

Emotional development in Early Childhood

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Suggestions of [Emotional Development](#) Practices at each Tier

Tier 1 universal practices	Tier 2 targeted practices	Tier 3 individualized practices
❑ Providing universal whole group accompaniment for emotional development during class time ❑ Providing opportunities for emotional development, which goes beyond the focus on self-regulation ❑ Being mindful of the differences between the 4-year-old and the 5-year-old ❑ Inviting expression of all emotions, each are required to find balance (e.g. like colours and shades in a rainbow) ❑ Being careful with categorizing emotions (association to a negative connotation) to bring out guilt and/or shame around the expression of some of these emotions (e.g. not using the colour red for frustration) ❑ Allowing for moments of emotional release and expression through different playgrounds (e.g. Inside Out Handbook by Hannah Beach) ❑ Matching the right word to the emotional experience (could use characters and stories to illustrate examples) ❑ Helping the child at Tier 1 feel safe 'enough' (e.g. through adult greeting/engaging children, adult posture, predictable structures and routines) to connect with and become aware of their emotions (body and mind connection) ❑ Providing the context to help the children 'experience' a comforting and calming feeling through the senses (e.g. play soft music, dim lighting, soft comfy textures, sensory materials, calming nature scenes, comforting scents, etc.)	❑ Providing targeted small-group (2-4 children) accompaniment for emotional development, either in class (during station-based activities) or in an alternate location (at recess/lunch, indoors or outdoors) ❑ Helping the child at Tier 2 feel safe 'enough' and have 'enough' softness (e.g. through check-ins and other targeted attachment rituals, adult posture at Tier 2, targeted structures and routines, etc.) to connect with and become aware of their emotions (body and mind connection) ❑ Setting up a variety of ways to play out emotions (e.g. role-playing, masks, puppets, etc.) – this can be done outdoors through games and activities (please refer to the CEBM frustration tool guide for ideas of activities and materials) ❑ Offering a variety of emotional creative art activities (e.g. music, dance, painting, colouring, etc.) ❑ Providing a variety of tools to illustrate emotions (e.g. mirror, photographs, emotion cards with actual children's faces, children's books, etc.) ❑ Offering a variety of tools and materials to discover body sensations (e.g. body silhouette, sensory box, etc.)	❑ Providing intensive and personalized one-to-one accompaniment for emotional development in an alternate location ❑ Allocating an alternate space to explore and name emotions (e.g. Emotions Corner in the Nurturing Support Center- NSC) ❑ Helping the child at Tier 3 feel safe 'enough' and have 'enough' softness (ex. through check-ins, softening defenses and other individualized attachment rituals, adult posture at Tier 3, ensuring the adult is well regulated, individualized structures and routines, etc.) to connect with and become aware of their emotions (body and mind connection) ❑ Providing individualized support measures to allow additional expression, movement, respite, or channeling energy, which helps with emotional support: - Individualized scheduled respite/downtime - Individualized gross-motor activities - Individual bin and personal tool board - Building and creating activities - Sensory corner in NSC - and more... ❑ Offering a variety of emotional creative art activities (e.g. music, dance, painting, colouring, etc.) ❑ Providing a variety of tools to illustrate emotions (e.g. mirror, photographs, emotion cards with actual children's faces, children's books, etc.) ❑ Giving access to a private space (e.g. Emotions Room) to release and express emotions – applying de-escalation strategies if needed

