5 Ways to Foster Social-Emotional Skills

Social-emotional skills, such as self-awareness, cooperation and responsible decision-making, are important for the health and success of young people. Whether at home or in school, there are many simple ways adults can help develop social-emotional skills in children and adolescents. To get started, try some of these:

1. **Be a role model**
   Adults and adolescents can positively influence children by demonstrating healthy social and emotional behaviors every day, including being a good listener, acknowledging their own and others’ emotions, and working together to resolve a conflict.

2. **Involve children and teens in decision-making**
   Engaging youth in decisions that affect them at school and at home (e.g., setting family agreements, identifying consequences) can improve their well-being and help them develop important leadership skills.

3. **Read together**
   Reading, particularly age-appropriate fiction books, can foster important social-emotional skills such as empathy. Reading to others or together as a family can also facilitate social connection and learning outside the classroom. Bonus: Encourage discussion of diverse characters’ feelings and experiences.

4. **Help others**
   Evidence shows that engaging in service-learning programs can increase students’ self-confidence and decrease school drop-out rates. Educators and caregivers can encourage kids and teens to volunteer for activities they enjoy, such as tutoring younger children or assisting at an animal shelter. Bonus: Volunteer as a family!

5. **Engage in physical activity**
   Participating in regular physical activity, including active games and free play, can help children develop self-regulation and social competence skills. Youth development leaders should encourage movement opportunities before, during and after school in addition to promoting low-cost family physical activities.

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