

Emotional Intelligence Programs in Education System

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Introduction

Curriculum-based social emotional interventions have important implications for helping to support children's development. If children are taught and understand their emotions, they will be able to develop healthy coping skills and manage life stressors in more positive and healthy ways. Several studies suggest unhealthy coping is related to delinquent behavior in youth; individuals with avoidant coping skills may distract themselves from problems or stress with criminal behavior and substance use [1]. However, if individuals are never taught about emotions how can we expect them to understand emotions, handle stress and develop healthy coping skills. Throughout our lives we experience many emotions daily and sometimes we are not able to accurately describe what we are feeling, or we don't know what to do to help ourselves feel better. We are expected to know our emotions and how to cope in healthy ways without ever being taught.

The way society is constructed makes expressing and understanding emotions almost impossible which leads to unhealthy coping methods, poor health and other issues in society such as mental health issues and crime. Emotions are a crucial and constant part of individuals lives from birth, we are taught everything from walking, to eating, yet no one teaches how to cope and understand emotions. Children are vulnerable and constantly learning about themselves and the world around them, their emotions and the way they perceive things is what develops their world schema. The schema that they develop is what is the foundation of their lives and determines their future success it is important that we teach and guide them to prepare them for healthy and successful lives; children are our future and it is our job to support and guide them. It is crucial to educate children on emotions and how to cope and therefore should be included as a mandatory requirement of the school curriculum. This paper will explore and discuss the background of emotional intelligence, intervention approaches, future practices and suggestions for future research.

Background of Emotional Intelligence

Throughout history emotions have been a sensitive topic where emotions are not talked about and swept under the rug. Because of social constructs like sexism men especially had to hide their emotions or they are viewed as not masculine and weak and are looked down upon. Women also were taught to hide their emotions

because if she felt too emotional she would be crazy or illogical. It was looked down upon for women to be "too emotional". Women are also seen as caregivers and responsible for looking after the well-being of their spouse and the children. This doesn't leave much room for women to care for themselves or express their own feelings. Also, the way mental health was treated and viewed in society caused many individuals to hide their emotions and try to find ways to cope on their own; many of which are damaging and not healthy. The school system also isn't constructed to teach or express emotions. If a child acts out or doesn't act "normal" or "acceptable" they are deemed behavioral and problematic; this teaches children to hide their emotions and not understand their feelings. This enables children to never understand their emotions or learn healthy coping strategies; this makes their future harder and future relationships difficult. Unfortunately, although society has come a long way, these social constructs still exist and play major roles in the expression of emotions today. Many individuals and social structures still act out these beliefs and make it difficult for individuals to express their emotions.

There has been a lot of research around child development and emotional intelligence and research shows that an interactive relationship between children's emotional and cognitive development. Emotional intelligence has been found to be a critical aspect of children's early development, learning, and relationship building [2]. Research has also shown that if children are taught and understand their emotions bullying would decrease; evidence is mounting that social and emotional learning strategies are critical to promoting academically solid, bully-free schools, and lower suicide rates [3]. Historically, schools have deemed cognitive skills more important than social and emotional skills for academic success, however present research suggests that emotional intelligence may be more important than IQ for success in both schools and the workplace (Oliver, 2011).

We can teach children these skills through art games colors and stories. Children learn and express themselves through play and this is a great way to teach them these crucial life skills. It is also crucial to change the language around emotions and broaden the language. We think of only a few simple emotions happy sad mad scared those are the basics and that's how everyone usually explains and expresses their feelings but that's not all the emotions which we

feel or experience. And changing the language when expressing or describing our emotions from I am sad to I feel sad or I feel sad right now this allows the realization that the feelings are valid and that feelings are temporary this is critical. Language is crucial changing the language to person first and concern second is empowering and highlights that they are a person who is experiencing something. Changing language changes thoughts which changes behaviors.

Understanding feelings are temporary is very important because it helps foster hope and solution focused thinking saying I am sad says you are sad and offers no hope or solutions. Saying I feel sad brings to reality it is a temporary feeling and opens room for communication and conversation another important aspect for solutions to start feeling better and work through the emotions. It is important to know what you are feeling and why. Many individuals including adults don't know what they are feeling and they don't know why and they can't vocalize or communicate their feelings and emotions. This is because none of us were taught. Our vocabulary around feelings and emotions is limited and we are taught from very young to suppress these feelings and keep them hidden, and to deal with them on our own.

