

7 Tips for Practicing SEL at Home

Here are bite-sized practices and rituals that you can consider using on a regular basis with your child(ren) to extend social-emotional learning into the home.

1. **Take an assets-based approach that focuses on your child's strengths.** Emphasize children's strengths and "SEL superpowers" before talking about what they can improve on. For instance: when your child brings home a graded test or assignment, first discuss what she or her did well. Then shift the discussion to what can be improved. Focus on process-oriented skills versus the outcome. Take this a step further by working collaboratively with your child to create a "SEL skill chart" that they can use to monitor how they are practicing various skills and habits at home.
2. **Explore emotions by asking your child how they feel.** Send the message that feelings matter, are normal, and that you care about them. Encourage children to use "I" statements when talking about their emotions; help them unpack what it feels like to be happy, excited, stressed, or frustrated.
3. **Model empathy and kindness as well as sharing and helping behaviors.** Utilize daily interactions – such as helping an elderly neighbor – to encouraging sharing and helping behaviors. Explore options for children to participate in community service projects or volunteering opportunities and talk to them about giving back.
4. **Read books to (or with) your child.** Seek recommendations from your child's teacher or a librarian for stories on themes that both interest your child and are relevant to the SEL skills they are learning in the classroom. Read these books together with your child and explore how the characters handle conflict or form relationships.
5. **Empower your child to solve problems on their own.** Resist the temptation to step-in and offer solutions to a difficult situation your child is encountering. Instead, ask probing questions to help your child solve the problem on their own. Discuss how decisions might impact others (positively or negatively) and what the pros and cons or solutions might be.
6. **Model emotion labeling and emotion regulation when you encounter stress, frustration or anger.** Specify a "quiet area" in the house that can be used to cool-down. When you encounter "trigger situations" that may cause you to get angry or irritated, name what you're feeling, take a few deep breaths, and talk as a family about what everyone can do to stay calm.
7. **Be willing to apologize.** Show your child that it is important to apologize after an outburst, misunderstanding or conflict while modeling respect and kindness.