

THE PROTECTIVE FACTORS
AN E-BOOK SERIES FOR SUPERVISED VISITATION PROGRAMS

Emotional and Social
Competence of Children



The Sixth Protective Factor in a Series of Six

Institute for Family Violence Studies
College of Social Work
Florida State University
<http://familyvio.csw.fsu.edu>



INTRODUCTION

Research indicates that children who have well-developed social and emotional competencies are at a reduced risk for child abuse and maltreatment. Emotional competence can be defined as a child's ability to identify and express his or her feelings. Social competence refers to a child's ability to interact with other people. Emotional competence and social competence go hand-in-hand, as both involve skill sets that help to express, define, and interpret emotions. Emotional and social competencies also allow children to relate and respond to the feelings of others, as well as communicate their needs.

Objectives

After completing this training, social service providers and supervised visitation personnel should:

- Understand what an emotionally and socially competent child looks like in a family setting and be able to describe different examples in the home.
- Know about the importance of emotional and social competence and the positive effects on children and families.
- Be able to use strategies to help parents promote emotional and social competence in their children.
- Understand the specific ways that supervised visitation personnel can help parents promote emotional and social competence in their children.
- Know about the resources available to social service providers, as well as for families looking for more information about emotional and social competence in children.

Target Audience

This training can help anyone that works with families, specifically:

- Child Protective Workers
- Supervised Visitation Staff
- Case Managers
- Teachers
- Counselors
- All other social service providers working with families
- Families themselves!



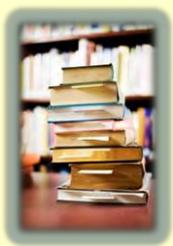
EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL COMPETENCE IN THE HOME

Below are several examples of what an emotionally and socially competent child may look like in the home:

- A young child sharing her snack with her sibling.
- A girl asking her parents to participate in an extracurricular activity.
- A little boy asking his sister if she is okay after a fall.
- A high-school youth talking with his parents about being bullied.

Below are several indicators of what a child with underdeveloped emotional and social competence may look like in the home:

- A young boy breaks household items when he becomes angry.
- A girl becomes upset and quits whenever she is not winning at a game.
- A child refuses to share anything with her brother.
- A little boy cries whenever he gets an answer wrong on his homework.



Additional Multimedia Materials...

One way to help a child to become emotionally and socially competent is to work with the child to help them identify his or her feelings. There are lots of visual aids that are available to teach children about emotions and positive social behaviors. Try using the **Feelings Thermometer** and the **Kid Care Cue Cards**, attached at the end of this training, to model ways for parents to increase emotional and social competence in their children. More tools can be found on the website for The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning at the following link:

<http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/strategies.html>



THE IMPORTANCE OF EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL COMPETENCE FOR CHILDREN

Emotional and social competence allows children to build healthy and positive relationships, as well as help children manage their moods and behaviors. Generally, children who are emotionally and socially competent do better in school and build stronger relationships.

Children who are emotionally and socially competent:

- Listen, share, cooperate, and help others.
- Are able to control their behaviors in an age-appropriate way.
- Are better able to successfully establish relationships with their peers.
- Perform better academically and behaviorally in school settings.

Children who are underdeveloped emotionally and socially may:

- Have difficulty in peer relationships, as well as with interpreting the emotions of others.
- Have lower levels of confidence and motivation, especially at school.
- Find it challenging to focus or to stay on task.
- Struggle with controlling their feelings and behaviors.



Think About It...

Knowing about the importance of emotional and social competency, what are the risks to families with children who are emotionally and socially underdeveloped? What are the risks to the family if the parent is emotionally and socially underdeveloped? How might the child, parent, or family as a whole be affected?



