



An Early Literacy and School Readiness Newsletter for Professionals

Emotional Wellness: Understanding Its Importance

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Without early emotional wellness, particularly in the first five years, there is great risk to children's ability to function and adapt in school and in life. The sobering news is that young children, including infants and toddlers, are not too young to have serious mental health problems.

Emotional wellness typically receives much less recognition than academic preparation and school readiness, yet research demonstrates that children clearly need emotional and social development just as much as they need cognitive skills.

The good news is that early learning professionals can make a substantial impact promoting emotional wellness by

understanding its importance and applying good practices.

"...the concept of school readiness is not exclusively a matter of fostering literacy and number skill but must also include the capacity to form and sustain positive relationships

with teachers, children, and other adults, and develop the social and emotional

skills for cooperating with others." *Young Children Develop in an Environment of Relationships, National Scientific Council on the Developing Child*

Emotional wellness can be described as "the developing capacity of children (birth through age five) to: experience, regulate, and express emotion; form close, secure, interpersonal relationships; and

explore the environment and learn - all in the cultural context of family and community." *Strategies to Support the Emotional Wellness of Children, Families, and Staff: Finding from a Head Start Mental Health Task Force, Education Development Center, Inc. 2002*

Emotional wellness might also be called mental health, emotional intelligence, emotional knowledge, relationships for learning, and social/emotional development.

There are many abilities connected to emotional wellness, such as the ability to engage well and get along with others, pay attention and focus, display self-control, identify emotions, recognize other's emotions, and show empathy. Adults who work with children recognize the value in

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# Emotional Wellness *continued*

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these abilities and know that emotional wellness lays the foundation for other learning and positive well being.

## The Human Connection

Research illustrates that human connection is the active ingredient fueling a child's development. Before children learn their letters, numbers, or how to share, they must experience positive, nurturing interactions to support future academic success and future healthy development.

"Healthy development depends on the quality and reliability of a young child's relationships with the important people in his or her life, both within and outside the family. Even the development of a child's brain architecture depends on the establishment of these relationships." *National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, Young Children Develop in an Environment of Relationships, Summer 2004*

Early learning professionals can offer children the greatest gift of all - a reliable, nurturing, responsive, loving adult to build a relationship with.

"Relationships engage children in the human community in ways that

help them define who they are, what they can become, and how and why they are important to other people. " *National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, Young Children Develop in an Environment of Relationships, Summer 2004*

## Considerations of Emotional Wellness: Promotion, Prevention, and Intervention

With careful attention, early learning professionals can provide opportunity for intervention and plans that successfully support emotional wellness.

### Promotion

- Build loving, responsive relationships - Hold and sing to infants, get down of the floor and play with toddlers, and listen to and observe preschoolers carefully.
- Demonstrate problem solving skills - Comfort infants while talking to them, use role play demonstrating words and language with toddlers, and facilitate group discussions that guide problem solving skills with preschoolers.
- Enlighten parents and others - Share articles, workshops, and information with others on research and current emotional wellness development.
- Provide emotionally supportive environments - Is your environment safe, comfortable, engaging, visually supportive, filled with routine, clear

boundaries and adults who are kind, respectful, and well prepared? The environment should offer positive emotional expectations such as helping each other and reminding children that we are a community that works together.

- Use project and experience based learning - Project work and experience learning encourages children to collaborate, plan, solve problems, and use socially and emotionally intelligent work.
- Be aware of children's different temperaments - Variations in temperament means each child may respond differently to different situations. Recognize your reaction to different temperaments (to best support each child).
- Understand that culture plays a role - Each family has their own unique set of ideas regarding their child's emotional and social development. Discuss these with families.

### Prevention

- Prevent missed opportunities to assess emotional wellness - Use well suited types of observation, assessment, screening tools, and methods to identify and document any difficulties as well as any progress and success.
- Prevent unrealistic



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## Emotional Wellness *continued*

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expectations - Know what to expect based on concrete knowledge of child development. Seek out professional development that embraces new research and training to help evaluate and deal with emotional wellness.

- Prevent a lack of communication with families - Plan time to share strategies and information together. Request information from the parent to better understand their child, such as how their child likes to be comforted.
- Avoid escalated situations - Develop action plans to set quickly into place for all levels

of concern. Be sure the group working together has common visions for promotion, prevention, and intervention to provide a comprehensive support system.



### Intervention

- Be well aware of intervention services, such as mental health and child welfare agencies, early intervention programs, and clinical intervention services for high risk situations.
- Build successful collaborations - Provide documented

information to the intervention service program to provide a comprehensive picture of the child's needs. Be sure all adults involved have the information they need and have access to communication with one another and use follow up strategies.

