

# Early Childhood Resource Hub newsletter

## Emotional literacy and self-regulation

Start 2020 with a plan to better support your children with understanding and managing their emotions. Read about an approach taken at one kindergarten. Access online resources that provide a range of useful strategies. Together with the January newsletter (Responding to a natural disaster) this newsletter aims build capacity to talk about feelings and skills of self-regulation.

### Helping children with their emotions

At being3 Kindergarten, Michelle Addamo and her colleagues introduced the [Zones of Regulation approach](#) in 2019. The Zones approach uses four colours to help the children identify how they are feeling in the moment, given their emotions and level of alertness. The approach also guides them with strategies to support self-regulation. Michelle explains:

As part of our environment we have just implemented our zone lights; we use these in a classroom context to promote personal awareness of oneself in the group context. We will be extending this with a 'you can try ...' element to help the children move between the zones. By understanding how to notice their body's signals, detect triggers, read social contexts and consider how their behaviour impacts those around them, the children learn improved emotional control, sensory regulation, and self-awareness. They develop problem-solving skills.



Image: © Michelle Addamo

Michelle bought the light switches from Kmart and covered them with cellophane.

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The service was motivated to try this approach because one of the children had been seeing a child psychologist in relation to building social communication skills. Part of his therapy was being able to identify where he felt himself to be within the zones in order to move between them. The service also had a few children that were seeing a speech pathologist who using the Zones of Regulation in her practice.

It worked well to implement the Zones for consistency for all children and for bridging the learning contexts of the individual children. I was surprised how well it fitted and extended on prior learning with the children in relation to feelings and emotions due to the colours. Some story books use similar colours to identify the emotions as used in the Zones, such as *The colour monster* by Anna Llenas.

The children really gravitated to the use of the coloured lights to represent the zones. Most could identify different feelings that they may have within the zones and all explored these through both small and large group games.

Some children needed some support to move between zones. They may have fixated on the colour (red zone – I feel angry) 'I am in the red zone because I'm angry' (however, the child wasn't angry). We would say things like 'You look like you are in the green zone, your face looks happy, I can see a smile when you are talking, shall we go and look in the mirror?' One child was diagnosed with autism and was obsessed with the colour red. Most of the other children explored the zones through play with peers.

The children were able to more easily identify how peers were feeling easier using the zones. This has supported them in their play and in other social situations. For example, identifying someone was sad, they could offer them a drink or ask them to play whereas before the emphasis was on their own feelings and perhaps not identifying those of others.

The service has also introduced a table-top matching game where the children can match face emotions cards with the zones. They have found that the children are already responding well and understand the concepts.



Michelle had to liaise with other early years professionals to build her knowledge of the concept. She advises:

Do your research, see if any families, teachers or early intervention specialists are using this. Ensure it is relevant in your context with the age group of the children. This model is to be used to support children's understandings of emotions and socially acceptable rules in engagement but is not a way to manage whole-class behaviour.

Parents have been unanimously positive about the approach. One parent provided this feedback in 2019:

'This is a brilliant idea!!! So glad to know that being3 Glen Waverley has put in great efforts in supporting the development of the children's social and emotional wellbeing.'

## Resources

### Developing emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence is related to many important outcomes for children (and adults). Research indicates that children with higher emotional intelligence are better able to pay attention, are more engaged in school, have more positive relationships, and are more empathic. Access the mood meter and the five 'RULER' skills for children on the US-based [NAEYC website](#).

### Strengthening communication skills

The Victorian-based *Communication practice guide* is designed to help educators better understand the trajectory of communication skill development. It highlights the importance of communication in enabling children to access and engage with learning opportunities.

