



Formative Parenting

Cultivating Character in Children

A Ministry of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Immaculata, Pennsylvania

Home Ways for School Days, Part 2 SCHOOL SOCIALIZATION

Typically, children care more about being accepted and approved by peers than they do about academic achievement. They desire companionship, inclusion, and invitation to group activities. Some seem to possess naturally the skills for social acceptance. Others act in ways that defeat that very desire.

Successful socialization requires the social and emotional *capacity* to respond in an effective way. Socialization skills enable a child to understand the norms, attitudes, values, and behaviors that are socially appropriate for an occasion. Modern psychologists speak of “social and emotional intelligence” – a *smartness* that includes self-awareness, impulse control, working cooperatively, and understanding the perspective of others. This newsletter suggests HOME WAYS that prepare children to develop the socialization skills.

Create occasions that increase a child’s affective (emotional) abilities.

Empathy – identify with the pain of others, *compassion* – do something to relieve the suffering of another, *sacrifice* – deny self for the sake of another, *appreciation* – recognize with gratitude the efforts of another, *sharing* – give self, talents and possessions to another to use, own or borrow, *sympathy* – reverence the grief of another, *sorrow* – express remorse with the intention to change, and *keeping promises*.

Strengthen the capacity for self-control.

Taking turns, inviting others to go first and by delaying gratification. For example, “Yes, you may have xxx ... as a lunch treat, after you finish your written homework, on payday, after you first offer one to each of our guests, or when you save half the cost . . .”

Teach how to Name, Claim and Tame Emotions and Behavior.

- Label the feeling as specifically as possible. For example, *anger* is a generic word; *resentment* is more specific. *Love* is broad while *trust*, *acceptance*, and *inclusion* are more finely-tuned expressions of love. A list of *emotional vocabulary* is featured in *Building Moral Intelligence* (Dr. Michele Borba, 2001) and on her website at www.moralintelligence.com.
- Verbally or mentally express feeling and acknowledge the intensity of the feeling. For example, “I am so embarrassed by my mistake that I want to hide where no one can find me.”
- Know the difference between feeling and actions. Frustration, for instance, explains – but does not excuse – a temper tantrum.
- Manage feelings by controlling impulses, reducing stress, and using self-talk.

Practice the skill of respectful assertiveness.

Use “I Statements” to express needs, feelings, wants and desires. “*When . . .* [state the behavior] *I feel . . .* [state the feeling] *because . . .* [state the consequence].” For example, “*When* dirty dishes are left on the table *I feel* taken for granted *because* I am left to clean up the mess that others make.” “*When* something captures your interest you tend to forget responsibilities and so *I want* you to pack your book bag *before* turning on the TV.”

Be inclusive of classmates.

Abide by the school/class policy regarding birthday parties, Christmas gifts, Valentine cards, etc. If no policy exists adopt the attitude: “How would I feel if my child was excluded from social activities?” If you are not able to invite the entire class to a party, or send a gift or card to each student, do so privately by telephone, mail, or “away from school” delivery. Sensitize your child to safeguard the feelings of others.

Cultivate the disposition of Gospel love.

Distinguish between “love” and “like.” We may not like everyone we meet but Gospel love calls us to demonstrate respect, courtesy, helpfulness, inclusion, forgiveness, second-chances, fairness, and justice to all people. Guide your child in the ways of discipleship and help him/her to apply Christian principles of socialization at home and at school.

Bully-Proof your child.

Bullies are unhappy people with low self-esteem. They act out of anger, frustration, or to win respect. Bullies target victims who seem smaller, weaker, shy, or who excel in grades or achievement. Bullies pick on others either physically or verbally through threats, insults, and embarrassment or by systematically ignoring the victim.

A “Bully-proofed” student is respectfully assertive, focuses on how to avoid violence, refuses to trade insults, stays calm and confident, pre-plans how to talk to the bully, uses humor to relax a tense situation without making fun of the bully, compliments the bully with honest affirmation and seeks help from a parent, teacher, principal or counselor.

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