

THE POWER OF THOUGHT

NURTURING EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING IN OUR YOUNG MINDS

**THE SEEDS WE PLANT TODAY WILL BLOSSOM INTO
A FUTURE WHERE EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING IS AS
VALUED AS ANY ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT**



Make a
PROFOUND
IMPACT

The Power of Thought: Nurturing Emotional Well-Being in Our Young Minds

Introduction

In the intricate tapestry of a child's development, the threads of emotional well-being are woven with care. As parents, educators, and caregivers, we hold the key to unlocking the potential for a resilient and emotionally intelligent generation. Welcome to our guide on "*The Power of Thought: Nurturing Emotional Well-Being in Our Young Minds*."

In these pages, we share why understanding and expressing emotions are not merely skills but cornerstones of a thriving and celebrating a balanced life. Imagine a world where our children, from the earliest stages of their journey, are equipped with the tools to navigate the vast landscape of their feelings, paving the way for a future rich in empathy, self-awareness, and authentic connection.

We begin with the realization that identifying and articulating our emotions is not just a developmental milestone; it's a lifelong skill with far-reaching implications. We dive into the difference between self-awareness and self-management, unraveling the delicate dance between understanding one's emotions and the ability to guide them purposefully.

But what about self-regulation? How can we empower our young learners to navigate the sometimes tumultuous waters of their inner world? This guide lays the foundation for emotional resilience, embracing the belief that the seeds we plant today will blossom into a future where emotional well-being is as valued as any academic achievement.

This has been drafted in collaboration with Lynn McLaughlin (MEd) of [Lynn McLaughlin Inc.](https://lynnmclaughlin.co) and her niece, Amber Raymond (MSW) of [Messsmakers](https://www.messsmakers.com). Lynn is a life-long educator, with teaching experience from early years through post-secondary. Amber offers a children's mental health program and is a practicing social worker. They are the co-authors of The Power of Thought Book Series and have partnered to offer professional development and parent engagement opportunities.

IDENTIFYING OUR EMOTIONS AND EXPRESSING OUR FEELINGS



Identifying your emotions and learning how to manage them is one of the most important skills you can have.”

– Shahana Knight, Child mental health expert

Simply put, *emotional identification* is the ability to identify and express your own emotions, healthily, as well as to recognize and empathize with the emotions of others. Our self-awareness around feelings does not come naturally. Similar to other interpersonal skills crucial to social-emotional growth, learning how to identify and cope with emotions is a skill that needs to be encouraged and taught to humans at an early age.

Learning about emotions begins to develop early on in childhood. Studies show that adults who can notice how they feel and adjust their behavior are more likely to do well in life, have healthy relationships, and manage difficulties. When we model this for our students and children, they learn from us.

Emotional intelligence, in children, means their ability to recognize and understand their own emotions as well as the emotions of others. Children often have big emotions. They are almost always filled with a whirlwind of feelings like excitement or frustration.

Why Is It Important?

1. It Solves Underlying Problems

Our emotions help us make connections with people and understand how a situation makes us feel. This then helps us make decisions about whether we want to be in that situation and/or around that person. By being able to observe and identify what we feel, we can understand the reason behind that feeling. This can help us find the cause for that feeling and solve any underlying problem. Emotional learning can help us make better life decisions.

Example: A child may be friends with someone who makes him/her feel unhappy about themselves. It is important that they can recognize their feelings and realize that being around that person isn't right for them. A child who does not have emotional learning will lack this awareness. They may not ever realize that their chosen friend is having a negative impact on their young mind

2. We Feel in Control

Our emotions impact our mood, behavior, and often, our actions. For instance, if a child is feeling angry or unhappy, it can impact their schoolwork, grades, friendships, and overall mood. The child may not want to take part in hobbies or activities, may become withdrawn or have blow ups. It is important to teach children to identify when they are feeling unhappy so that they can figure out why. They can even learn to find a solution to make themselves feel better. Doing this can help children realize that they are in control of how they feel, and can lead to a sense of awareness, purpose, and self-confidence.

3. Negative Emotions lead to Negative Thoughts

Negative thoughts, in children or adults, can lead to poor decisions, problems in relations, and an unhappy life. Understanding why we are unhappy is critical.

It is crucial to show children that they are in charge of their thoughts. If they start thinking and believing they are not good enough or unloved, then they foster negative thoughts that affect their mindset, confidence, and behavior. Educating children that they have the power to change these negative thoughts and they are responsible for how they feel can change their perceptions and behaviors. Teaching children that if they believe it, they can achieve it – is a first step to molding them into young adults who can convert negative emotions into happy thoughts.

Once a child can identify their emotions, they develop self-awareness around how to control their emotions. This means they can learn what calms/ soothes them and reduce any unhealthy behavior or unhappy thoughts.

4. We Will Have Stronger Relationships

When you can recognize your own emotions, you can not only manage them but communicate them to others. Moreover, you can help others do the same.

Children who can identify their own and others' emotions can gauge a situation and respond appropriately. They are able to help and support their siblings, friends, and others when these people feel unhappy. By teaching children to identify emotions, they can form better relationships as they grow up.