STRATEGIES FOR WORKING WITH FAMILIES

Social service providers can help parents learn about the importance of emotional and social competence for children and how to foster it in their children. There are many different opportunities for social service providers to discuss emotional and social competence with parents. Some opportunities are described below:

- Talking with parents during intake and follow-up procedures to social service delivery.
- Exploring options with parents when they express concerns regarding their children.
- Discussing emotional and social competence with parents during supervised visitation.
- Educating parents about occupational, educational, and social resources.
- Chatting with parents during pick-up, drop-off, or parent-teacher meetings.



Skill Building

There are different skills that help parents foster emotional and social competence in their children. Some are described below, along with information on how social service providers can help parents to develop these skills:



Skill

Strategy

Create a Safe Environment

- Offer warmth and acceptance when discussing emotions with the child.
- Encourage active play and offer support and guidance when the child expresses fear or frustration when trying something new. When feeling emotions, help name, validate, and manage those emotions.
- Listen to the child when he or she expresses thoughts. Use validation and clarification to reflect understanding and acceptance.
- Express the importance of giving children “face” time. Encourage the parent to be attentive and expressive with the child at every age.



Skill

Strategy

Communicate

- Encourage parents to talk regularly with the child about his or her day and explore the child’s thoughts and feelings.
- Give parents tools to help the child communicate emotions, including how to communicate and listen to others effectively.
- Encourage parents to remain aware, sensitive, and supportive of the child in conversations about feelings.
- Following times of “acting out,” wait until the child is calm and have the parent talk with the child. The two can come up with different ways of handling the problem together.

Multimedia Materials: Attached to this document is the handout **Top 10 Strategies to Facilitate Child Communication**, which can aid parents in encouraging children to communicate with them, helping to build their emotional intelligence and further developing the parent-child bond.



Skill**Strategy**

Teaching and Practicing

- Have parents teach behaviors like listening, saying “please” and “thank you,” and other ways to be polite, as well as give the child opportunities to practice these behaviors.
- Parents can encourage self-control by staying calm in situations that may usually incite anger.
- Encourage parents to read books or watch movies with the child and ask him or her about specific emotions and behaviors using the characters. For example, the parent can ask, “How do you think Mr. Bear is feeling right now?” or “What would you do if you were Mr. Bear?”
- Provide parents with tools to teach children how to identify and label emotions and the appropriate behaviors that accompany different feelings.

Multimedia Materials: Attached to this document is the handout **How To Show You’re Listening**, which you can provide to families to aid both parents and children in the development of positive listening skills which helps to encourage communication of emotions.



Skill

Strategy

***Ability to Demonstrate
Emotional and Social
Competence***

- Discuss ways that the parent can model healthy management of their own emotions.
- Develop methods parents can use to properly respond to the child in challenging situations.
- Teach the parent how to express emotions around his or her child, identify problematic areas and strengths, and then develop better responses together.



A Note on Cultural Competency...

Have visual aids such as books, magazines, posters, toys, etc. that reflect a variety of people and cultures. It is important for children to see people like themselves represented in their environment and to be exposed to diversity in all of its forms! Remember to talk with the parents about their values and expectations for their children. For more information on working with children from a variety of backgrounds, click on the link below. It will direct you to a list of publications, including information on working with Native families, children of color, multiracial youth, LGBTQ youth and more! The information is put out by Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children [CASA]:

