

# VIP Value In Parenting

Volume 2, Number 3

Fall 2000

## Talking About Your Child's EQ

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As the school year starts, parents, teachers, and children turn their thoughts back to crayons, assignments, and report cards. Lots of time will be spent practicing spelling, writing book reports, learning the alphabet, and using flashcards or educational videos. All of these things are certainly very important parts of school, and can be valuable ways to increase your child's knowledge. Each of these items deals with what we call IQ, or the Intelligence Quotient. IQ simply means the amount of built-in "smarts" each person is born with that supports them in reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Lately, however, there has been a lot of attention given to another part of growing up and learning. This newer area does not deal with the "head" of the child, but rather with the "heart." Instead of IQ, this part of development is called EQ.

### What is EQ?

EQ stands for Emotional Quotient, and refers to those internal "smarts" that assist in building character. Educators and child psychologists realize that children need much more than math, science, language, and the arts to be truly successful in school, and in life. Making and keeping friends isn't learned the same way students learn shapes and colors. Knowing how to handle anger or disappointment isn't taught like the multiplication tables. Being respectful and helpful aren't typical assignments children get for homework; they must be gained in different ways.

Experts agree that by young adulthood, emotional skills and habits are already learned and basically set. Depending on circumstances and examples children have experienced, these skills and habits can be strong or weak, helpful or even dangerous. That is why parents and educators in the early and elementary years play such an important role encouraging positive emotional and social life skills in young children.

### Does EQ "Come Naturally?"

If we rely on behaviors that "come naturally," usually the result is not a positive EQ. Think about it. Did you have to teach your two-year old to scream "NO?" Did you give your children lessons how to tease each other? Does any loving parent or teacher help children practice name-calling? Hopefully not! Yet it is human nature to look out for our own interests, to get all we can, to be the winner at the expense of another. We can't let natural, usually selfish instincts be the guide for life. That leads to hitting with blocks, fighting at recess, cheating on tests. How then can parents (and teachers) help their child have a really high EQ?

## Make Use of GOMER

The five letters stand for the steps parents can use to build EQ.

- G = Goal** What specific EQ items do you want to work on with your child?
- O = Opportunities** Keep alert for moments you can point out good EQ skills.
- M = Modeling** Your child is always watching and listening to you... take care!
- E = Examples** Use TV or real life to show positive and negative EQ examples.
- R = Reinforce** Give hugs, praise, a thank you when your child shows high EQ.

### What Can Parents Do to Help EQ?

#### Be a Good Role Model.

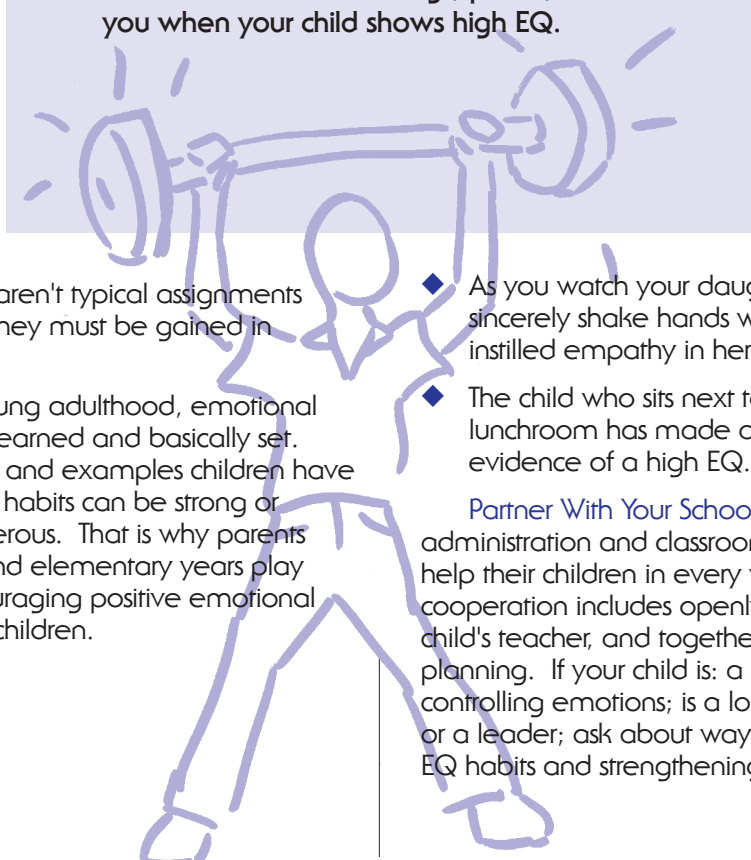
Parents must recognize that they are their child's first teacher, and parental examples in those early years leave lasting impressions. For parents, grandparents, and caregivers raising children that have not been with them since birth, you may need to "undo" negative messages or reinforce positive lessons learned from previous role models.