Children never learn about their emotions or how to cope with negative experiences in healthy ways; they are left to figure it out on their own. This leaves them unable to identify their emotions and often leads to them dealing with their emotions in unhealthy and destructive ways, such as violent behaviors, crime, substance use and leads to mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and suicide. Often children don't feel comfortable discussing their feelings with their parents. As well, parents don't always know how to teach their children about emotions as parents were never taught about their own emotions; this creates a vicious cycle in society and leaves many people struggling to cope and understand their emotions.

Many employers today are providing training in emotional intelligence and hiring individuals with emotional intelligence as research has shown emotional intelligence fosters more productive and successful employees and healthier work environments.

Also even though awareness is rising and mental illness is becoming recognized in society we still individualize the problem. Work on it, take meds you will get better however we need to understand and realize that it is a social issue and it takes a village to raise healthy children who become healthy adults. Influences on mental illness come from everywhere and it is our entire world that shapes us. We need to teach individuals about mental health and illness, about emotions and feelings and ways to cope. The school system also isn't constructed to teach or express emotions. If a child acts out or doesn't act "normal" or "acceptable" they are deemed behavioral and problematic. When children "act up" in class they get in trouble and are disciplined, they are called out in front of the class and are left feeling embarrassed and like they are "bad" and "wrong".

All this teaches children to hide their emotions and not understand their feelings. This enables children to never understand their emotions or learn healthy coping strategies; this makes their future harder and future relationships difficult. Unfortunately, although society has come a long way, these social constructs still exist and play major roles in the expression of emotions today. Many individuals and social structures still act out these beliefs and make

it difficult for individuals to express their emotions.

Stigmas and negative attitudes towards expressing emotions and feelings are very rampant in society, and if an individual chooses unhealthy coping strategy such as drugs or alcohol, or if they develop a mental health concern they are stigmatized, isolated and shamed in society even more. This causes a vicious cycle of unhealthy coping strategies as individuals are left lost and on their own to figure out how to handle the stresses of life. Without ever being taught healthy ways many individuals turn to what is available to them and that is usually unhealthy methods to cope with stress and emotions.

Thus, they are constantly isolated, stigmatized and feeling negatively and this cycle of hiding their emotions, not understanding or not being allowed to express their emotions and not knowing how to cope continues and causes a vicious cycle in society which we see all too often.

Mental illness and stress among college students is at an all-time record high with 47% of students reporting symptoms of depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and psychotic symptoms; these symptoms have doubled or tripled since the mid-1990s [4]. With 75% of diagnosable mental illnesses being established between the ages of 15-24 this is a crucial time to provide services and support, however, many go undiagnosed or untreated (Occupational health & well-being, 2017). This highlights a significant gap in meeting the needs of students and it is well-known that post-secondary institutions are not doing enough to address and support mental health concerns [4].

The Spring 2016 national college health assessment which collects information on student's health behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions indicated that depression, anxiety, and suicide attempts are increasing among Ontario's post-secondary students (In it Together, 2017). 46% reported feeling depressed and had difficulties functioning, 65% reported feeling overwhelming anxiety, 14% had seriously considered suicide, and 2.2% reported a suicide attempt (In it Together, 2017).

Research from the higher education statistics agency revealed a record 1,180 students who experienced a mental health concern left university early in 2014-15, which represents a 210% increase from 380 in 2009-10. Youth visits to the doctor's offices increased 25% between 2006-2014, rates of emergency room visits for mental health and addiction soared 53% and hospitalizations 56% (Macdonald, 2017). Anxiety and mood disorders were the most common reasons for youth and in 2014 only 4 in 10 youth admitted to hospital for mental health received any follow-up care and all this highlights a need for more and accessible mental health care (Macdonald, 2017).

This highlights a gap in supporting our youth and providing them with the necessary skills they need to succeed in life and for their health. We need to teach our children these coping skills and make changes before things get worse. Need to realize that mental illness and other health concerns is not simply an individual problem but a social issue that requires all of us to work together and make changes.

Intervention Approaches

An ameliorative change/intervention is to educate parents on how to teach their children about emotions and how to cope with the negative experiences in their lives in healthy ways. If communities teach parents to teach their kids, this would help families learn

to cope and handle their emotions and negative experiences. By doing this it would create change in families and in communities by decreasing depression and anxiety and offering healthy ways to cope with emotions. If parents are given the tools to teach their children how to cope and navigate negative experiences in healthy ways it will create stronger family structures which in turn will create stronger communities.

