

Managing emotions and relating to others may be just as important as IQ score to a child's future success.

Baby Einstein. *Brainy Baby*. *So Smart Baby*. If the titles of these fast-selling DVD's are any indication, raising intelligent kids is a big priority for today's parents. But what does that mean, exactly? Most of us associate "smarts" with IQ (intelligence quotient), which measures mental abilities like problem solving,

reasoning, and understanding new ideas. It's true that in many cases a kid's IQ score can predict the level of cognitive complexity he can handle. But a numeric score on a test certainly doesn't represent his overall intelligence.

Over the last decade, mental-health experts have also begun to factor in a person's EQ (emotional quotient),

HEARTS & SMARTS



which measures how well he manages his emotions and relates to others. In fact, your child's EQ might be an even better predictor of his future success at school and in life beyond.

"Whatever our mental faculties may be, our EQ determines how well we put them to use," says Daniel Goleman, PhD, the Harvard psychologist who popularized the idea of EQ with his best-selling book *Emotional Intelligence* (Bantam Books, 1995). He reasons that an empathetic, self-aware kid—one who's able to, say, smoothly join in a social situation—naturally has a leg up when it comes to learning. And a less emotionally mature child—one who, say, can't control his impulses—is more likely to have academic problems.

Like IQ, EQ is at least partly inborn. But it's through lessons of childhood that we learn how to handle our innate tendencies and emotions. In his latest book, *Social Intelligence* (Bantam Books, 2006), Goleman asserts that parents have an opportunity to shape their child's EQ by modeling their own responses to life's challenges, by discussing their feelings and encouraging children to discuss theirs as well.

Why is it mostly up to the parents? Because the human brain undergoes

KIDS LEARN AN INTENSE AMOUNT FROM THE WAY THEIR FAMILY DEALS WITH FEELINGS.

"Trust is the critical foundation for emotional well-being throughout a person's entire life. It's necessary for relationships with family, friends, and coworkers."

DURING THOSE FIRST FIVE YEARS, IT'S NOT WHAT A CHILD LEARNS BUT HOW.

its most constant and dramatic transformation before your child even gets to school. "From birth to age 5, it's as if you're building the best possible computer," says David Perlmutter, MD, a neurologist and author of *Raise a Smarter Child by Kindergarten* (Broadway Books, 2006). "Age 5 is when we really start filling the computer with all the data." But during those first five years, it's not *what* a child learns, but *how* he learns it, that counts.

With this in mind, here's how to make your smart cookie even smarter.

Get social right away.

Christen Male, of North Yarmouth, Maine, spent hours interacting with her children, Rachel and Nick, when they were newborns. She'd sing, smile, and make faces.

Sounds sweet, right? Actually, these parent-baby "conversations" during the first 14 months of life are crucial for a child's development. Through this ongoing dialogue, a mom begins to discern when her baby is tired, ready to learn, hungry, and so on. And he learns that his needs are important—and that he can count on his mom to meet them.

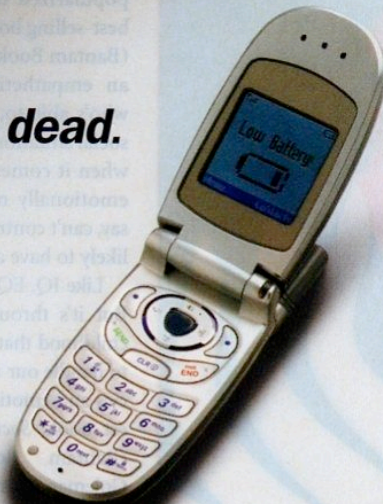
"The most important thing during the first year is building trust," says Pam Schiller, PhD, an early-childhood expert and author of *The Complete Resource Book for Infants* (Gryphon House, 2005). "Do whatever you can do to make sure the baby knows someone is caring for him." In fact, trust is the critical foundation for emotional well-being throughout a person's life. "It's necessary for relationships with family, friends, and coworkers," she says.

A sense of trust also affects your child's intellectual development. "If you don't feel safe, your brain goes into protection mode," says Schiller. "And the curiosity that drives learning can't work to its fullest potential."

Talk about feelings—even the obvious ones.

Five years later, Male is still nurturing Nick's EQ, but in different ways. "My husband went biking the other night, and it was unusual for him to be gone at that time," she says. "Nick said, 'I wish Daddy was here. It makes me feel funny inside when he's not.'" So Male found herself explaining to Nick what it means to miss someone, using words like "sad" and "love."

Now it's dead.



"Little kids experience a mysterious flood of feelings," says Goleman. "They don't have the mental understanding of why they feel that way." He reminds parents that they need to make the connection between the explanation of what a child is feeling and what that feeling is called.