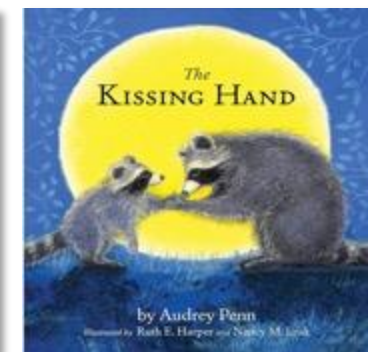
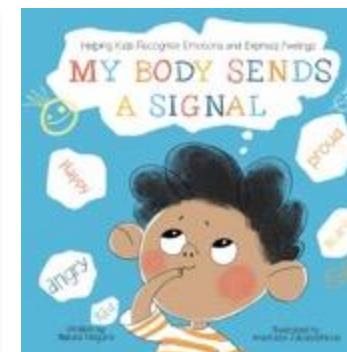
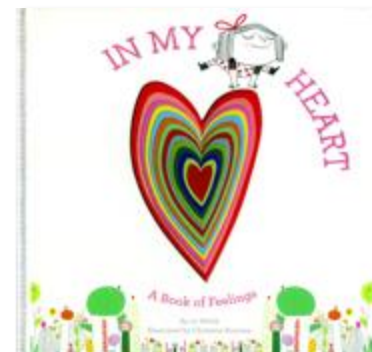
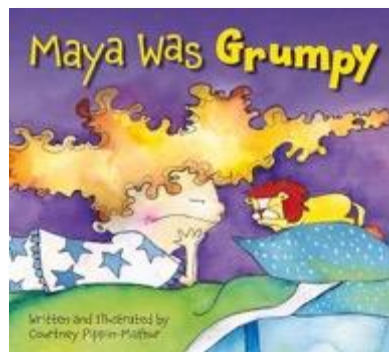
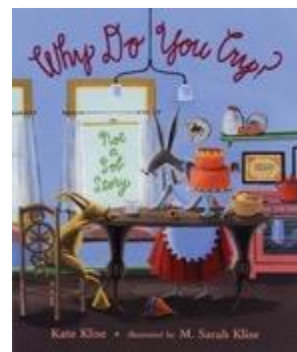
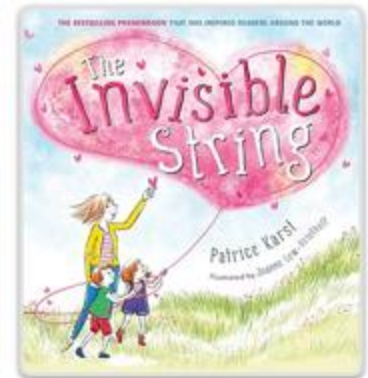
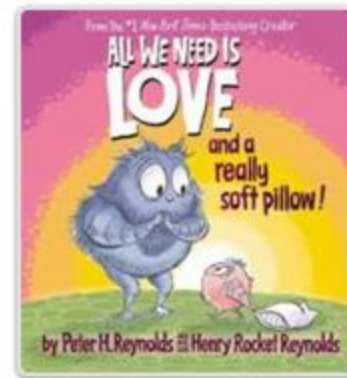
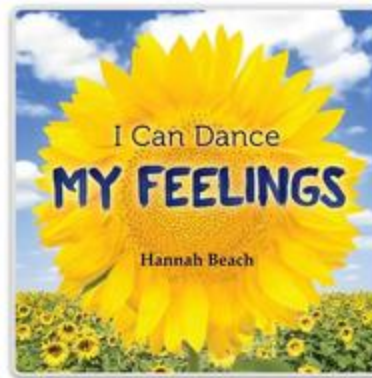
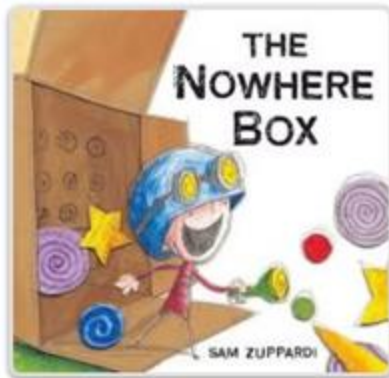
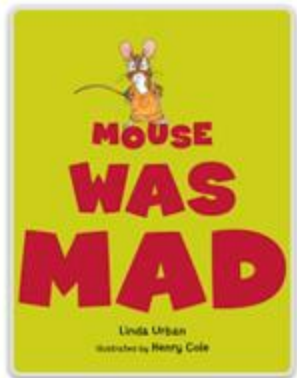
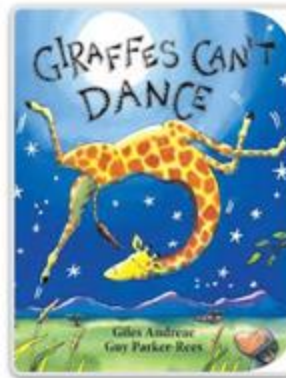
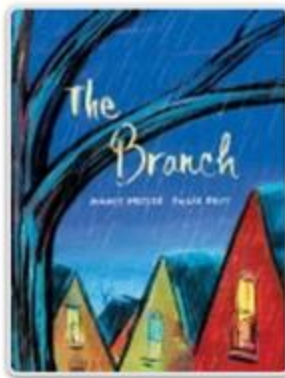
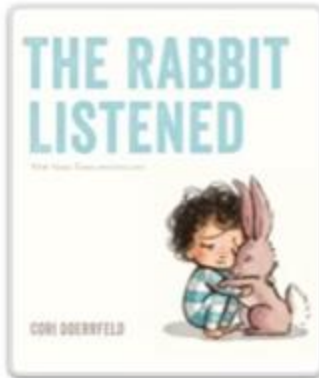
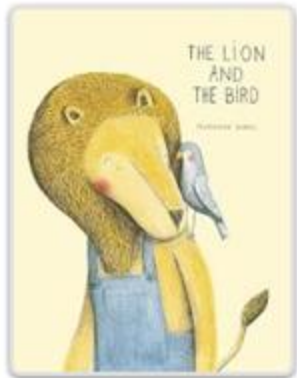
<https://www.cebmmember.ca/k4-k5-emotional-development>

