

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE (EQ) & FOSTERING A SENSE OF BELONGING



FOSTERING A SENSE OF BELONGINGS LOOKS LIKE...

by Siomara Bridges-Mata, Director, Community Initiatives & Advocacy

Having a sense of belonging is so important for our development as humans. When we feel connected and have support systems in place, we are happier, healthier, and more resilient (able to effectively navigate difficult times in our lives). Cambridge dictionary defines belonging as a feeling of being comfortable as part of a particular group and having a good relationship with the other members of the group because they welcome you and accept you. Fostering a sense of belonging amongst our youth takes intentional effort; in this month's EQ Community Newsletter, we share tips and strategies on how to truly cultivate belonging, helping you develop environments that promote comfort, connection, and genuine contribution.

EARLY LEARNING

Fostering a sense of belonging provides young children with the foundation for their well-being. The adults in a young child's life can help them feel secure by recognizing emotions through facial expressions and labeling emotions. As you label these emotions, you are helping them make a connection between their feelings and their body reaction. In young children, it is essential that we plan for transitions to help children adjust to new places. You can visualize the new place and identify triggers for uncomfortable emotions. Let's plan! Think about soothing activities that will help them feel comfortable. Start talking about the new place you will be visiting. Then, when you are at the new place name similarities between the familiar place and the new place. Help them feel loved and noticed by exploring these new emotional adventures.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

At this age children, start navigating places more independently. Adults can support this newfound independence by learning about their daily routines, such as in their classroom or at home. Use different opportunities to deepen conversations with your child. During this time, it is essential that the adults model skills that will help sharpen the self-awareness and self-management skills of young children in these new settings. During these conversations, learn how new friends or new settings are helping their children build on their personalities and interest. As the adult, it is important to model empathy through deep conversations, as children will put it into practice in other settings.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Our preteens are discovering new interests and new friends as they navigate the challenges of middle school. This is a great time of year to check in with your kids to see where they feel most welcome. Help them be mindful of the friends and extracurricular activities they are choosing. Where do they feel the most welcome? Who makes them feel included? How can they help others feel included?

HIGH SCHOOL

One of the most powerful things we can feel is connection. To be truly seen and understood is a hard thing to come by in your teens. There is no faster turnaround than a teen who has found a place where they belong. Whether it is band, football or theatre, students that feel they belong to something show a greater satisfaction for life. It provides connection, purpose, and a way to learn more about themselves.

COPING SKILLS & ACTIVITIES

YOU BELONG TO A COMMUNITY

by *Melissa Hartnett*
Education Programs Specialist

A sense of belonging is key to a successful classroom community. Students who feel accepted are always more engaged in learning. One strategy to foster belonging at school is to greet students at the door. Teachers who take the time to greet each student with a positive interaction before each class show that they care and value them. Whether it's a smile and hello, a fist bump, or a special handshake, taking time to greet every student by name every day helps build a relationship over time. As the writer, Dale Carnegie, once said:

“A person’s name is to him or her the sweetest and most important sound in any language.”

When teachers greet their students by name, they are demonstrating that they see them, and they are important. Additionally, when a teacher asks a question about last night’s baseball game or notices sadness in a normally happy student and asks how they are feeling, it expresses that the teacher cares about them beyond grades and classwork. In a school setting that sense of belonging starts at the classroom door.

RELATIONSHIPS HELP YOU BELONG

by *Caitlin Castro*
Education Programs Specialist-
Grants Coordinator

In early childhood, relationships are crucial to a sense of belonging. Children build and experience attachments with people as soon as they are born. Adults (parents, teachers, caregivers, etc.) should nurture relationships with children that are warm, caring, and consistent in order to help children feel loved, safe, and secure. When children have these positive relationships in their life, they are more likely to emulate these skills in relationships with their own peers. Learning how to work with others is crucial for young children. In the classroom, children practice developing these skills through play. During play, children learn how to work together, help others, and how to be a part of a team. These factors are so important in fostering a sense of belonging in children. These are skills that develop over time through consistent routines and healthy expectations in the classroom and reinforced at home.

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www.myframeworks.org

RESOURCES & READINGS

by *Eddie Underwood*
Education Programs Specialist



The following are some resources to help with fostering a sense of belonging. Fostering a sense of belonging supports students through a time in which they are forming their identity, developing psychosocial skills, and being influenced by their peers.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oRXYc4xmvrwg&t=3s>
- <https://www.learningandthebrain.com/blog/psychology-of-belonging/>
- <https://www.actforyouth.net/resources/ipe/inclusive-3-activities-belonging.pdf>



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