This is another example of how EQ affects overall intelligence, because our brains are wired to pay attention to whatever's engaging us emotionally. A child's day is filled with opportunities to learn. But if he's floundering emotionally, he loses focus—which in turn hinders learning in all areas.

The effect can last through adulthood. "You may be a whiz at history," says Goleman. "But if you're upset by something that happened in a relationship, you know that you just can't think clearly about history."

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Redirect, don't reject, natural impulses.

With a 3½-year-old son and a 1-year-old daughter, Leslie Mitchell, of Nashville, has ample opportunities to teach impulse control. "One day my son, Cal, was playing with a gift wrap tube," she says. "He was whacking everything with it. I didn't really care, but then he started whacking me with it. I said, 'Okay, Cal, you can hit the table. You can hit the floor. You can hit the door. You cannot hit me.'"

Rather than just saying, "Don't hit me," Mitchell distinguished for Cal the appropriate and inappropriate ways to release his energy. "Impulse control is wired in the brain between 15 and 48 months," says Schiller. "If you practice it, the wiring becomes more significantly developed."

So with just a little guidance, Mitchell is teaching Cal a skill that's crucial to succeed in life. "We've all got to do homework and prepare for presentations at work," Schiller adds.

EQ Reading List

"One of the best ways to foster emotional intelligence is reading to your child," says neurologist David Perlmutter, MD. "Your child is sitting on your lap, listening to your voice, smelling your scent, looking at the book, and watching you form the words. So [several] senses are being stimulated at once. Beyond that, he feels the safety and security of being with Mom."

Books that impart emotional lessons also give moms the chance to teach kids words for their feelings. Here, three mom-suggested reads:

■ **Guess How Much I Love You**

by Sam McBratney

—Suzanne Calderon, Trabuco Canyon, CA

■ **Coco Makes Music**

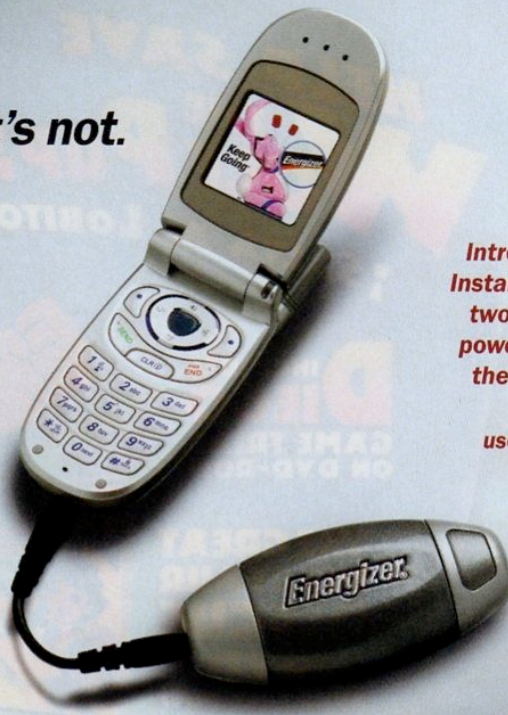
by Karen van Holst Pellekaan

—Shihching Wagner, Ulysses, PA

■ **Baby Faces**, DK Publishing board book

—Christen Male, North Yarmouth,

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"A child's day is filled with opportunities to learn. But if he's floundering emotionally, he loses focus—which in turn hinders learning in *all* areas."

"What I say to parents is, 'Here's your big moment. If your child's exposed to [your words of wisdom] during this window of opportunity, it can make a significant difference.'"

Let her be angry—but talk about it.

"Children learn an intense amount from people in their family as a model," says Goleman. "They do what you do, not what you say." It's important to remember this when dealing with an angry, irritable child. "If you do not take your child's irritability personally, but view it as a problem that the child needs help with, then you're in a better position to help," Goleman says.

This works for Suzanne Calderon, of Trabuco Canyon, California, who watches her 21-month-old Mia's sunny disposition turn dark and surly when she's told she can't have her treasured toothbrush. "When I say no, she gets mad and stomps her feet."



