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INTRODUCTION

A TEACHER'S LAMENT

I have just about had it up to here! One more argument or fit of tears and I think I will scream. I know that I am supposed to be a super teacher with an endless supply of patience and energy, a technique for every situation, and a solution for every problem, but sometimes I cannot believe that he just crumpled up his assignment again because it was not exactly the way he wanted it to be. Oh terrific. There she goes, grabbing his pencil yet one more time. I can see the headlines now: "Youth who stole pencils in her formative years arrested for grand theft!"

I want these children to grow to be happy, successful adults. I do everything I can. I talk with them and reason with them, but sometimes it is as if I were talking to the air. The same things keep happening over and over again.

With youngsters as they are, it's difficult enough to get all the subjects covered that must be taught. Now you want me to teach something else? How can I find the time? Why should I bother?

WHY TEACH EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE COMPETENCIES?

It is evident that young people are engaging in many harmful behaviors leading to increasingly damaging results for themselves and for society. Alcohol and drug abuse are increasingly widespread and appear among younger and younger age groups. The teenage pregnancy rate grows each year. Since the 1980s the level of childhood stress and depression has been steadily rising along with the number of juvenile crimes, runaways, and suicides (Gibson 1989).

Classrooms are filled with youngsters displaying a wide range of concerns and behavioral problems that teachers have little time and few techniques to address. Students suffer from poor self-awareness, low concentration, lack of motivation, little self-discipline, low self-esteem, poor communication, an inability to express feelings effectively, difficulty in resolving conflicts, and a significant amount of emotional pain.

Anxious, unhappy, angry youngsters do not make ideal students. As they try to focus their attention on getting their needs met and feeling better, little concentration is left for learning. As they search for and find inappropriate outlets for their emotions, they misbehave. Encouraging a classroom full of such students to learn and behave effectively can be very time consuming and frustrating.

Teachers can help lessen their students' frustrations, make classroom time more productive, and prevent behavioral and learning problems by providing their students with a body of information and a set of skills with which to make informed, positive, and independent choices regarding their emotional, social, physical, and mental well-being (Dewhurst 1991; Meyer 1990). This book provides teachers with the tools to do just that.

WHAT IS TEACHING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE?

Teaching emotional intelligence capabilities is not a pipe dream. Nor is this book a program of gimmicks and catchphrases. It is a curriculum that is based on the understanding that students think and behave ineffectively because they lack the skills and information with which to make more effective cognitive and behavioral choices. This curriculum provides teachers with the tools to transmit those important skills and that vital body of information.

Goleman, in his groundbreaking research on emotional intelligence (1995), spoke to the great need for developing mastery over the emotional realm so that one can make healthy, positive choices. He discussed the importance of providing the opportunity for each person to develop positive emotional habits as well as basic human competencies. He categorized these competencies into five domains: self-awareness, managing emotions, self-control, empathy, and handling relationships. Goleman's research indicated that these emotional and social competencies are learnable and cited the school environment as an ideal context within which to develop them.

Goleman's research further indicated that in order to truly develop these competencies, one must teach youngsters the skills to challenge their often inflexible thoughts. He spoke to the importance of checking one's thoughts against available evidence, thus offering cognitive guidance before the emotional switch goes into effect, triggering ineffective choices.

This book is centered around just this process. Students are taught that every thought, feeling, and behavior is based on a choice that has been made. Often, however, these choices are made by default, out of habit, or based on faulty or no information. The curriculum helps the teacher help students make choices con-

Developing Emotional Intelligence Through

SELF-AWARENESS



This chapter builds the foundation for development of emotional self-awareness. Students encounter the most important and basic concept of emotional intelligence: They choose how to think, feel, and behave.

The four lessons in this chapter introduce the basics of informed choice making. In succeeding lessons, students develop an understanding of what it means to make a choice, examine how choices may be made as a group, become aware of and investigate how emotions affect choice making, and discover how to become aware of and examine assumptions that underlie choices.