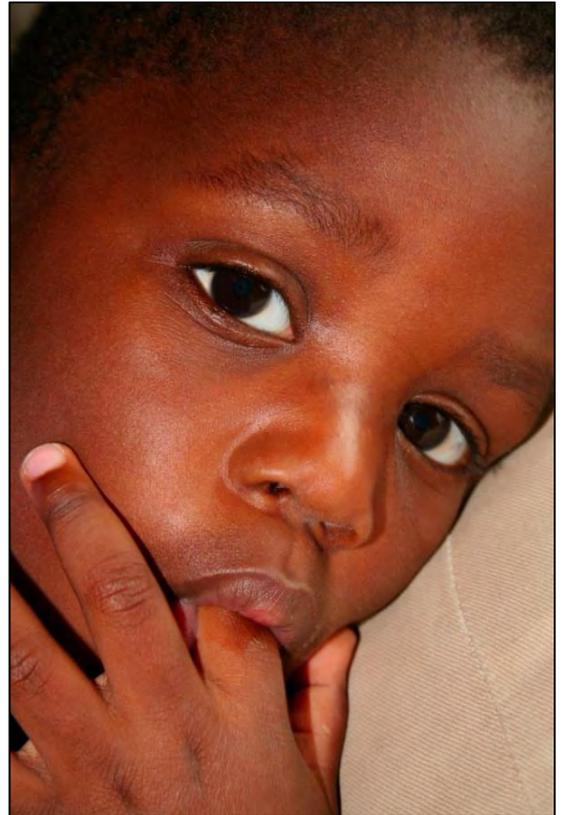
http://www.casaforchildren.org/site/c.mtJSI7MPIsE/b.6367927/k.1D9A/Cultural_Compence_Diversity_Inclusion.htm



CASE EXAMPLE

Read this case example and answer the questions that follow.

A teacher with a classroom of 3 and 4 year old preschoolers has noticed that one of the boys in her class does not interact with the other children during play time. When she calls on him, he becomes very shy and puts his head down. Sometimes he will nod his head yes, shake it no, or gesture that he does not know, but he will not speak. He sometimes leans over to a friend and whispers to her, and she will then speak for him, but he will not speak aloud to the class. Besides avoiding verbal communication, the child does well in all other aspects of the class. The teacher discovers in a conversation with the parents that at home, the child is very talkative and lively. The parents are aware that outside of the home he will rarely speak and believe that he is just extremely shy. He does not appear to be unhappy, especially at home, and he is able to communicate at an age-appropriate level.



Questions

1. What are some positive factors in this situation that can be built upon?
2. What are some ways that the parents could help to increase the child's comfort level with speaking outside of the home?

Possible Answers

1. *The child appears to be on track developmentally, does well in class, behaves well, and is able to speak (although he chooses not to most of the time). Also, it seems that the family is aware of his issue with speaking outside of the home. Importantly, he does seem to be comfortable speaking with one person in the class; that relationship could be used to increase the child's comfort level with speaking.*
2. *The parents could talk with their child to gain an understanding of why the child does not like speaking. They could try to do activities outside of the home that involve other children and families to expose the child to other social environments. They can also give the child specific tasks to practice in those environments.*



SUPERVISED VISITATION CHART

The chart below describes opportunities that supervised visitation personnel can take advantage of with parents and children to encourage the development of emotional and social competencies and the positive effect this may have on the child.

Opportunities for Supervised Visitation Personnel	What the Parent Can Do	Positive Effects on the Child
<i>During intake, provide the parent with information regarding age-appropriate social and emotional competency.</i>	The parent can respond to the child's emotional and social needs at the different stages of his or her development.	The child will have his or her needs met and will be less likely to "act out."
<i>During parenting time, encourage parents to model positive social behaviors.</i>	The parent teaches the child how to share, help others, work together, and show respect.	The child develops the social skills needed to interact positively with others.

Opportunities for Supervised Visitation Personnel	What the Parent Can Do	Positive Effects on the Child
<p><i>During parenting time, make tools available, such as the <i>Feelings Thermometer</i> or storybooks, to help the child identify his or her emotions.</i></p>	<p>The parent can use tools to help the child identify emotions and appropriate responses to feelings.</p>	<p>The child learns how to name his or her feelings and behaviors.</p>
<p><i>When the child becomes upset, encourage parents to talk with the child about his or her feelings, and to use validation, active listening, and clarification to express empathy and understanding.</i></p>	<p>The parent communicates with the child in a way that expresses understanding and care.</p>	<p>The child feels safe and accepted when expressing feelings.</p>
<p><i>When the parent becomes frustrated, talk about the importance of teaching healthy emotional expression and explore how the caregiver reacts to the child being happy, sad, anxious, angry, etc.</i></p>	<p>The parent can model healthy emotional expression and teach the child how to express his or her own emotions and how to respond to a variety of situations.</p>	<p>The child learns how to express emotions in a constructive way.</p>



CASE EXAMPLE

Read this case example and answer the questions that follow.

