



EMOTION COACHING FOR SUCCESSFUL TEACHER-STUDENT INTERACTIONS

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Introduction

Good teaching requires more than intellect. It touches a dimension of the personality that has been ignored in most of the developing one's teachers training colleges in the past many years. Good teaching involves emotional aspect too.

In the last decade or so, science has discovered a tremendous amount about the role emotions play in our lives. Researchers have found that even more than IQ, one's emotional awareness and ability to handle feelings will determine one's success and happiness in all walks of life, including social relationships. For teachers, this quality of "emotional intelligence"-- as many now call it-- means being aware of your students' feelings, and being able to empathize, soothe and guide them. For children, who learn most lessons about emotion from their teachers and parents, it includes the ability to control impulses, delay gratification, motivate them selves, read other people's social cues and cope with life's ups and downs.

I call the teachers "Emotion Coaches." who get involved with their pupils' feelings Much like athletic coaches, they teach their children strategies to deal with life's ups and downs. They don't object to their pupil's displays of anger, sadness, or fear. Nor do they ignore them.

Instead, they accept negative emotions as a fact of life and they use emotional moments as opportunities for teaching their kids important life lessons and building closer relationships with them.

Procedure for the emotion coaching for successful teacher-student interactions

The teachers:

1. Become aware of the child's emotion.
2. Recognize the emotion as an opportunity for intimacy and teaching.
3. Listen empathetically, validating the child's feelings.
4. Help the child find words to label the emotion he is having.
5. Knowing the difference between feeling and action and
6. Set limits while exploring strategies to solve the problem at hand.

Introducing emotions in schools could bring a radical change! Yet schools do not change so readily. Those well-meaning people who have tried to introduce innovations in schools have come up against considerable resistance from teachers, students and parents alike. Yet without their active participation, no such far-reaching change is possible.

One possible solution, if such essential skills prove too difficult to develop in schools, would be to start by introducing them in the spaces around school. During the breaks, for example, Daniel Goleman describes how appointed pupil mediators, once all involved know the rules of the game, resolve conflicts in the playground. Such a "school for emotions" could be a local, community-based activity in conjunction with other activities like scouts, parent-teachers associations, artistic expression groups, clubs etc.

What skills?

But what exactly might such skills be? In his book, Daniel Goleman gives a considerable list. Here are some indications inspired by a list quoted by Goleman from a book called *Self Science: The Subject is Me* (2nd edition) by Karen Stone McCown et al. [San Mateo, Six Seconds, 1998]

- **Self Awareness.** One of the basic emotional skills involves being able to recognize feelings and put a name on them. It is also important to be aware of the relationship between thoughts, feelings and actions. What thought sparked off that feeling? What feeling was behind that action?
- **Managing Emotions.** It is important to realise what is behind feelings. Beliefs have a fundamental effect on the ability to act and on how things are done. Many people continually give themselves negative messages. Hope can be a useful asset. In addition, finding ways to deal with anger, fear, anxiety and sadness is essential, for example learning how to soothe oneself when upset. Understanding what happens when emotions get the upper hand and how to gain time to judge if what is about to be said or done in the heat of the moment is really the best thing to do. Being able to channel emotions to a positive end is a key aptitude.
- **Empathy.** Getting the measure of a situation and being able to act appropriately requires understanding the feelings of the others involved and being able to take their perspective. It is important to be able to listen to them without being carried away by personal emotions. There's a need to be able to distinguish between what others do or say and personal reactions and judgments.
- **Communicating.** Developing quality relationships has a very positive effect on all involved. What feelings are being communicated to others? Enthusiasm and optimism are contagious as are pessimism and negativity. Being able to express personal concerns without anger or passivity is a key asset.

- **Co-operation.** Knowing how and when to take the lead and when to follow is essential for effective co-operation. Effective leadership is not built on domination but the art of helping people work together on common goals. Recognising the value of the contribution of others and encouraging their participation can often do more good than giving orders or complaining. At the same time, there is a need to take responsibilities and recognise the consequences of decisions and acts and follow through on commitments.

The Effects of Emotion Coaching

What difference does it make when students have Emotion-Coaching teachers?

Students whose teachers consistently practice Emotion Coaching score higher academically than children whose teachers don't offer such guidance. These kids get along better with friends, and are less prone to acts of violence. Over all, children who are Emotion-Coached experience fewer negative feelings and more positive feelings. In short, they're healthier emotionally.

Emotion-Coaching teachers can help their students develop into healthier, more successful adults. Practicing Emotion Coaching does not mean all class problems will cease, that there will be no more harsh words, no more bruised feelings, no more sadness or stress. Conflict is a fact of school life. Still, once you start using Emotion Coaching, you will probably feel yourself growing closer to your students and when teacher and learner shares a deeper intimacy and respect, problems between students will seem lighter to bear.

And finally, Emotion Coaching does not mean an end to discipline. Indeed, when teacher and learner are emotionally close, they are even more involved in their lives and can therefore assert a stronger influence. Teachers are in a position to be tough when toughness is called for. When they see their children making mistakes, they can call them on it. They are not afraid to set limits. They are not afraid to tell them when they've disappointed them, when teacher know they can do better. And because a teacher has an emotional bond with children, his words

matter. They care about what he thinks and they don't want to displease him. In this way, Emotion Coaching may help to guide and motivate students.

Emotion Coaching requires a significant amount of commitment and patience, but the job is essentially the same as that of any other coach. If you want to see your students excel at mathematics, you don't avoid the mathematics but you start working with them. Likewise, if you want to see your students handle feelings, cope with stress and develop healthy relationships, you don't shut down or ignore expressions of negative emotion but you engage with your students and offer guidance.

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