

## Emotional Safety

Emotional safety means that your child feels safe enough with the adults around her that she can be vulnerable. A child who feels emotionally safe can express her emotions without fearing shame or judgement.

In the parent-child relationship, a child feels emotionally safe if she feels valued and esteemed by you. When this is the case, the child knows that she can express her emotions such as fear, anxiety, sadness, joy, excitement, etc. For a child, emotions come from life's everyday experiences. As parents we see our toddler go from happy to sobbing in moments because she didn't get her way. The emotions come naturally. But learning to understand and manage those emotions is a learned process.

Emotional safety comes from within. It begins by teaching your child to identify and be comfortable with different emotions. This means taking advantage of life's everyday situations to talk about emotions with your child: "Look how sad he looks", "I know you're upset because your lego creation is broken" (that's heard often in my house), or "I would also be sad if someone had said that to me".

## Developing a Sense of Emotional Safety

- **Let your child know you think she is wonderful just the way she is.**
- **Give him plenty of opportunities to feel good about himself.**
- **Help your child develop his emotional intelligence.** This includes talking about your own emotions and how you manage them: "I have butterflies in my stomach because I'm anxious about my interview", "I'm feeling stressed about my presentation so I'm going to listen to my play list to calm down".
- **Don't belittle or dismiss your child's emotions.**
- **Listen first, then react.** Empathy is a common characteristic of emotionally intelligent people. It is not about accepting inappropriate behavior, but rather understanding how your child may feel about a particular situation. Putting yourself in your kid's shoes can help guide your response to her behavior.
- **Be intentional.**

## Healthy Discipline

Many people think to discipline is to punish or control. But it should be seen as an opportunity to teach a child there are consequences to actions – good consequences and bad. What does healthy discipline mean? Healthy discipline benefits the child. It isn't about making them pay or hurt. It should be an experience that teaches them a lesson. Harsh discipline is never healthy discipline. Appropriate discipline is. A child must know what they are being disciplined for and the terms of the discipline. Remember, you are trying to teach them, not hurt them.

Reference: Wilson, Sandra D. Released from Shame: Moving beyond the Pain of the Past. InterVarsity Press, 2002.