Types of accompaniment per Tier

Tier 1 For all	Tier 2 For some	Tier 3 For few
• It is meant to be an approach, weaved into daily interactions, rather than a one-off program • Built into times of connection (greeting rituals, circle time) and routine practice sessions • Incorporated during story time (match the book to the theme being covered) • Included within the choices of stations set up • Integrated during the bloc of time reserved for going outside	• Targeted support measures, which help the child be more regulated and available for emotional and social growth • Complimentary activities done in stations, while the other children in the class group have their own task • Complimentary activities done in a small group context, with the help of Support Staff, outside the classroom (in an alternate space or outdoors)	• Individualized support measures, which help the child be more regulated and available for emotional and social growth • Complimentary activities done one-to-one, with the help of Support Staff, outside the classroom (in an alternate space or outdoors)

** It is possible for an activity to have several objectives covering both SEL and academics*

Examples of children's books on emotional development



Themes in Emotional Development

Attachment,
belonging

Naming,
recognizing
emotion

Range and
intensity of
emotion

Expressing,
releasing
emotion

Grumpiness,
frustration,
upset

Fear, worry,
being brave

Sadness,
loneliness, tears

Emotional
safety, comfort

Bodily
sensations

Knowing and
appreciating
oneself

Hypersensitivity,
neurodiversity

Emotional co-
regulation

<https://www.cebmmember.ca/k4-k5-emotional-development>

They are not
little adults

Young Children

and their
SEPARATION
problems

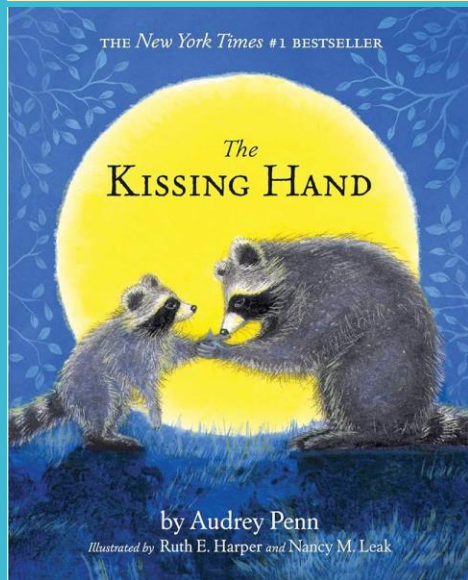
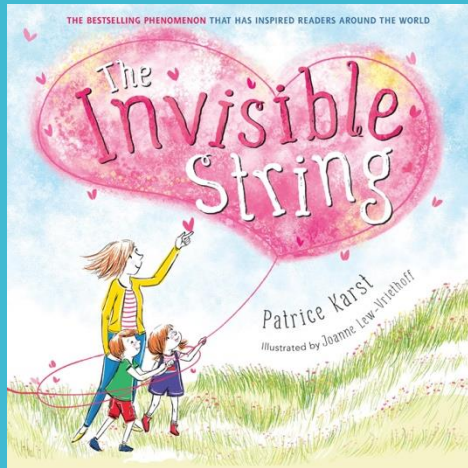
A FEAR OF SEPARATION that can be
overwhelming and crippling.