If parents suffer from a mental illness than it is very difficult for them to educate and support their children with emotions when they struggle themselves. Parental depression has extensive effects on the family life and their children's social development and mental health [5]. It was found that educating parents and children about mental health and teaching parents how to help their children with difficult emotions was effective in reducing negative mental health effects in children [5]. Also, the positive effects could still be seen at 1.5-year follow-ups; this highlights the effectiveness of educating parents and children on mental health and healthy coping strategies. The research found that not only did these interventions decrease symptoms of depression and anxiety in youth but also prevented it from occurring [5]. A con of this approach is that some families may not have access to these supports and may not be able to afford the therapy. Also, some cultures may not access outside support for family issues or may not believe in mental health. Some pros of this approach are that research found that is effective not only in reducing symptoms but preventing them. as well the positive effects were seen over a year after treatment.

A transformative change would be incorporating emotional intelligence education curriculum into the school system and teaching children early on about their emotions and how to cope. This kind of change would transform society and would create change in children's lives; children will be smarter, healthier, and happier. It would also decrease bullying, and suicide, depression and anxiety and decrease problem or disruptive behavior and it would decrease crime and substance use. Many studies have found that teaching emotional intelligence and coping skills to children is highly effective in many domains of a child's life through to their adult life. Bullying is an increasing issue across the world and leads to school absences, depression, anxiety, and suicide. Technology and the growth of the internet has perpetuated the problem of bullying and made it worse. Bullying has become a national forefront of school safety concerns and many children suffer in silence [3]. Emotional intelligent students can empathize, control emotions, communicate effectively, make reasonable decisions, solve problems, persevere, and get along better with others [3]. They tend to have better relationships, are highly productive, inspire productivity in others, can set and attain goals, and achieve better grades [3]. Some cons of this approach are that some parents may not agree with the curriculum and it may not be inclusive to all cultures. Also, it may be costly as teachers will have to be educated and trained to teach emotional intelligence to the children. As well new curriculum will need to be created and incorporated and this could be timely and costly. Pros of this approach are that it is shown to be effective for child development and has benefits for their lives. It would also change and prevent issues from starting in the first place and these skills are known to be crucial in the lives of individuals as we all deal with stress and life challenges daily.

Studies have shown a strong co-relation between academic performance and emotional intelligence and EI traits. Studies

show strong co-relations between emotional intelligence and cognitive abilities; and strong co-relations between emotional intelligence and academic performance especially in math and English subjects [6]. Emotional intelligence and emotional regulation showed higher performance in math and English and showed that emotional intelligence and regulation also reduced anxiety related to mathematical tasks [6]. Data also showed that emotional intelligence improved math performance regardless of the children's cognitive ability [6]. This strongly highlights the impact and importance of emotional intelligence and highlights the impact it has on academic performance.

Educating children on their emotions and teaching them how to cope with stressors in life will reduce crime and create better outcomes in their lives. Coping refers to all strategies individuals use to manage stress and coping skills encompass problem-solving, emotional and behavioral strategies to tolerate stress [1]. The ability of young people to cope with external stressors is a relevant factor in the development of criminal and aggressive outcomes [1]. Individuals who can cope are able to seek and ask for help, talk to others and actively seek solutions and problem solve. They are also more successful in school, work, and with social relationships. Individuals who possess coping skills will be less prone to develop aggression and criminal behavior; in contrast individuals with avoidant or inadequate coping skills are more inclined to distract themselves from life problems and stressors with criminal behavior and substance use [1]. Several studies show that inadequate coping is related to delinquent behaviors in youth [1]. This highlights the need and importance of teaching children emotional intelligence and coping skills. If children are never taught about their emotions and how to cope with them in healthy ways it can't be expected that they will learn how. It is our job to teach children and prepare them for life and success; emotions and stress is a constant part of life and has major impacts on the lives of everyone. It is crucial and necessary that we educate children on emotions and coping to prepare them, support them and ensure greater success in their lives overall.

