

Promoting Social and Emotional Learning at Home

This Week's Focus – Self-Awareness

What is Self-Awareness?

A realistic understanding of our own strengths and weaknesses, together with a consistent desire for self-improvement, is essential to success. Unfortunately, we are often more aware of our weaknesses and limitations than our strengths and possibilities. Failure and disappointment can cause us to think about what went wrong and why we did not meet our goals. However, when we are successful, we often just go on without taking the time to think about how we used our strengths to achieve our goal.

To help our children be successful, we can help them become more aware of their strengths and skills so that they can be better prepared to call upon them in the future. As Rachel Simmons, best selling author and co-founder of Girls Leadership said, "Self-knowledge is the foundation of real success," and that includes knowledge of our strengths.

Strategy– "My Successes and Strengths"*

The goal of this strategy is simple – to become more aware of what specific skills, talents and strengths help us achieve our goals so that we can deliberately use those skills in the future.

For elementary students – Have your child think of something that they really like to do and are good at. It could be sports, an artistic talent, or even playing video games. Then have them make a list of what specific skills they use to be successful. The more specific the better! Have them make a poster of the activity and the skills they use, then hang the poster to remind them of their strengths!

For middle school students – When faced with a challenge or a problem, have them identify their strengths (they could have already done this like the elementary students) and then discuss how they can use specific strengths to achieve their goal or solve the problem. The idea is to develop a strength-based plan on how they will meet their goal.

For high school students – They might need to collaborate or work with other individuals who have different skill sets to solve more complex problems and challenges. Help them think about what skills they bring to a team, what other skills the team will need, and who else has those skills and could be invited to be part of the team.

For preschool students – Offer encouragement by describing what is happening or has happened as a result of your child’s kind words and actions. Take care to describe what your child does or says, rather than making comments that are judgmental. Instead of saying, “Good job, or “You’re so kind!” Try instead, “You walked over to your friend and helped her up after she fell off the swing. Now she is smiling.” When a young child hears a description of an outcome of their behavior, they develop more self-awareness and are more likely to engage in similar behaviors again in the future.

For Infants and Toddlers - Infants and toddlers seem to hear and see everything that parents do! They learn a lot by watching and listening to us. Make sure that you take time to really notice what your baby is doing--- whether it is reaching for a toy, smiling, or even fussing because she is hungry. Talk to your child about what you are noticing, so your baby knows that you are aware. Babies learn about self-awareness when parents demonstrate that they are aware of them.

A Note to Parents

Adults can benefit from being more aware of their strengths as well. The next time you have a family project have each person, including yourself, identify what skills they can contribute to make the project a success.

Promoting Social and Emotional Learning at Home is brought to you by Aperture Education (www.Apertureed.com) and The Devereux Center for Resilient Children (www.CenterforResilientChildren.org). Feel free to visit our websites for additional ideas.

***My Successes and Strengths** was developed by Ann McKay Bryson and is part of Aperture Education’s DESSA Comprehensive Social and Emotional Learning System