◆ When your child says to his Kindergarten teacher, "I'll help clean up the snack tables," you have planted caring in his EQ.

◆ As you watch your daughter win a soccer game and sincerely shake hands with the losers, you have instilled empathy in her EQ.

◆ The child who sits next to a newcomer in the lunchroom has made a good decision to be a friend, evidence of a high EQ.

**Partner With Your School.** As partners with the school administration and classroom staff, parents join forces to help their children in every way. That "two way street" of cooperation includes openly communicating with your child's teacher, and together being purposeful in EQ planning. If your child is: a bully or a victim; has trouble controlling emotions; is a loner a show-off; a peacemaker or a leader; ask about ways to cooperate in erasing low EQ habits and strengthening positive skills.



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**Be a Cheerleader.** One of the best ways to raise your child's EQ is to be their cheerleader. Take a moment and ask yourself these questions:

- ◆ Do I talk more about my child's successes than her faults?
- ◆ Do I listen respectfully to my child, without interrupting?
- ◆ Am I helping my child be organized, or do I only yell at the mess?
- ◆ Do I allow for honest mistakes, or, blow up at failures?
- ◆ Are the words, "Let's try it" instead of "It won't work" used for my child's ideas?
- ◆ When my child makes a good choice, do I show approval?
- ◆ Do I make it a daily goal to "catch my child being good?"

Part of cheerleading is understanding how to do it in the very best way. Try not to use empty praise like ... "You're such a good boy," or "That's nice." Rather, be clear and cheer specifics... "You really worked hard cleaning the basement." "The way you answered the phone was so polite!" "You came the first time I called you for dinner. That was great listening!" Meaningful cheers show you are truly appreciative, and that you're paying attention to your child. They also help boost your child's self-esteem by showing them how their good actions are helpful to others.

How to do it? Whether you and your child are at home or in school, at the market or the mall, at church or synagogue, on vacation or visiting friends, you can help to raise their EQ. Start by modeling and rewarding these behaviors:

**CARING**

**Show care to your family.** Don't tolerate insults, name-calling, put-downs. Speak love!

**Show care to neighbors.** Sweep, shovel, bake, rake, visit, volunteer. Be a giver!

**Show care globally.** Talk about disasters. Send money, clothes, food. Go beyond!

**PRACTICAL WISDOM**

**Give children calendars/daily planners.** Teach how to use them. Stop "last minute life!"

**Help children understand** long term effects of short-term decisions.

**Set weekly family meeting times** to plan, share, celebrate.

**Buy storage bins, file folders, baskets.** Help organize your lives and living space.

**Use books, TV, videos to teach** the difference between being assertive (positive and confident) passive (inappropriately weak) and aggressive (negative, hurtful, and demanding).

**HOPE**

**Be enthusiastic.** Teach children to see the "lemonade" they can make from "lemons."

**Stop using pessimistic words.** Instead of "That won't work" say "Why not try it?"

**Don't dampen dreams.**

**Double Benefits**

Consider this last thought about EQ. Besides the advantages your child will gain for a healthier social and emotional life, developing their high EQ also rewards *you as a parent.*

Now, as the intentional first teacher, and the EQ role model for your family, you too will find more opportunities to grow in these valuable areas. Positive, peaceful, successful families are the hopeful result of developing everyone's Emotional Quotient.

**For more information on this topic, please call:**

Cornell Cooperative Extension: 344-1234  
 OCCC, Early Childhood Program: 341-4354  
 Parent Education Ministry: 342-0908

**Find the EQ Assets!**

*Contributed by the Orange County Youth Leadership Congress: Eric Maxon.*

As you go back to school, you will need to bring many EQ Assets with you in order to succeed. Color in every other letter, starting with the first, to find these important qualities.



CWAYROIJNOGA HUOCPAE  
 SXEULBFOELSFTLESEWMU  
 SPESLEFICROINNTGROOJL  
 HAOHNOELSPTRYT  
 RKECSYPAORNPSOINBVISLOIIT OY  
 EIMLPTALTIHUYP

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For more information on parenting education and/or the Orange County Parenting Coalition Action Team, contact Cornell Cooperative Extension at 845 - 344 - 1234. [www.cce.cornell.edu/orange](http://www.cce.cornell.edu/orange)



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**Graphics:** Nancy Karp, Cornell Cooperative Extension, O.C.  
**Printing:** Jerry Reinhardt, Cornell Cooperative Extension, O.C.

**Funding / Distribution:** Empire Blue Cross Blue Shield, National Accounts Division, Middletown, NY; Partners for Children, Orange County