A HUNGER for CONTACT and CONNECTION
that takes precedence over any other need.



WHY?

Their capacity for relationship is not yet sufficiently developed enough to enable them to hold on when apart. For humans, this is such an important development that the first six years of life are primarily devoted to this task.



Nature's solution to not being able to handle separation

MORE ATTACHMENT, not less!

- The more ways a child has of attaching, the less need for contact and closeness and physical proximity.
- Children do not need to learn how to handle separation, instead they need to develop the ability to hold on when apart.

A child's emotional well-being

It starts with a
**sense of safety
& predictability.**

When a child feels
better, they do
better.

- ✓ Rely on structures and routines to create an environment that is consistent, predictable and reliable.
- ✓ Provide lots of opportunities for exposure and practice, especially with novelty. Give access to times when the child can experience a comforting and calming feeling through the senses (e.g. play soft music, dim lighting, soft comfy textures, sensory materials, calming nature scenes, comforting scents, etc.)
- ✓ Be generous and patient when being asked for help.
- ✓ Downtime/respice, movement, play (indoor and outdoor) and opportunities for emotional release are key for children to feel safe.

Feeling Safe *'Enough'*

Being their teacher does not mean you automatically have an attachment or that you are a safe person to them.

Intentionally work at building a safe attachment with each child in your class. This may look different from child to child (e.g. their level of defense).



Assess what works with each child - observe what best meets their needs, try different options to best meet their needs - what, how, when, where, in the classroom and outside.

Sensitive children (shy, anxious, trauma, neurodiverse) will take more time before they will trust and feel safe with new adults.

** Children can't explore and leap forward if they don't feel safe. Their brain cannot learn and grow if they are alarmed or in survival mode.*

**They are not
little adults**

Young Children

**and their
UNTEMPERED
nature**

They have BIG EMOTIONS!

**1 thought – 1 feeling – at a time
very little filter (brain immaturity)**

All impulses felt are expressed. They cannot do dissonance. They register only one feeling or impulse at a time. All conflicting impulses and thoughts are momentarily eclipsed.



WHY?

This is Nature's way of making it as easy as possible for young children to find their dominant feeling and experience it fully, by removing any confusing elements or complicating signals.