5. Normalizing Feelings Reduces Anxiety and More

Intense emotions can be overwhelming. Teaching children to express their emotions in a safe space will encourage them to develop a healthy acceptance of their feelings. When a child represses their feelings, it can lead to stress, anxiety, and other health problems. Further, unresolved feelings can manifest physically through headaches, stomachaches, ulcers, and blood pressure.

Ways to Help

- Help them Replace Negative Thoughts with Positive Words. For example, replace, “I can’t do this” with “I can do anything I put my mind to.”
- Teach emotional language and vocabulary. It will help them identify and cope with their feelings. Labeling feelings can also help them understand others’ emotions.
- Begin classroom circles from the start of the year as early as pre-school. Children share their ideas and reflect on experiences. Positive connections are facilitated, and children learn to understand facial expressions, body language etc. Circles help build empathy, emotional regulation, and conflict resolution as examples.
- Meditation and Mindful Breathing can help a child relax from stress or calm down when they are overwhelmed with emotions.
- Positive Affirmations to build their self-confidence.
- Mindful Coloring can not only calm a child but also works as a self-care technique. It provides a time-out to relieve stress and take your attention away from the unpleasant situation. You can then focus your mind on your emotions and manage your response.
- Listen to calming Peaceful Music
- [Chat Chains](#) is a revolutionary social-emotional learning game. It helps children recognize and talk about their emotions and improve their social skills.

Reference:

Resource Page for Chat Chains [Think Psych](#)

SELF-AWARENESS AND SELF-MANAGEMENT



Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate.”

–C.G. Jung

What Are They?

According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning ([CASL](#)) social-emotional learning (SEL) is “the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.”

Self-Awareness encompasses the capacity to recognize and understand one’s internal world, comprising emotions, thoughts, behaviours, values, strengths, attitudes, and mindsets, and to discern how these factors influence actions and decisions in various situations.

Example: Students who are self-aware may notice fearful emotional responses as they are about to take a test. They may feel their heart beat faster and their stomachs clench, making their thoughts race and they worry about failing the test. To get out of the test, they consider telling their teachers that they feel sick, but in the end, they recognize that this behaviour is a result of their emotion and thoughts running amok. They accept that these reactions can occur when they experience anxiety.

Skills That Develop Self-Awareness Include:

- Identifying and analyzing one’s emotions, and how they affect others
- Understanding the relationship between one’s emotions, thoughts, values, and behaviours
- Integrating personal and social identities
- Identifying personal, cultural, and linguistic assets
- Demonstrating honesty and integrity
- Examining prejudices and biases
- Experiencing self-efficacy
- Having a growth mindset
- Developing interests and a sense of purpose

Self-management entails navigating and adapting one's thoughts, emotions and actions in a positive manner, empowering the individual to make wise decisions and pursue objectives that bring about mutual benefits for oneself and those around them.

Self-Management Skills Include:

- Regulating and expressing one's emotions thoughtfully
- Demonstrating perseverance and resilience to overcome obstacles
- Sustaining healthy boundaries
- Identifying and using stress management strategies
- Setting personal and collective goals
- Using planning and organizational skills
- Showing the courage to take initiative
- Demonstrating personal and collective agency
- Maintaining attention
- Using feedback constructively
- Practicing self-compassion

Ultimately, self-awareness and self-management are closely linked. For example, being able to stop and calm down when one is upset (self-management), requires skills like recognizing and labeling emotions and considering how they might be affecting one's behavior choices (self-awareness).

How Can We Help?

- Set clear expectations and give advance notice of changes in routine.
- Play games that teach kids to take turns, follow directions, follow through, and complete tasks.
- Model mindfulness and how we self-regulation as adults.
- Teach children to be present in the moment.
- Normalize using emotional vocabulary and help children identify their own feelings, big and small.
- Help them identify why they are feeling the way they do.
- Teach a variety of strategies they can use to build their toolbox (deep breathing, being outdoors, visualizations, etc).
- Plan for 1:1 conversations daily that build communication and attention skills.

Reference:

SEL for Students: Self-Awareness and Self-Management [Greater Good in Education](https://www.greatergoodineducation.org/)

SELF-REGULATION



“Everybody in the world is seeking happiness— and there is one sure way to find it. That is by controlling your thoughts. Happiness doesn't depend on outward conditions. It depends on inner conditions.”

-Dale Carnegie

What is It?

Self-regulation is the ability to understand and manage your behaviour and your reactions to feelings and things happening around you.

It includes being able to:

- Regulate reactions to strong emotions like frustration, excitement, anger and embarrassment
- Calm down after something exciting or upsetting
- Focus on a task
- Refocus attention on a new task
- Control impulses
- Behave in ways that help you get along with other people

Why Self-Regulation is Important

As children grow, self-regulation helps them:

- Learn at school – because self-regulation gives your child the ability to sit and listen in the classroom
- Behave in socially acceptable ways – because self-regulation gives your child the ability to control impulses
- Make friends – because self-regulation gives your child the ability to take turns in games and conversation
- Share toys, and express emotions in appropriate ways
- Become more independent – because self-regulation gives your child the ability to make appropriate decisions about behaviour and learn how to behave in new situations with less guidance from you.