- Get Help - With increasing challenges and stress, it's important to recognize our own emotional and social needs; connect with others, seek support and professional guidance when needed.

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## Songs for Spring

### UNDER THE RAINBOW

Sung to: *Up On the Housetop*  
By: Paula R. Westernen

First comes a rain cloud passing by  
Dropping little raindrops in my eye  
Next comes the sunshine all over  
the sky  
Now look at the rainbow way up  
high  
Ho, Ho, Ho, who wouldn't go.  
Ho, Ho, Ho, who wouldn't go.  
Under the rainbow, a place for me  
Under the rainbow yes sir-ee!

### MY KITE

Sung to: *The Farmer in the Dell*  
By: Jean Warren

My kite is up so high,  
My kite is up so high,  
Oh my just watch it fly

My kite is up so high.  
My kite is falling down,  
My kite is falling down,  
Oh no it's down so low  
My kite is falling down,

The wind has caught my kite,  
The wind has caught my kite,  
What fun I'm on the run  
The wind has caught my kite

My kite is up so high,  
My kite is up so high,  
Oh my just watch it fly  
My kite is up so high.

### RAIN, RAIN FALLING DOWN

Sung to: *Row, Row, Row Your Boat*  
By: Susan A. Miller

Rain, rain falling down,  
Falling on the ground.  
Pitter, patter, pitter, patter,

What a lovely sound.

(Add verses using squishy, noisy, silly)

### IT'S RAINING

Sung to: *Frere Jacques*  
By: Susan Widdifield

It is raining, it is raining,  
On my head, on my head.  
Pitter, patter raindrops  
Pitter, patter raindrops,  
I'm all wet! I'm all wet!

### CLOUDS

Sung to: *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*  
By Paula R. Westernen

When I look into the sky  
I can see the clouds go by.  
They don't ever make a sound  
Letting wind push them around.  
Some go fast and some go slow  
I wonder where the clouds all go.



# March is National Nutrition Month

National Nutrition Month® is a nutrition education and information campaign sponsored annually by the American Dietetic Association (ADA). The March campaign is designed to focus attention on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits. National Nutrition Month® also promotes ADA and its members to the public and the media as one of the credible sources of timely, scientifically based food and nutrition information.



The National Nutrition Month campaign reinforces the importance of nutrition as a key component of good health, along with physical activity. The key messages are broad and are empowering in their presentation.

Whether these messages are passed on to families or used personally, they represent a core of ideas that promote good health through nutrition and physical activity.

☺ *The food and physical activity choices made today and every day affect your health. Eating right and being physically active are keys to a healthy lifestyle.*

☺ *Give your body the balanced nutrition it needs by eating a*

*variety of nutrient-packed foods every day. Just be sure to stay within your daily calorie needs.*

☺ *Get the most nutrition out of your calories. Choose the most nutritionally rich foods you can from each food group each day - those packed with vitamins, minerals, fiber and other nutrients but lower in calories.*

☺ *Find your balance between food and physical activity. Regular physical activity is important for your overall health and fitness plus it helps control body weight, promotes a feeling of well-being and reduces the risk of chronic diseases.*

☺ *Play it safe with foods. Prepare, handle and store food properly to keep everyone safe.*



For more detailed information on healthy eating and physical activity for children, check out the Nutrition BEST web pages at <http://ceplacer.ucdavis.edu>.

Or for more information about the Dietary Guidelines and the MyPyramid food guidance system visit <http://www.healthier.us.gov/dietaryguidelines> and <http://mypyramid.gov>.

Here are some books to read with children focusing on nutrition and physical activity:

## **Bearobics**

by Vic Parker

In this funny counting book, a shaggy bear turns on his boom box and all the animals begin to boogie, jump, jive, and shake. The playful illustrations and book design support the movement theme.

## **Clap Your Hands**

By Lorinda Bryan Cauley

A crew of kids and animals, dressed in appealing combinations of comfortable odds and ends of clothing, responds to suggestions from the verse. They wiggle, purr, fly, tickle, somersault, kiss, and spin their way through the story.



## **Growing Vegetable Soup**

by Lois Ehlert

Brightly colored collage illustrations reveal a story of a father and child who plant a vegetable garden. Children will learn the steps to gardening, how plants grow, and how to make a yummy soup.

## **Lunch**

by Denise Fleming

A very hungry mouse peeks out of his hole and sniffs...LUNCH! As he nibbles and crunches his way through lunch, children can guess which fruit or vegetable he'll eat next.

