

BUILDING SELF-AWARENESS SKILLS IN YOUR CHILD

A child's future ability to succeed in school, in college, in the workplace, and to achieve long-term happiness will depend on their ability to develop self-awareness. Students who learn to accurately recognize their own emotions, thoughts and values and how they influence behavior, as well as being able to accurately assess their own strengths and limitations with well-grounded confidence, optimism and a "growth mindset", are well on their way to future success.

Parents and families are critical partners in helping their children develop relationship skills. This resource offers guidance, tools, and activities for parents and families to help their children in developing self-awareness at home.

OPPORTUNITIES TO BOOST YOUR CHILD'S SELF-AWARENESS

- **Accept and recognize your child's emotions.** Help your child identify and name their emotions and share your feelings with them. Learning to tune in to their feelings and behaviors, as well as the feelings and behaviors of others, can help them learn to respond more appropriately in social and emotional situations. Your child's ability to understand and articulate emotions will help them learn to express themselves better and deal with emotions more effectively to manage behavior.
- **Empathize with your child.** Empathizing with your child will help them feel more secure and confident. By teaching them that their emotions are important and nothing to be ashamed of they will know they do not always have to be perfect. At the same time teach them to be aware of the feelings and needs of others.
- **Let your child communicate freely.** Honest and open communication is key to your child's self-awareness and overall growth and development. Let them express their thoughts without reaction or judgement so they will share how they are feeling without worrying what you will think. Have conversations about their strengths and challenges and discuss what strategies they can use to complete tasks and build on their strengths.
- **Teach effective problem solving.** Help your child to arrive at their own solutions rather than giving them answers. Allow them to make mistakes and teach them how to move forward the next time.



FAMILY MOVIE NIGHT

Toy Story (1995, rated G)

Woody is a good-hearted cowboy doll who belongs to a young boy. Fear and jealousy set in when his position as the favorite toy is jeopardized by a new Buzz Lightyear toy. In the film, we see both Woody's and Buzz Lightyear's struggles to understand both their sense of self and their place in the world. Woody's sense of self was rooted in being Andy's favorite toy. He was the leader, the one all the other toys looked up to for their sense of self. However, when Buzz entered the scene, this dynamic was radically disrupted.

WALL-E (2008 rated G)

In the distant future, a small waste-collecting robot embarks on a space journey that will ultimately decide not only the fate of mankind but his own. After spending 700 years on earth he meets EVE (a fellow robot) who helps WALL-E open his eyes to his potential and the solution to a major problem. WALL-E has developed emotions and is trying to process them, all while trying to change the fate of humanity.

Inside Out (2015, rated PG)

Important messages about needing to feel and to express all of your emotions, whether happy or sad. Told from the perspective of 11 year old Riley as her emotions guide her through a difficult, life-changing event.

Seabiscuit (2003, rated PG-13)

In the midst of the Great Depression, a businessman coping with his sons death, a jockey with a history of trauma and a down and out horse trainer team up to help Seabiscuit, a temperamental, undersized racehorse. The main characters develop self-awareness through mindfulness and develop resilience inspiring others.



DISCUSSION STARTERS

TEACHING SELF-AWARENESS THROUGH LITERATURE

ELEMENTARY

You Are Strong By Danielle Dufayet, Jennifer Zivoian
This soothing and empowering book reassures children that they can handle big emotions. It highlights that developing inner strength and confidence can help you to take on challenging moments in life. “You Are Strong” shows a variety of scenes and family relationships to show the different ways you can find support and inspiration while being strong. Includes a Note to Parents and Caregivers by Julia Martin Burch, PhD, with advice for building skills to navigate and cope with big emotions.

1. What does being strong mean to you?
2. Which character do you relate to the most?
3. Why do you think confidence is important?
4. Do you think talking about your feelings is strong?

The Boy With Big, Big Feelings By Brittney Lee, Jacob Souva

This book features boy with the ability to feel so much, he can feel his family members’ emotions as if they were his own. His feelings are so big, sometimes they glow from his cheeks and even pour from his eyes. He tries to stuff down his feelings to cope, but when inspired by art, the boy finds that his feelings are to be celebrated and nothing to be ashamed of.

1. Do you think that it is okay to have big feelings?
2. What are some things that make you have big feelings?
3. How would you describe big feelings?
4. What are some ways that we can manage when we have those big feelings?

I Am Enough By Grace Byers, Keturah A. Bobo
A picture poetry book that leaves you feeling confident and secure in who you are. Everyone can benefit from the reassurance that Grace Byers delivers in “I Am Enough”. A feel good book that inspires self love and unconditional appreciation for unique abilities.

1. What unique abilities do you have?
2. What page was your favorite and why?
3. Do you think most people know they are enough?
4. If you could add a sentence to the book, what would it be?

INTERMEDIATE

The Playbook: 52 Rules to Aim Shoot and Score in this Game Called Life By Kwame Alexander, Thai Neave

For anyone fluent in sports, this book is perfect. Using basketball as a metaphor for growth on and off the court, it offers inspiring quotes and images from figures like LeBron James, Nelson Mandela, Steph Curry and Serena Williams. Alexander provides his own poetic helpful advice to help anyone who needs a little encouragement.

1. Which piece of advice stuck with you the most?
2. If you could give someone else advice on how to handle the “game called life,” what would it be?
3. How does self-awareness apply to this book?

The Beginning of Everything By Robyn Schneider
Sometimes new beginnings come from what seem to be bad endings. Schneider discusses relationships, chaos within them and how to find meaning in the things that seem impossible to come back from. From flash mobs to blanket forts to a poodle who just might be the reincarnation of Jay Gatsby. A story of how difficult it can be to play the part that other people expect.

1. How do you think Ezra felt juggling sports, school and his relationship issues?
2. Did you recognize that even if someone appears to have it all, they can still struggle with things others are not aware of?
3. What new beginnings can you think of that occurs after another event ends?

Be Calm: Be Your Best Self Everyday (Be You) By Editors of Teen Breathe

A guide to learning how to remain calm while under stress. The ability to calmly express your point of view when under pressure, is a skill that can be a benefit in various situations. Whether talking to a friend, family member or whomever it may be, slowing down and thinking about the power of your thoughts and words is important. *Be calm* not only supports individuality but offers input as to how to cope with negative emotions and circumstances starting with what is inside, first.

1. What skill do you feel the book mentions is most important to you, when coping with stress?
2. What kinds of events do you think this book helps you prepare for?
3. How do you remain calm under stress?