

# 5 Keys That Unlock Children's Potential

*A "snapshot" of the social and emotional learning skills that enable young people to manage their emotions and behaviours especially when faced with challenging tasks and difficult people.*



In You Can Do It! Education, teachers and parents are encouraged to help develop the five essential social and emotional foundations ("keys") all young people need to be successful and happy. By helping children become more aware of and use these keys at school and home, you are helping develop their social, emotional and learning intelligence. Make sure that you take the time to explain what these five keys are and how they can be used.

In the following article, each of the five keys is briefly described including some ideas about what you can do at school and home to support their development.

## 1. Confidence

Confidence requires that young people not be overly concerned with what others think if they make a mistake. Confidence is revealed when young people are not afraid to fail and are happy to meet someone new.

Confidence involves young people having trust in themselves and believing that

they will probably be successful in the end. Confident young people stand up straight, look people in the eye, and speak clearly and with a firm tone of voice.

### **Practical Things You Can Do to Develop Confidence in a Child**

- Give a child a special responsibility (e.g., special role or job).
- Ask a child questions you know he/she can answer. Prompt him/her before asking question so he/she is prepared and experiences success.
- Set aside time each day for a child to demonstrate what he/she has learned at school.
- Help a child to identify and develop individual interests and talents by showing interest in and excitement about areas of your young child's skills and talents.
- Do not give a child too much attention when he/she expresses negative feelings about school work.
- Encourage a child to speak up when asked a question.
- Encourage a child to have eye contact with adults (if appropriate to your culture) or

others, when being spoken to.

- Practise asking a child his/her name and age so that he/she can respond with a confident, clear voice.
- Provide a child with many opportunities to do things where he/she can be successful. Provide praise at these times.
- Praise a child for trying something new.

## 2. Persistence

Persistence is revealed when young people try hard when doing schoolwork they find frustrating and do not feel like doing, and finish their work on time.

Young people who keep trying to complete an assignment rather than becoming distracted, and those who elect to play after they've done their work, demonstrate motivation and can be described as being persistent.

### **Practical Things You Can Do to Develop Persistence in Your Child**

- Provide your child with accurate feedback concerning

the amount of effort he/she is expending and how much effort and time is really needed to complete a task such as a puzzle or a drawing.

- Discuss with your child repeatedly how his/her big effort results in learning or success.
- Provide strong, immediate reinforcement (i.e., verbal and non-verbal) for effort your child puts toward work that he/she finds hard or boring (little jobs, puzzle, colouring).
- Praise your child when he/she willingly does tasks (chores) that are not fun without complaining.
- Catch your child doing something that requires effort, and praise him/her for trying hard.
- Praise your child for returning to a task (chore) that requires effort to complete.

### 3. Organisation

Organisation is revealed when young people keep track of their assignments, schedule their time effectively, break down long-term assignments into small steps and set goals for how well they want to do in specific areas of their school work and in other endeavours.

Organisation also means having all supplies ready to do school work and a good system for storing previously learned material.

#### **Practical Things You Can Do to Develop Organisation in Your Child**

- Provide your child with simple instructions regarding how to organise his/her toys, play area, and the bag s/he takes to school.
- Establish a routine and schedule for your young child to perform the necessary, daily needs, e.g., teeth brushing before bedtime reading, eating breakfast before playing or watching TV, putting things away when finished using

them.

- Establish a set routine at home for wake-up time, being dressed and ready to leave, dinner time, ready for bedtime, and sleep.
- Only provide materials your child needs for current work/play.
- Allow time before leaving home, the park, to collect his/her things or help put things away.
- Ensure that your child is ready for instructions (e.g., eye contact, sitting still) when explaining a task to him/her.
- Teach your child ways to remember directions and instructions (e.g., red canister holds the biscuits).

### 4. Resilience

Resilience is shown when young people are able to stop themselves from getting extremely angry, down, or worried when faced with challenging events and difficult situations and people. Resilience means being able to control your behaviour when very upset without fighting or withdrawing for too long.

It also means being able to calm down after having been upset and bouncing back to work and being with other people.

#### **Practical Things You Can Do to Help Your Child Become Resilient (calm down when extremely upset)**

- Accept that it is normal and healthy for your child to experience negative emotions. (It is good to show and talk about different negative feelings you have, as long as they are not too extreme.)
- Provide your child with words to describe his/her own feelings (e.g., "You are feeling angry." ["You are feeling worried." or "You are feeling sad."] as well as your own feelings (e.g., "I am angry you

broke that ").

- Teach your child to say to themselves "calm down" and to take three big breaths before doing something he/ she finds frightening or when he/she is very angry or sad.
- Model for your child the kinds of positive self-talk he/ she can use when he/she is experiencing a bad situation to help brighten his/her mood (e.g., "This isn't so bad, it won't last forever.").
- Discuss with your child the importance of finding a grown up to talk to when he/she has very bad feelings. This could be a parent, a teacher, or a family member.
- Explain to your child that when he/she gets very upset, he/she should find something fun to do to help him/her calm down.

### 5. Getting Along

Getting Along is revealed when young people work cooperatively with each other, resolve conflicts by discussion rather than fights, manage their anger, show tolerance, and follow school and home rules and expectations, including making responsible choices so that everyone's rights are protected.

Getting Along also involves young people making positive contributions to helping others and to making the school, home, and community safer, healthier, and good places to live and learn.

#### **Practical Things You Can Do to Help Your Child Get Along**

- Acknowledge and praise your young child when he/she is demonstrating good getting along skills.
- Do not use sarcasm, put your child down, communicate with a negative tone of voice, or become furious when your

child misbehaves.

- Teach your child what to say when he/she meets someone new (introduce himself/herself by name, say "hello", smile).
- Teach your child to take turns when playing.
- Teach your child the importance of telling the truth, not saying mean things

to someone else, and doing something nice for someone who has hurt feelings or is sad.

- Avoid placing your child together with a child who does not get along well with others.
- Provide opportunities for your child to share his/her toys with another child. Then praise your

child for doing so.

- Provide opportunities for your child to experience taking turns with someone when doing something he/ she likes to do. Acknowledge his/her patience in waiting his/her turn.
- Always communicate in a friendly, kind manner with your child.