A supervised visitation monitor is working with a young mother and her eight-year-old child. During the visit, she notices that when the child first arrives to visitation, though shy, she appears happy and comfortable. As soon as the mother arrives, the child becomes visibly tense and anxious. The monitor notices the mother attempting to make conversation with her daughter about different topics, but whenever the child begins to express a feeling or opinion, the mother disagrees with her and criticizes her. The child becomes increasingly quiet throughout their time together. After some time, the mother asks her if something is wrong. The girl says that she feels like she can't ever do anything right and that she is always wrong and begins to cry. Her mother yells, "Stop crying. You have no reason to be upset!"



Questions

1. Can you identify positive behaviors that the mother engages in that can be built upon?
2. What problematic behaviors do you see on the part of the mother?
3. What strategies could be suggested to the mother to replace the problematic behaviors?

Potential Answers

1. *The mother expresses interest in the child and appears to be attentive to the child's change in mood when she becomes quiet. She also acknowledges that her actions have caused this change in mood and desires to understand what she has done wrong. It also seems to bother the mother when the child begins to cry.*
2. *The mother reacts to the child with criticism whenever the child expresses her opinion. The mother also uses hostility to get the child to stop crying.*
3. *It is good to talk to the child, rather than criticize her when she expresses an opinion or feeling that is not favorable to the mother. The mother can ask her child to elaborate on her opinion or say, "You know, I don't agree, but it is okay for us to have different opinions." Emphasize the harm in using threats to get a child to stop a behavior and provide the mother with ways in which she can soothe her child through validation and affection.*



OTHER RESOURCES

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning

An overview of social and emotional competencies and skills categorized by CASEL, and specific objectives for the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

<http://casel.org/why-it-matters/what-is-sel/skills-competencies/>

Teaching Your Child To: Identify and Express Emotions

A publication by The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning that focuses on how parents can help their child learn about expressing emotions in constructive ways.

http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/familytools/teaching_emotions.pdf

Family Skill Builder

An E-booklet put out by The Institute for Family Violence Studies that focuses on developmental milestones, caregiver-child interactions, and supervised visitation goals.

<http://familyvio.csw.fsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/FINALFamilySkillBuilder.pdf>

Strengthening Families through Early Care and Education

A Center for the Study of Social Policy literature review that focuses on model early-learning education programs and their strategies for promoting the protective factors.

<http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengthening-families/resources/body/LiteratureReview.pdf>

Raising Children Network

Strategies that caregivers can use to encourage positive behaviors in children.

http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/encouraging_good_behaviour.html

THE FEELINGS THERMOMETER

The Feelings Thermometer can be used to help a child identify what he or she may be feeling and appropriate responses to those feelings.

How am I feeling today?

What can I do to feel better?

STOP and ask for help!