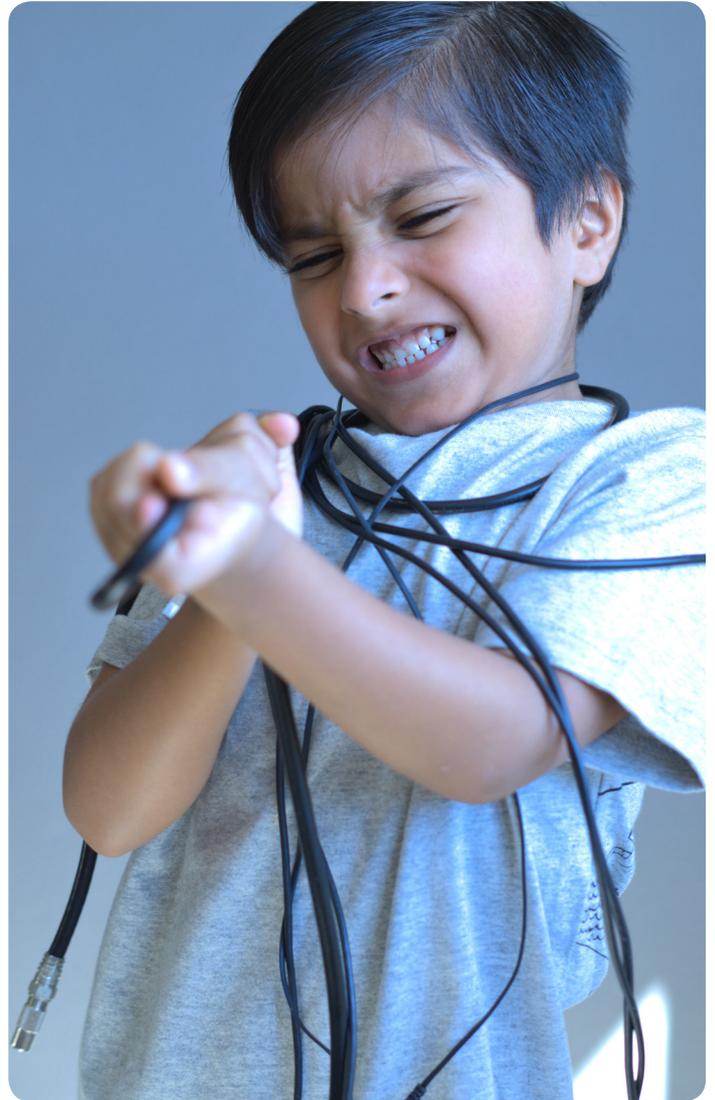
### Labelling emotions

This [article](#) includes examples and vignettes that illustrate how practical strategies might be used in a variety of early childhood settings.

### Importance of relationships

*Growing up our way* provides insights into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child rearing practices, including attitudes to discipline, relationships and behaviour.

Read how four different services build trust with Aboriginal families in the 2019 SNAICC publication: [Successful strategies to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in early childhood education and care](#).



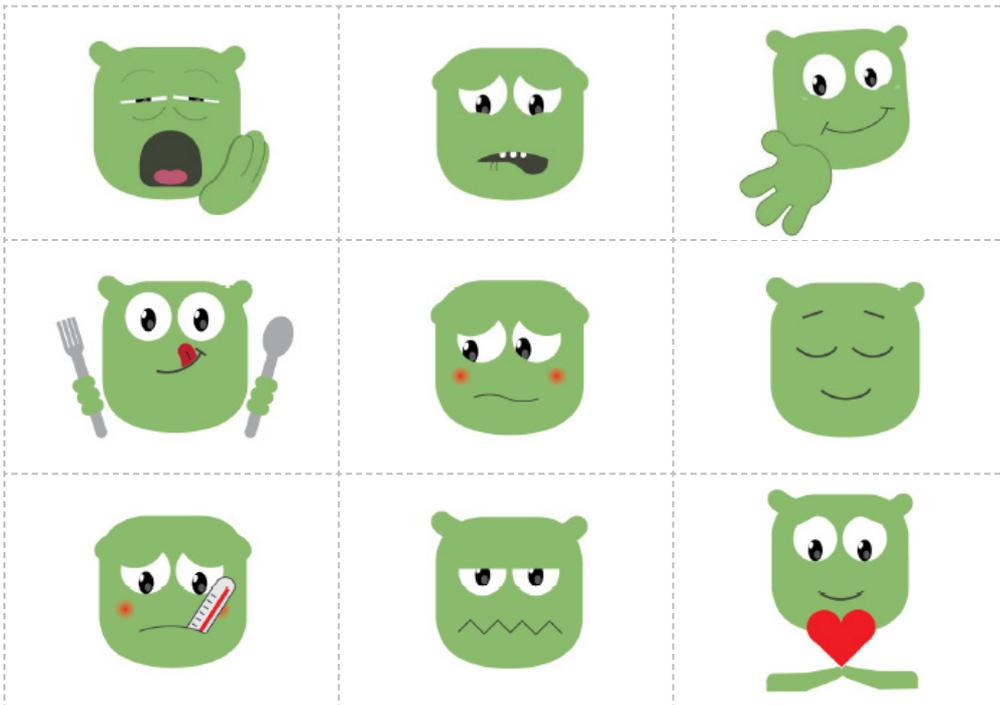
Anjuman Sharma/Alamy Stock Photo

## Resources (cont'd)

### Developing your child's emotional literacy

This Queensland-based [resource](#) provides advice for parents and educators. It has links to Allen puppets (which you can make) and to emojis that help children to recognise how they are feeling.

Find an age-appropriate children's booklist that includes topics such as 'Being a friend', 'Sad feelings', 'Happy feelings', 'Accepting different types of friends' and 'General feelings'.



Allen learns about feelings, Developing your child's emotional literacy © State of Queensland, (Department of Education) Released under a CC BY 4.0 licence.

## Professional learning

### Professional learning bundle

Early Childhood Australia has collated a professional learning bundle titled 'Supporting behaviour and self-regulation'. The bundle includes online learning modules, webcasts and ECA publications such as *Emotion coaching: A transformational tool*, 'Children's behaviour: A guiding approach' by Dr Louise Porter, and other useful resources. It is available for sale through [ECA](#).

### Podcast

Focusing on emotions and emotion regulation is such an important element of working with children who have experienced trauma. This [podcast](#) provides some entry points.