

Emotional and social intelligence has been shown in studies to be a strong predictor of success in school and beyond. These experiences help children develop relationships, learn to work collaboratively and identify and express feelings. You may need a few family or friends to join in some of these activities.

Cooperation

Sharks in the Water This game operates on the same premise as Cooperative Musical Chairs. Outline a large square on the floor with either masking tape or chalk. This area is the safe island and the area surrounding the square is the ocean.

When the music begins participants “swim” around the island. The stopping of the music indicates that sharks are coming and all players must retreat to the safety of the island.

With each round the lines are altered making the island smaller and smaller. Players work together to make sure everyone has a safe place to get away from the sharks.

Mirror, Mirror This is a game that can be played with partners or with a larger group. A leader is chosen to initiate movements the others are to mimic as quickly as possible so that it appears they are a mirror image of the leader.

Balloons The goal is to work together to keep the balloon in the air while standing or sitting in a circle. To make it more challenging change the play from using hands to elbows, shoulders, knees, etc.

Webs Using a big ball of yarn hold the end and toss the rest to a person seated in the circle. This participant decides who to toss the ball to and says something they appreciate about that person. This continues until everyone in the group has a piece of the web. Talk with your child about the threads of the web being links between them.

Feelings

Feeling Photos Talk with your child about the words we use to describe feelings related to things they have experienced. Encourage them to share their stories. Give photos/cut outs/ internet pictures of a diverse group of people demonstrating various feelings and lead a discussion about how these people may be feeling and what the possible causes might be. A possible extension would be to have your child draw feeling pictures.

Feeling Books Select a children’s book that deals with a particular feeling and read to your child (there are many book lists online, see <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu>). As situations involving feelings arise in the book, ask your child thought provoking questions to encourage them to try to understand, empathize and connect. A possible extension is to have them re-enact the story in a dramatic play scenario or puppet show.

Puppet Shows Tell a story using puppets to enact common childhood experiences and ask your child questions at intervals about the feelings of the characters, their possible motivations and what might be done to problem solve for a more mutually beneficial outcome.

Feelings in Motion In a large group space ask participants to use their whole bodies to show emotions. An extension would be to have participants guess the emotion being enacted.

Beanbag Share Talk about what it means to share ideas. Pass the beanbag around the circle to music or a chant. The participant who has the beanbag when the music stops shares an idea such as a story they like, an interest, a place they enjoy going, something they want to do later in the day etc.