# Spring Into a Spectacular Story!

## COMPASSION

### Featured Title:

*Plaid: A Tale of Compassion*  
By Leslie Young

A sweet little Scottie dog named Plaid is feeling sad because he has a broken leg and he does not think his friends care or even notice. He becomes very happy, though, when he discovers that not only do they notice him sitting under a cherry tree, but they help him to feel better. With his friend's help, Plaid returns to his old playful self again, showing us how important and very valuable compassion is.

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*A Very Important Day*  
Maggie Herold

*Be Good to Eddie Lee*  
Virginia Fleming

*The Doll Lady*  
H. Elizabeth Collins

*Freddie Q. Freckle*  
Midge Messinger

*Get Well, Good Night*  
Shelley Moore Thomas

*Knots on a Counting Rope*  
Bill Martin Jr & John Archambault

*Lily and the Paper Man*  
Rebecca Upjohn

*Play Lady / La Senoras Juguetona*  
Eric Hoffman

*This Farm is a Mess*  
Leslie McGuire

*The Velveteen Rabbit*  
Margery Williams

*When I Care About Others*  
Cornelia Maude Spelman

## EASTER

### Featured Title:

*The Night Before Easter*  
By Natasha Wing

"Twas the night before Easter, just before dawn, Not a creature was stirring out on the lawn" The Easter bunny takes center stage in this delightful spin on Clement C. Moore's beloved poem that will send families hopping to the library for an Easter treat sweeter than any sugar plum!

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*Happy Easter, Mouse!*  
Laura Numeroff

*Fancy Nancy's Elegant Easter*  
Jane O'Connor

*The Easter Egg*  
Jan Brett

*Easter Bugs*  
David Carter

*Happy Easter Curious George*  
H.A. Rey

*The Best Easter Eggs Ever*  
Jerry Smath

*The Easter Frog*  
Gabe Washburn

*Hop!*  
Phyllis Root

*Easter Babies: A Springtime Counting Book*  
Joy N. Hulme

*ABC's of Easter*  
Patricia Reeder Eubank



## SPRING

### Featured Title:

*Hurray for Spring*  
By Patricia Hubbell

A little boy celebrates spring by exulting in activities such as swinging, playing in puddles, planting seeds, and observing ants, worms, rabbits, and red-winged blackbirds. Told in simple words and short sentences, the rhyming first-person text expresses the child's joy in the simple pleasures of his outdoor world.

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*It's Spring!*  
Linda Glaser

*How Do You Know it's Spring?*  
Allan Fowler

*Mouse's First Spring*  
Lauren Thompson

*When Spring Comes*  
Yvonne Simpson

*Everything Spring*  
Jill Esbaum

*Kitten's Spring*  
Eugenie Fernandes

*Countdown to Spring: An Animal Counting Book*  
Janet Schulman

*Caterpillar Spring: Butterfly Summer*  
Susan Hood

*When Will it be Spring?*  
Catherine Walters

*Hopper Hunts for Spring*  
Marcus Pfister

*Spring*  
Gerda Muller

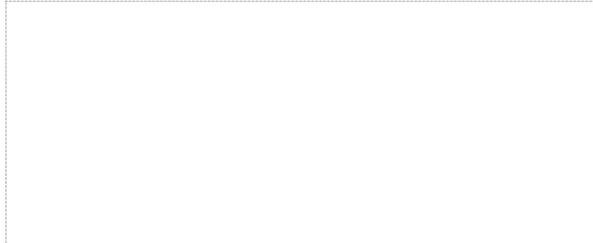
*In the Spring*  
Craig McFarland Brown



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## Spring Garden Jars

Read one of the suggested books on page five with the children and then try this fun project! The Garden Jars can be created by each child individually using smaller jars or use larger jars to make room decorations.

### WHAT YOU NEED:

baby food jars with lids (one per child) **OR** use larger jars and do as a group activity  
 small silk, craft flowers (trimmed to have shorter stems)  
 craft glue  
 green play dough

### WHAT YOU DO:

1. Flatten the play dough to 1/4 or 1/2 inch

- thickness. (Use a rolling pin if you'd like.)
2. Use the mouth of the jar as a cookie cutter to make the circles of play dough.
  3. Glue the play dough circles into the lid of the jar.
  4. Stick the flowers into the play dough.
  5. Allow the play dough to harden overnight.
  6. Screw the lid onto the jar carefully.
  7. Decorate the lid using scrap ribbon or pieces of felt tied into a bow.



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