A child's capacity to regulate emotions

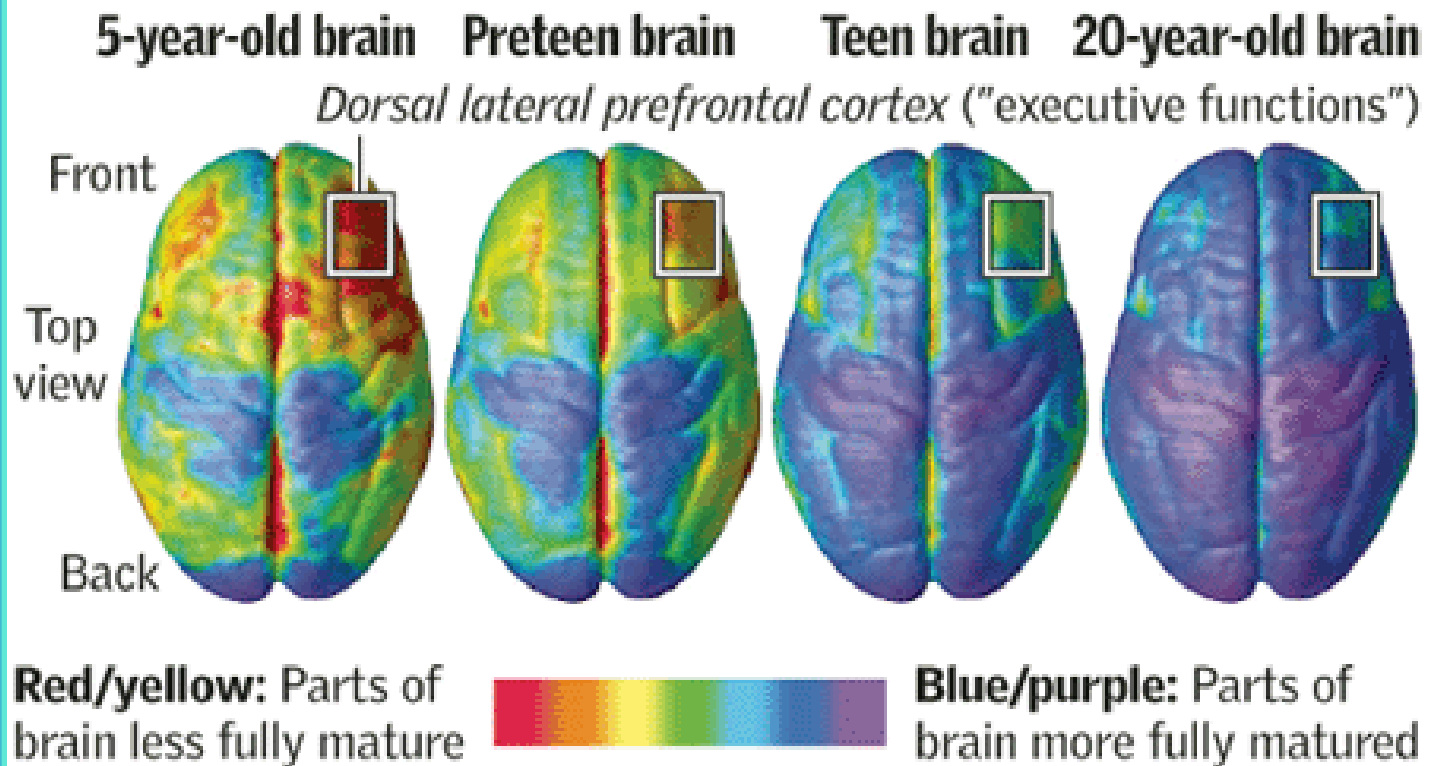
It starts with
co-regulation.

Younger children have no filter and can only do one emotion at a time, which makes 'managing their emotions' quite difficult.

- ✓ Come alongside their big emotions and act as a grounding element for them, modeling ways to manage emotions.
- ✓ Use the proper name of each emotion to show that they are valid. Be careful with categorizing emotions as good or bad.
- ✓ Set up games and engaging/playful activities that will help emotions get out safely (to make headway, we must work preventively around the incidents).
- ✓ Provide opportunities for emotional development, which goes beyond the focus of self-regulation (inviting the children to explore and express their emotions).