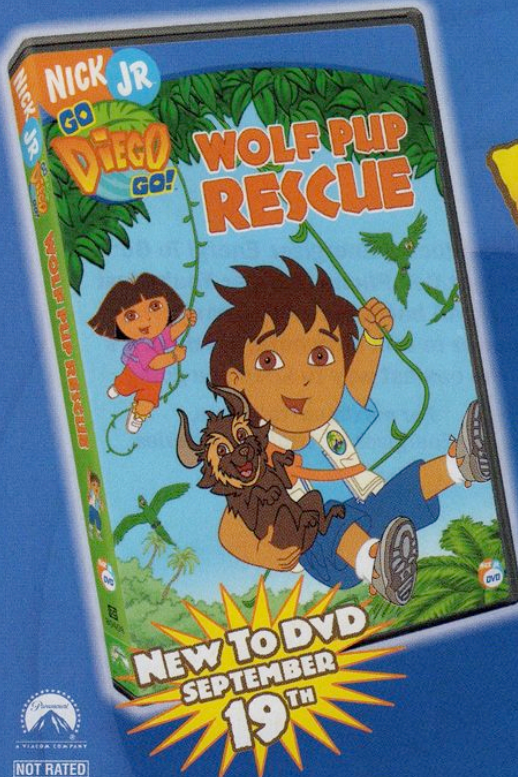
Calderon resists the urge to snap at Mia. "I'll say, 'That's okay, you're allowed to be mad,'" she says. "Next I'll explain to her why we brush our teeth, and when we do it. And then I redirect her to something else, like a game or puzzle or book."

Goleman suggests engaging an angry child in conversation about what's upsetting her until the anger passes. Kids obviously learn better when they're calm. "This teaches

her the basics in conflict management," he adds.

Encourage new experiences—even scary ones.

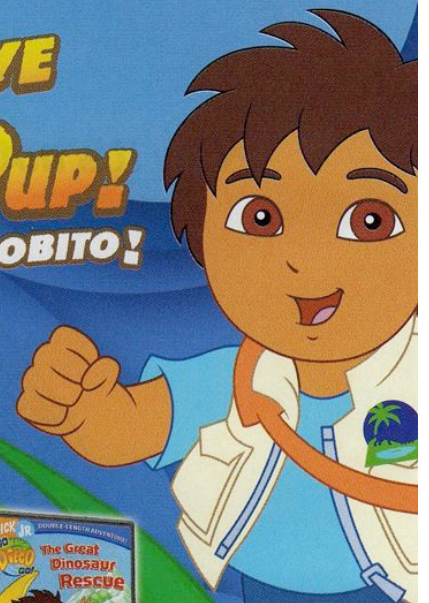
Leslie Mitchell says her son, Cal, is timid in public. He's not alone. According to a study by Harvard psychology professor Jerome Kagan, PhD (Goleman's colleague), about 15 percent of children are born with an emotional system that tends to overreact. "This makes them react to new things as though they were threatening," says



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Goleman. Mitchell says that in Cal's case, "he buries his head in my legs and won't talk to anybody."

So when it comes time to drop a reluctant Cal off at Sunday school, she gives him as much information as possible about what's ahead. "I'll say, 'After we park the car, we're going inside and to your classroom,'" she says. "'Your teacher will be there.' And so on. I casually go through the entire routine."

Goleman applauds this approach, because the toddler/preschool years are a key time for teaching your child how to manage social situations. He adds that studies generally show "young children whose parents urged them to try something new turn out not to be timid and shy." With emotional obstacles like this one, parents really do have the power to help.

Jennifer Graham Kizer is a writer based in Springfield, New Jersey, who had her second child in July.

Brain Boosters

Neurologist David Perlmutter, MD, offers activities that nurture EQ abilities like empathy and self-confidence.

■ Role-playing games

"Kids will say, 'Okay, let's play cops and robbers. I'll be the cop, and you be the robber.' They have to work out who's going to play which role. Then they play out their perceptions of what that role must involve. And in so doing, they learn to appreciate what others must be feeling based on their behavior."

■ Playing with puzzles and blocks

"How you do a puzzle is trial and error. It's a terrific time for a child to learn that it's okay to experiment and make mistakes. The puzzles should be just a little bit more challenging than the child is comfortable with. The parent ought to be there to encourage and help but ultimately should allow the child to figure it out."

■ Coloring with crayons

"You can challenge a toddler by saying, 'Can you draw a picture of Mommy?' Then the next question is, 'Where's Mommy's head, and where are her arms and legs?' You'll be surprised with a 2-year-old, because the picture looks like scribble to you. But once he starts to point things out, you'll realize that there really was a concept going into the creation of the drawing. By asking him to interpret the picture for you, and by being supportive about it, you're encouraging the child that whatever he draws is good, so stay with it and be creative."

■ Learning songs, then changing them

"Sing a song, and then drop the wrong word into the song one day. That challenges the child—and it's a tiny bit of an emotional experience, because something's out of order. But that's good, because the child is learning. Parents should change things so children learn to perceive a new challenge and compare it to previous experiences."