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DEVELOPING SELF-AWARENESS IN CHILDREN

As you will know from previous bulletins, one of our priority areas this year is supporting children with their emotional health and well-being. I have therefore included some information on 'Self Awareness' this week for parents:

What is self-awareness?

Self-Awareness is the thinking skill that focuses on a child's ability to accurately judge their own performance and behaviour and to respond appropriately to different social situations.

Self-Awareness helps an individual to tune into their feelings, as well as to the behaviours and feelings of others. For example, a child successfully uses self-awareness skills when they notice they are talking too loudly in a library where other children are trying to work, and then adjusts the volume or their voice to a more considerate level.

Self-Awareness is vital both to a child's academic success as well as their social and emotional growth. This thinking skill facilitates a child's ability to accurately judge their own performance and behaviour, as well as their ability to appropriately respond to different social situations.

Children with Good Self-Awareness Skills:

- Recognise the needs of other children
- Have an awareness of how their behaviour impacts others.
- Display an ability to understand and articulate their feelings.
- Use self-instruction, such as, "First, I'll do this; next, I'll do that."
- Are able to identify what they must learn in order to complete a task successfully.
- Understand their personal strengths and weaknesses.

Children with Less Developed Skills:

- Have difficulty understanding non-verbal cues and body posture.
- Are unable to understand other people's perspectives.
- Are in frequent conflict with others due to misunderstandings.
- Engage in inappropriate behaviours without recognising how they impact others.
- Have difficulty being accurate in their self-assessment, such as in describing their academic or athletic performance.
- Are unlikely to double check their work and often make simple mistakes, such as adding instead of subtracting.

How can we help children to develop better self-awareness?

1. Develop checklists to help children determine how well they have completed a home-based chore or activity. Use a grading system and give praise for accurate self-evaluation. Have them rate themselves as you rate them for the same task then compare and contrast scores. Describe your methods of evaluation and ask them to do the same.
2. Encourage estimation and prediction skills. Ask children how they might do on a test at school, how long it might take them to complete a task at home, or how they might perform in a game or sport. Have them record their estimates and then step back later to determine the accuracy of their predictions.
3. Express yourself: Model self-verbalisation skills by expressing your thoughts and problem-solving strategies aloud. For example, verbalise statements such as, "This reminds me of the time when we tried to do this," or "I need to think about what worked and didn't work the last time we did this." Encourage your child to use similar self-instructional strategies to help them in their own problem-solving tasks.
4. Estimating how easy or difficult a task might be will assist your child to gauge his/her ability to complete the task. It can also be helpful to consider potential barricades to completion of a goal. Ask questions that encourage thinking about what might hinder, delay or prevent successful completion.
5. Ask your child to "help" you to get ready for activities in and outside the home.

6. Be “reporters”. Make use of occasional opportunities for you and your child to sit back and observe other children in small groups. On a bench at the playground, the beach or the mall, take turns reporting on social interactions you can watch “live”. Make guesses about what might be going on. Then point out any physical actions, facial expressions, behaviours or tones of voice that give clues to support or disprove your imagined story.

7. Be actors. Role-playing or rehearsing lines can be a big help in getting ready to meet new people or enter a new setting. Take turns introducing yourself to each other and asking one or two appropriate questions. As your child becomes more confident with these skills, simply offer a prompt prior to entering a new situation.

Describe your methods of evaluation and ask them to do the same.

8. Younger children may benefit from visual reminders of their sets of strengths and weaknesses. For example, a collage of pictures showing a social, friendly, but disorganised child smiling with friends, engaged in cooperative play activities, yet also having a messy room. Encourage your child to collect and group the pictures and to talk about her choices.

REMEMBER...

Children who are self-aware:

-  Are good at making inferences and connections about content while reading
-  Develop a willingness to reflect on, and edit their work and writing
-  Can explain their mathematical reasoning in words
-  Are able to self-evaluate and check their work for errors in maths.