

Emotional Intelligence

QUESTION: What is emotional intelligence, and is it as important as a person's I.Q.?

ANSWER: Child development research is showing that emotional intelligence (E.Q.) may be more important than I.Q. in determining a child's success in later life. The underlying skills that make up emotional intelligence can be taught to children. Child psychologists are identifying games as the most effective way to teach cooperation, sharing and making friends, the positive skills needed throughout life. Games give children the tools they need to work things out in daily experience. Learning and play are a child's work. Children thrive on positive adult attention, and it's valuable for all adults to realize that playing with our children is a wonderful way to develop their E.Q. We all learn best when we're relaxed and happy.

What games do you remember playing with adults or older friends as you were growing up? My favorite childhood memories include jigsaw puzzles with my grandmother and her friends, endless games of Candyland with my mother, dancing with my father while standing on his shoes, singing action songs with my Sunday School teacher, playing Go Fish with my aunt and uncle, acting out the story-lines created and directed by my preteen neighbor and pick-up sticks with my teen-age sitter.

Learning by watching and doing is as traditional as building snowmen and as innovative as computer games. The rules in game playing teach structure and cooperation and give us practice following directions and becoming problem-solvers.

There is amazing power in positive, focused attention. Following your child's lead in choosing a game or activity and playing together for 15 minutes every day will increase your son or daughter's sense of satisfaction and well-being. The result is a child with a higher E.Q. It's well worth the time. In fact, it probably increases your E.Q. too.