Take deep breaths, count to ten, do something else, find a quiet space

Think of something happy, find something fun to do

Smile! You are feeling **GREAT!**

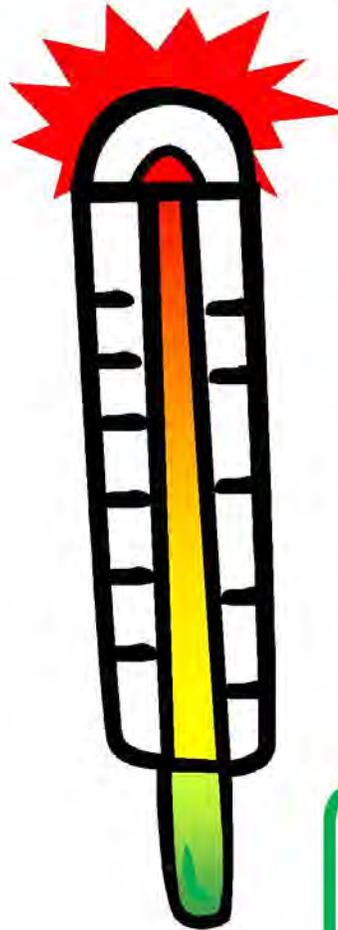
What words describe how I feel?

Angry, Furious, Very Sad, Anxious

Frustrated, Anxious, Annoyed, Upset

Nervous, Worried, Confused

I feel good!
Happy, Relaxed, Content, OK



What should I do?

Child Care Cue Cards

As supervised visitation providers, you can use the following child care cue cards with parents and their children during supervised visitation. The cue cards are a way to teach children how to act or react in different situations. It is a good way to show children how to act appropriately. Below are scenarios parents can ask their children to think about and match to the best cue card.

1. You want something, such as a toy or food. What would you do?
2. You are playing with a toy and another child wants to join you. What would you do?
3. There is a line to go down the slide. What would you do?
4. You are having problems with a question during school. What would you do?
5. Another child is bullying you. What would you do?
6. A child is doing something that you don't like. What would you do?



Sharing



Asking for Help



Ignoring



Asking to Stop
Politely



Please and Thank You



Waiting Your Turn

Top 10 Strategies to Facilitate Child Communication

Below are 10 strategies you as a parent can use daily to facilitate good communication skills in your child.

1. Get on your child's level.

If your child is shorter than you, kneel down so you are at eye level with him or her during communication.

2. Actively listen to your child.

Make eye contact with your child and be attentive as he or she speaks.

3. Display signs of verbal and nonverbal listening.

Say "yes" or "mhhh" as your child speaks, nod your head, and make facial expressions to show signs of listening.

4. Ask questions to encourage your child to have open communication.

When your child is telling a story, ask questions to get more details.

5. Teach your child not to interrupt while someone else is speaking.

If your child interrupts you, ask him or her politely to not do that and calmly explain that interrupting is disrespectful to the speaker.

How To Show You're Listening

Focus fully on the speaker.

- * Sit up straight, face the speaker, and make good eye contact.

Limit distractions

- * Put away phones and turn off the TV.

Show interest

- * Ask the speaker questions to show your interest.



Use encouraging responses

- * Say “Mhmm” or “Okay” to create a welcoming conversation.

Respond to show understanding.

- * Give a supportive response, such as “I can tell this is very important to you”.

Avoid interrupting the speaker

- * Focus on what the speaker is saying and avoid preparing your response until there is a natural pause in conversation.

Show support with your body language

- * Providing the speaker with nods, smiles, and an open posture puts the speaker at ease and shows your support.

REFERENCES

Denham, S. A., Bassett, H. H., & Zinsler, K. (2012). Early childhood teachers as socializers of young children's emotional competence. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 40, 137-143.

McCabe, P. C., & Altamura, M. (2011). Empirically valid strategies to improve social and emotional competence of preschool children. *Psychology in Schools*, 48(5), 513-540.

Shultz, B., Richardson, R. C., Barber, C. R., & Wilcox, D. (2011). A preschool pilot study of connecting with others: Lessons for teaching social and emotional competence. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 39, 143-148.

United States Department of Health and Human Services (2013). Preventing child maltreatment and promoting well-being: A network for action. *2013 Resource Guide*. Retrieved from: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/guide2013/guide.pdf>



The Clearinghouse on Supervised Visitation

awards this Certificate of Training to

for completion of a Protective Factors training
on ***Emotional and Social Competence of
Children***



Karen Oehme, Director, Institute for Family Violence Studies

Date