

Developing Emotional Intelligence in Your Child

*~Mrs Melody Appleton & Mrs Poon Siew Win~
Educational Psychologists*

Emotional Intelligence became a buzzword when Daniel Goleman's book on the subject was published and subsequently mentioned by our Prime Minister in one of his speeches. Emotional Intelligence, or EQ, is the ability to be sensitive to our own and to other people's feelings, the ability to genuinely respond with empathy and understanding, to control our behaviour and to develop co-operative and supportive work habits. The need to develop a high level of social awareness and response is important to the reduction of stress and the promotion of a happy and successful life. Unlike IQ, which is seen as fairly static by the time a child reaches the middle years of childhood, EQ can be developed through the lifespan of the individual. Children benefit greatly from developing skills in dealing positively with their peers, parents and teachers and these skills can be learned.

The main group of children that attend our EQ workshops have difficulties relating to their peers because of attention problems,

inability to play co-operatively, impulsivity, language difficulties, extreme shyness or are on the higher end of the autistic spectrum. Of course, other peer relationship problems, such as bullying or being the victim of bullies, also prompt parents to send their child to one of our workshops. Depending on the severity of the problem, some of the children may begin with individual sessions before proceeding to a group situation.

Specific activities for various age groups are developed to suit the needs of those particular children. These include the use of stories, games and role-plays. Feedback is an important part of the process as most of the children lack an awareness of how their behaviour is perceived. Our focus is to give children the skills to deal with everyday social situations, both predictable and unpredictable, skills that make them and others feel comfortable and positive about their social interactions. Children benefit from understanding how they can control



Mrs Melody Appleton (left) & Mrs Poon Siew Win (right), Educational Psychologists, sharing ideas to enhance emotional intelligence and social skills in children with autism.

and change situations that have previously caused stress and unhappiness as a result of misunderstandings between them and adults in their environment. Throughout the workshop we kept parents informed of the techniques learnt and suggested ways that they could provide opportunities for the children to transfer and generalise their newly learned skills.