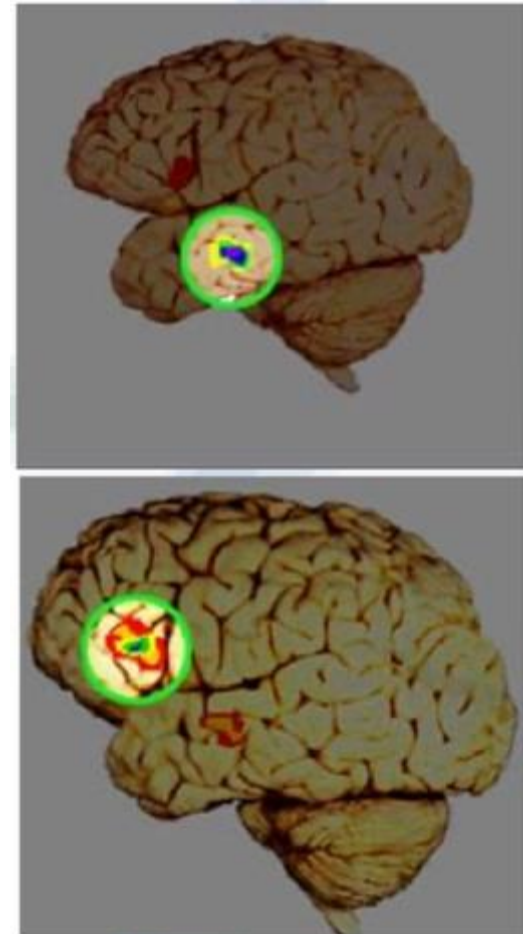
Judgment last to develop

The area of the brain that controls “executive functions” — including weighing long-term consequences and controlling impulses — is among the last to fully mature. Brain development from childhood to adulthood:



Emotional regulation requires Prefrontal cortex development

- Young children don't yet have a fully developed pre-frontal cortex, which means their emotions cannot be well filtered or slowed down.
- They also don't experience much cognitive dissonance or mixed feelings (ONE thought or emotion at a time).
- They have great difficulty with perspective taking and with reflection, especially when upset.



EXPECTING SELF-REGULATION	PROVIDING CO-REGULATION
Focusing on external elements to fix/control the problem.	Being aware of the adult's own emotional state and stress response as a priority.
Focusing on the student's behavior (what they've done wrong) and their intention to correct it.	Focusing on the student's sense of safety, sensations and feelings, as well as the adult-student dynamic.
When escalating, looking to stop the inappropriate behavior through the adult's authoritative posture and tone.	When escalating, helping the student regulate through the adult's own soothing posture and tone.
Upping the ante when the student is hostile to attempt to shut it down. Acting like a thermometer that reacts to the rise of the student's behavior.	Supporting the student in their dysregulation even when hostile (adapting the circumstances accordingly). Acting like a thermostat to hold a steady temperature.
Focusing on the outcome and how to achieve it (e.g. by applying consequences).	Meeting the student's needs through the application of specific support measures and emotion regulation strategies.
Intervening when an incident occurs. No specific plan for debrief or follow up beyond the incident.	Providing a debrief and follow up. Working proactively around the incidents by creating a preventative plan of action.