Incorporating emotional intelligence into the school curriculum would create better, more successful futures and healthier, happier lives for children and would create better relationships. It would also create better communities and a better society overall. This is needed to see positive and necessary changes in society. Teaching emotional intelligence and coping skills in school ensures that children will learn the necessary skills they need for life. Research shows that educating children about emotions and coping skills improves their academic performance, creates better relationships, reduces bullying, depression, anxiety, crime and improves health overall [1, 3, 5-6]. Research also shows that educating children on emotions and coping creates better and more successful outcomes in adult life and opens more job opportunities [1,3, 5-6].

If I was taught about emotional intelligence in school, it would have helped me a great deal and I would handle my stress in healthier ways and participate in self-care. I might not have started smoking if I knew better ways to cope with stressful situations in my life. I would have been able to better understand and express my emotions and would not have fallen into the social constructs of hiding and suppressing my emotions. I would be able to express to others that I am stressed and need help and wouldn't believe I need to do it on my own and that I can't or shouldn't ask for help. My life would be more manageable, healthier, and happier if I knew better ways to

cope with my stress and felt I could express myself and get support. I would take care of myself and be healthier overall. I would know when I'm feeling stressed and know healthy ways to cope and would be able to practice self-care rather than feeling lost or helpless and burning out. I would have better tools and knowledge on how to assist and support the homeless youth I work with and be able to educate them on emotions and coping skills and help them lead healthier lives. I would also be able to better support my family and my son and would have better relationships with them and we would all lead healthier lives.

Future Practice

The research examining social-emotional interventions for youth, combined with my personal experience pursuing increased self-care, highlights the importance of educating families about emotional intelligence. As a clinician and agent of social change I will educate my clients on emotional intelligence and teach them about their emotions and healthy ways to cope. As a clinician I will provide family sessions in my community where I teach families about emotional intelligence and ways to cope. As an agent of social change, I will advocate for policy changes and to incorporate emotional intelligence programs in education curriculum. I am going to further research the benefits and effects of teaching emotional intelligence and coping skills to children. I will also use literature that has been done and teach my son and family about emotions and coping skills and I will also teach the clients I currently work with about their emotions, coping skills and how to manage their stress in healthy ways. Doing this will create positive changes in their lives and allow them to lead healthier lives. Teaching my son and family will create a healthier environment and relationship at home as a family unit and for all of us individually. My son will then gain emotional intelligence and be able to perform better academically, create better relationships, be able to solve problems, and be healthier overall.

Emotions are a part of life from birth throughout our entire lives and stress is a constant part of life. Every individual experiences many emotions and will experience stress daily, yet no one is taught about emotions or coping skills. Individuals are left on their own to figure out emotions and find their own ways to cope and often individuals facing a great deal of stress turn to unhealthy ways to cope. The world is constantly changing and evolving yet our school system has remained the same and is structured to teach academics like math and English but doesn't teach essential life skills such as coping. The world and society are structured to teach individuals to suppress emotions and that negative emotions are bad, and that being vulnerable is uncomfortable, bad and embarrassing. This further causes individuals to suppress their emotions and leaves them lost for ways to cope with life.

Conclusions

Many studies and research show that teaching emotional intelligence and coping skills has countless benefits. Emotional intelligence and coping skills increases academic performance, creates better relationships, reduces anxiety, depression, increases problem solving skills and reduces crime and bullying [1, 3, 5-6]. Research shows that teaching these skills to children in their early years is crucial to their development and later outcomes in life [1, 3, 6]. This highlights the need, importance and effectiveness of teaching emotional intelligence and coping skills to children in school. By teaching children this in school we ensure that they are getting the

knowledge and skills they need to lead healthy and productive lives and to be prepared for their lives. Some limitations of the research are that it wasn't inclusive of different cultures and beliefs. As well, more longitudinal research would be beneficial to determine and analyze how long the benefits last and how teaching emotional intelligence impacts the lives of children. Future research should look at different cultures and beliefs and determine the differences and impacts of teaching emotional intelligence for different cultures and beliefs. Future research should also follow up with children throughout their lives to see the impacts and benefits of teaching emotional intelligence.

It is our job to guide, teach and prepare our children for life and emotions are a critical part of life; we need to teach children about emotions and healthy ways to cope. We are failing as a society by leaving children to learn about emotions and find ways to cope on their own. Teaching emotional intelligence and coping skills in school is crucial and a change that is necessary in society. Children only learn what they are taught so it is critical to teach them about emotions and healthy ways to cope for them to lead successful, productive, and healthy lives overall.

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