How and When Self-Regulation Develops

Children develop self-regulation through warm and responsive relationships. They also develop it by watching the adults around them.

Self-regulation starts when children are babies. It develops most in the toddler and preschool years, but it also keeps developing right into adulthood.

- **Babies** might suck their fingers for comfort or look away from their caregivers if they need a break from attention or are getting tired.
- **Toddlers** can wait short times for food and toys. But toddlers might still snatch toys from other children if it's something they really want. And tantrums happen when toddlers are overwhelmed by strong emotions.
- **Preschoolers** are starting to know how to play with other children and understand what's expected of them. For example, a preschooler might try to speak in a soft voice if you're at the movies.
- **School-age children** are getting better at controlling their own wants and needs, imagining other people's perspectives and seeing both sides of a situation. This means, for example, that they might be able to disagree with other children without having an argument.
- **Preteens and teenagers** are better at planning, sticking with difficult tasks, behaving in socially appropriate ways, and considering how their behaviour affects other people. For example, your teenage child might think about your perspective when they're negotiating with you about their curfew.

How Can We Help Children and Teenagers to Learn and Practice Self-Regulation

- Work on skills for understanding and managing emotions.
- Use calming down strategies for toddlers, calming down steps for preschoolers and school-age children and calming down steps for pre-teens and teenagers.
- Plan for challenging situations where it might be hard for younger children to behave well. For example, 'When we go to the library, there are lots of books to see. Before we start to look, I'll show you how to find what you are interested in.' Then give students a reminder when they enter the library. 'Remember, I'm going to show you where you can begin looking for what you like.'
- Involve pre-teens and teenagers in problem-solving and negotiating difficult situations. For example, 'The gym is being used today. What could our class do during that period of the day that can still get us up and moving?'
- Praise children and youth when they show self-regulation and manage a tricky situation. For example, 'You were great at waiting for your turn', or 'I liked the way that you shared with Sam when he asked'.
- Try to model self-regulation. For example, 'I'd really like to keep reading this with you, but if we don't stop now, we won't be ready for your lunch break.'

TIP: Let's remember that our expectations will change according to children's chronological ages well as the stage of development they are in. If you see frustration, it may be because they do not have the skills or understanding to do what you are asking of them.

Problems With Self-Regulation

From time to time, different things can affect children's ability to self-regulate. Illness and fatigue are two examples. You will also see that self-regulation changes in different environments. Home may look very different than school. Sometimes noise, crowds, or not knowing what is about to happen can be a challenge.

We stand at the intersection of possibility and potential. This is a testament to the profound impact we can have as architects of emotional intelligence.

Envision a world where our children, armed with the tools to navigate the vast landscapes of their feelings, go forth into a future enriched with empathy, self-awareness, self-regulation, self-confidence, problem solving and communication skills. In the hands of parents, educators, and caregivers lies the power to shape a world where emotional intelligence is not just valued but cherished.

Reference:

Self-Regulation in Children and Teenagers [Raising Children.net.au](https://www.raisingchildren.net.au)

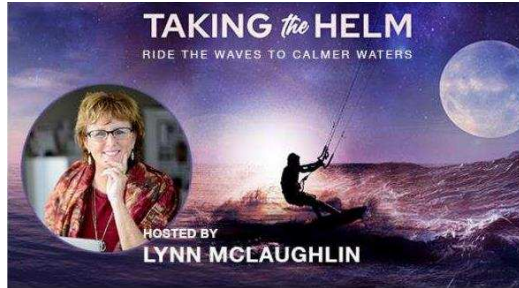
Conclusion: Cultivating a Legacy of Emotional Resilience

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We welcome your questions, or input and invite you to browse our website which offers a realm of additional resources including a powerful children’s book series co-authored by Lynn McLaughlin (MEd) and her niece, Amber Raymond (MSW) titled, [The Power of Thought](#).



Lynn’s podcast, [Taking the Helm](#) is now in its fourth year, with guests who are experts in this field of children’s mental health. How can we take a proactive approach and teach our children skills they need for life? Listen anytime on your favourite podcast app.

As Founder of [MESSS Makers](#), Amber Raymond offers a summer camp for children that teaches Motivation, Empathy, Self-Regulation, Self-Awareness and Social Skills. She envisions a sanctuary rooted in nature, welcoming children, youth, parents, teachers, and groups for rejuvenation and holistic healing. Picture a haven offering therapy, energy healing, spiritual counseling, and physical guidance—all amidst a profound connection with nature. Amber is in the midst of making this a reality and welcomes any and all support!



We also offer options for professional development, [parent engagement events](#) and much more!

HEART MATTERS
EMBRACING EMOTIONAL HEALTH FOR ALL

YOUR ONE-OF-A-KIND INTERACTIVE EVENT THAT BRINGS POSITIVE CHANGE TO FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES ALIKE

Amber & Lynn

WHAT DOES YOUR COMMUNITY NEED?