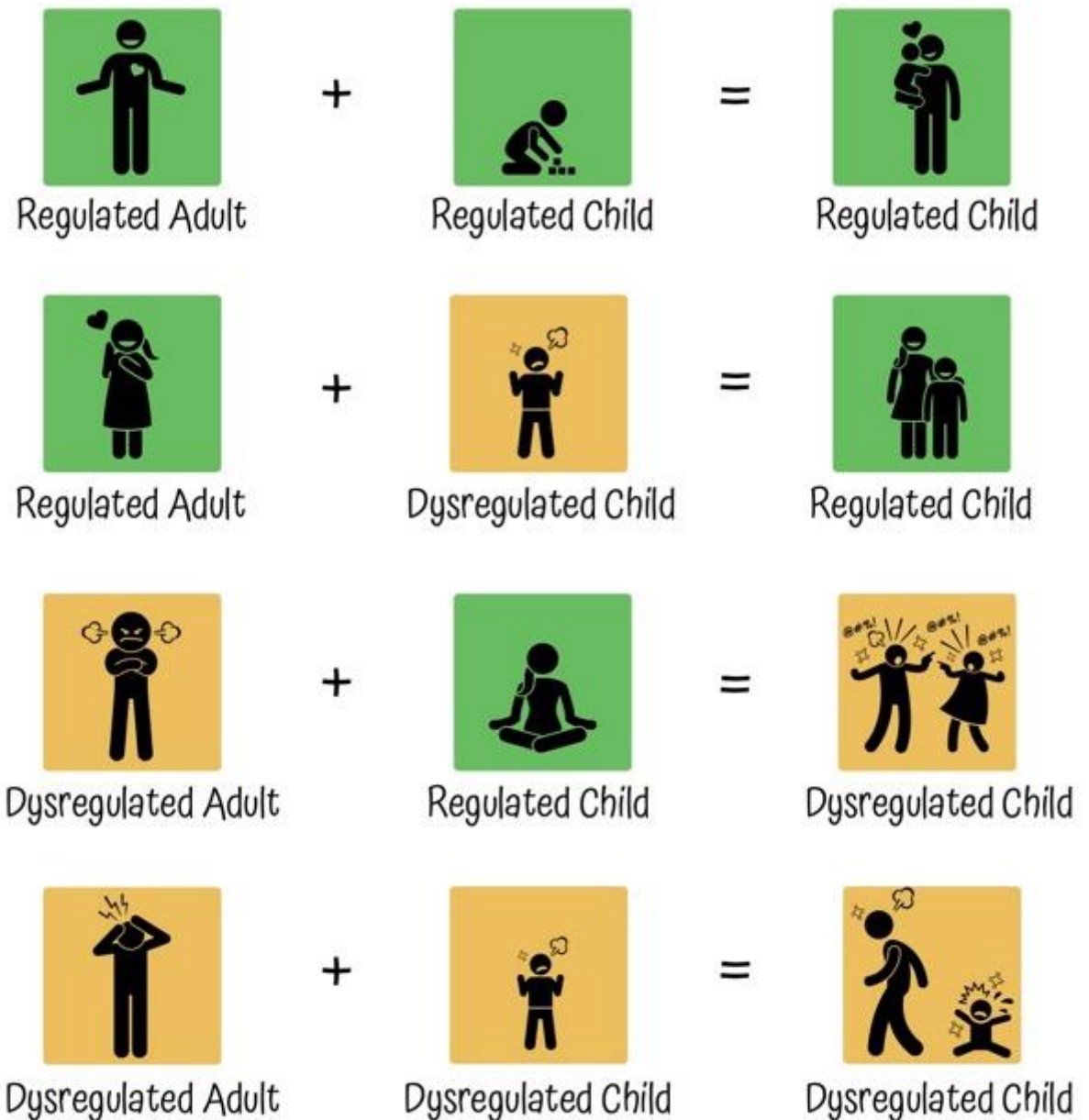


What happens when emotions are **SUPPRESSED?**

** when emotions are suppressed, they come out in in
challenging behaviours*

**EMOTIONS NEED TO BE RELEASED
AND EXPRESSED**

The importance of adult regulation



A child's self-awareness

It starts with opportunities for exploration in the **play mode** and attempts to try out different identities.

- ✓ Create time and space for play to occur.
- ✓ Provide a variety of materials and props to accompany their play.
- ✓ Ensure to offer tools to help the child discover their body sensations as well (body silhouette, sensory box, etc.)
- ✓ No need to get involved; let play do its thing.

Self-awareness and consciousness



- Around the ages of 5-7, a child develops sense of SELF, as they put up boundaries (what “I” feel, what “I” like, etc.)
- After around the age of 7, a child begins to be able to mix with others without fusing and “losing” themselves.
- Having a ‘soft heart’ and feeling our emotions is required for this process to unfold.

