, what will be the consequences of that choice?"

## 6 READ BOOKS, STORIES, AND SING TOGETHER.

Reading stories and singing aloud is a way for you and your child to share something enjoyable and learn about the world and our roles within that world, together. Through stories children can explore how people handle conflict and process common issues such as a new baby, grief, going to kindergarten, or making and losing friends.

## 7 GIVE CHILDREN CHOICES AND RESPECT THEIR WISHES.

When children have a chance to make choices, they learn how to solve problems. If you make all their choices for them, they'll never learn this key skill. Giving children ways to express preferences and make decisions shows that their ideas and feelings matter.

## 8 ENCOURAGE HELPING AND SHARING.

Regularly talk with your children about what others might need, and how you could be helping. Think about big and small ways that you can help—whether by taking out the trash for an elderly neighbor or by volunteering at a local food pantry or at your church, mosque, or temple. These acts build empathy, cooperation, and a community-oriented mindset.

## 9 YOU ARE YOUR CHILD'S BEST ROLE MODEL.

Stay calm when you're angry. Learn to recognize your own "trigger situations" and talk about coping with anger as a family. Show your children how you calm down: i.e., "I'm feeling very upset, so I'm going to take a couple of deep breaths before we talk about this." Modeling these cool-down strategies can help your kids develop self-control.

Be willing to apologize. When you do get upset, or make a mistake, apologize to your child. Explain what you meant to do or say. In these moments, you're teaching social competence—that conflict is a normal part of life, and that it can be solved respectfully and calmly.

## 10 OFFER PRAISE AND SUPPORT FOR POSITIVE BEHAVIORS.

Children who demonstrate cooperation, sharing and follow the rules can benefit from positive reinforcement to build their confidence.

