

KNOWLEDGE TO ACTION BRIEF

Social-Emotional Competence of Children: A Protective Factor

Strategies 2.0

Supporting young children to develop social-emotional skills is found to have a profound effect on their health and development in early life and as adults. Social-emotional competence, which includes self-regulation, executive functioning, emotional and impulse control, and social and communication skills, influences children's cognitive and language development, academic achievement, and mental health (CSSP, n.d.).

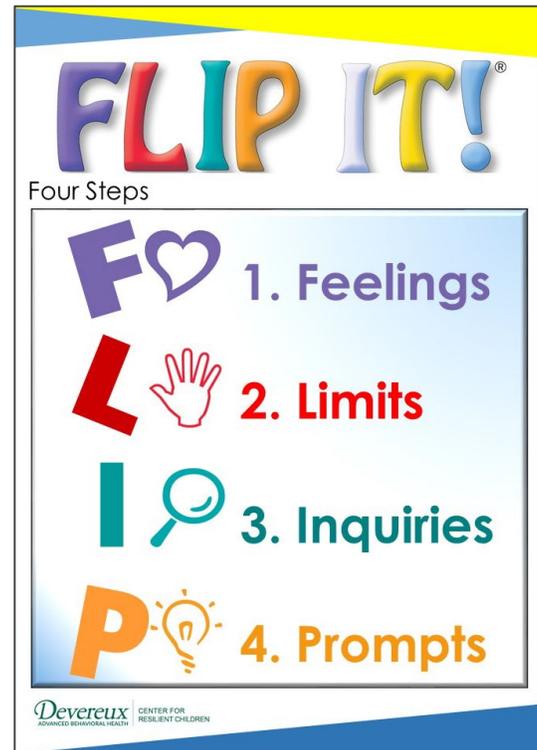
Professionals in the family strengthening field can work with parents or caregivers to provide a supportive environment that builds children's social-emotional competence. For example, families can encourage the development of such skills by providing problem-solving activities, encouraging children to express their emotions, and by setting clear expectations for acceptable behavior (CSSP, n.d.).

One tool parents and caregivers can use is the FLIP IT! strategy, developed by Devereux Center for Resilient Children. [FLIP IT!](#) is an easy to follow, four-step process designed to address young children's challenging behavior and involves outlining clear steps to calm a child and correct their behavior. This is a strength-based strategy that helps promote self-control and emotional development (Devereux Center for Resilient Children, 2019).

Not only parents and primary caregivers, but other important adult figures in the child's life, such as educators, can help build social-emotional competence as the child ages. One framework used by educators to develop positive social and emotional skills and address challenging behavior is the Pyramid Model (Fox & Hemmeter, 2014). The components of the model are as follows:

- Nurturing and responsive relationships: an example is engaging and responding to children during conversations
- High quality supportive classroom environments: an example is a teacher providing clear instructions and structure
- Targeted social-emotional supports: an example is teaching a child how to self-regulate their emotions
- Intensive individualized interventions: an example to collaborate with families to examine a child's problem behavior and develop an individualized strategy to address the behavior

Strong social-emotional competence in children is one of multiple factors that are considered to protect them against potential child abuse and neglect. A child's ability to handle their emotions, communicate when they are angry or upset, and engage in positive social interactions can help parents and caregivers feel less stress or frustration, which allows them to better meet their child's needs (FRIENDS National Center for Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention, n.d.). Furthermore, social-emotional skills are associated with positive adult outcomes. For instance, Jones et al. (2015) found that social-emotional skills are associated with a higher probability of high school graduation, college degree attainment, and stable employment in addition to a lower likelihood of needing public assistance, police involvement, and arrests as adults.



Take Action

- 1) Professionals in the family strengthening field can work with families to build and develop social-emotional competence in children. They can model social and emotional skills, and teach parents activities or techniques similar to the FLIP IT! Strategy, which supports parents with the knowledge to teach their children.
- 2) Encourage communities and family resource centers to offer play groups for young children and support groups for caregivers, where they can connect to others, learn to support their children's social-emotional competence, and practice with their peers.
- 3) Learn more about supporting the development of social-emotional competence and strengthening protective factors by signing up for the Strategies 2.0 Family Strengthening Certificate Program or individual Strategies 2.0 trainings that focus on protective factors. Find out more at StrategiesCA.org/trainings.

References

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Strategies 2.0

Strategies 2.0 is a multi-dimensional initiative to help professionals and organizations make a bigger impact.

We train, support, and link professionals and organizations together to more effectively support families as well as build power to advance equity and opportunity in our communities.

Author: Jasmine H. Tran, MSW Candidate, San Diego State University

