Top Ten Practices

Top ten practices to promote emotional literacy in preschool classrooms (Joseph, 2001; Joseph & Strain, 2003):

1. Teachers intentionally foster healthy relationships between themselves, the children, and their families.

2. Teachers frequently label their own feelings and identify the feelings of other children.

3. Teachers reinforce children’s use of feeling words.

4. There are pictures of children with emotion labels around the classroom.

5. Teachers encourage family and home involvement by letting parents and caregivers know about classroom activities around emotional literacy.

6. Teachers read books, sing songs, and play games about emotions each day.

7. Teachers design activities to directly teach emotion words to children who need more explicit instruction.

8. Teachers prevent emotional outbursts by helping children label their feelings before their feelings escalate.

9. Teachers use simple emotion words throughout the day (mad, sad, happy) and model the use of more complex emotion words (disappointed, excited, generous, caring).

10. Teachers embed opportunities to learn new emotion words and practice emotional literacy throughout daily routines, planned activities, and the natural, daily interactions between children.