A child's confidence and positive self regard

It starts with a sense of

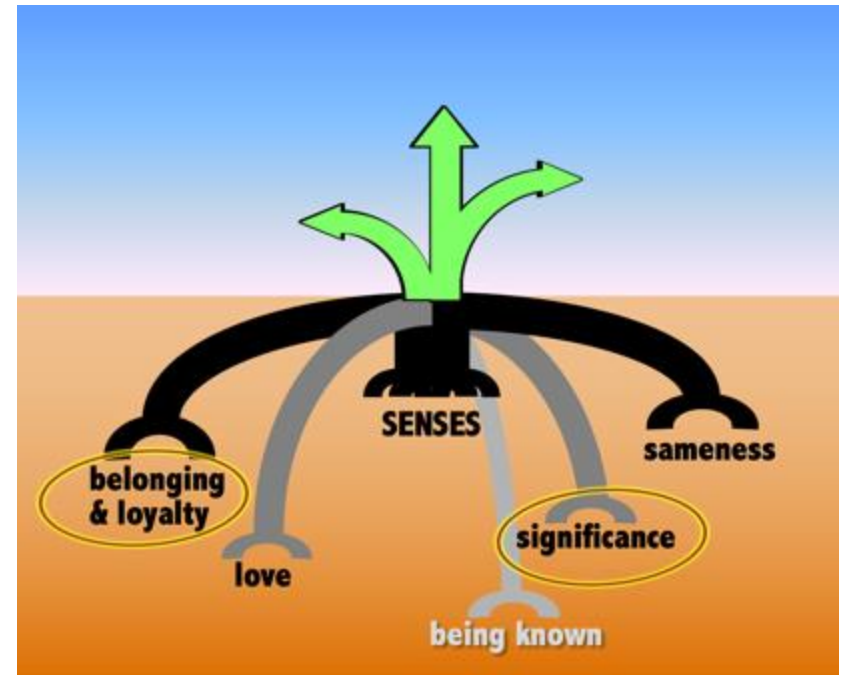
**belonging
& mattering.**

Support them in feeling cared for, important, included, listened to and understood.

- ✓ Greet each child and show interest by asking them about their loved ones, interests, plans & activities.
- ✓ Encourage trying new things and highlight efforts. Introduce the concept of the 'Power of YET' (help the children visualizing that, with practice and determination, they will eventually be able to achieve something that is currently challenging for them).
- ✓ Convey that mistakes happen to everyone and that it's okay.
- ✓ Provide opportunities for the child to experience being helpful, such as being the teacher's helper for setting the calendar, daily schedule, song for the day, today's weather, etc.

Quest for value through attachment

- Having an accurate self-perception and good self-confidence requires an acceptance of oneself and positive self-worth.
- These fruit stem from a fulfilled sense of **belonging** (feeling welcomed and included) and **significance** (feeling valued and cherished).



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CEBM RESOURCES CENTER Framework for Student Support



PHILOSOPHY

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

CHALLENGES

PRACTICES

MATERIALS

INTERVENTION SPACE

K4-K5 Emotional Development (this webpage is still under construction)

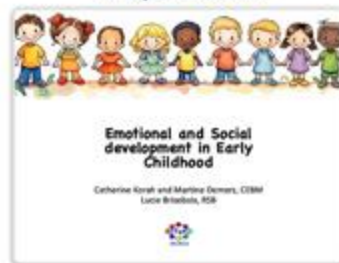
Through children's literature, this resources page aims to provide a range of tools and resources to help make emotional development more concrete and engaging for K4-K5 children.

CEBM would like to extend a special thank you to all the [key people](#) who have contributed to this resources page. The following documents, tools and resources could not have been possible without their precious help.

The books presented below are those for which CEBM developed activity cards. Please consult the [list of books by theme](#) for additional suggestions. You can also consult this [list of books by timeline](#).

OVERVIEW: school staff resources for K4-K5 emotional development

Intro presentation



Practices by tier



List of books by timeline



Books by theme



Summary of activities by theme



YouTube links



Editorials by theme



K4-K5 Social Development

Emotions Intervention Materials

Brain Break Activities

Physical Outlet - Movement Station

Fine Motor & Quiet Activities

Sensory Materials

Cocoon Area

Building & Creating Activities

Lego Resource Package

Flexible Classroom

Accessibility to Work Tools

Personal Bin

Puzzle Activities

Play-Drama-Dress-up

Children's Literature

Academic Resources

FR

K4-K5
Practices

K4-K5
Corner