



# Clearinghouse on Supervised Visitation E-Press



February 2021



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### **Upcoming Phone Conferences in 2021:**

**February 17, 2021 @ 12pm/11CT**

**March 24, 2021 @ 12pm/11CT**

**April 21, 2021 @ 12pm/11CT**

## Questions from Directors

*I am looking for a system that tracks my clients and funding sources for those clients. Though we do use Quickbooks for internal use, is there an associated database system to track clients from start to finish, including accumulated grant or fee payment data, services and service hours, etc. Any suggestions?*

After spending some hours researching this, I can tell why you're frustrated. I even called SVN, and they didn't have any suggestions specifically for the for-profit community. I found some numbers to call for free, like **Free FastStart**

**Consultation:** [\(844\) 687-6771](tel:8446876771) for

<https://www.softwareadvice.com/human-services/>

Athena seems to have a lot of documentation space and a billing component.

<https://www.athenasoftware.net/features/>

Also, there is a company in London called Child Assist Pro

(<https://www.childassistpro.com/features/>) Email:

[support@techniframe.com](mailto:support@techniframe.com)

If I hear of any others, I'll be sure to let you know.

*We have a client who had COVID-19 back before the holidays. She says she doesn't need to wear a mask because she has antibodies, although I don't know if she has been tested for them. Should we insist on having her wear a mask (we give them out for free), or let her refuse one?*

Based on the CDC guidelines, I would recommend that you stick to your very reasonable rule about mask-wearing. Remind your client that when she wears a mask, she is not wearing it to protect herself as much as she is wearing it to protect others. Remind her that COVID is a new illness that we don't know enough about yet to be able to know how long one person will stay immune after an illness. Can you imagine having to find out exactly when people were sick, when they recovered, and how then guess how long they *might* have immunity? Remind her that if you allow her to go without a mask, other parents will not want to wear a mask, and that will put everyone at risk, including her child. My last recommendation is to emphasize the wellbeing of children. That's your program's purpose, and you want to be consistent with it.

# Talking about Parents' Substance Use Disorder



## Introduction

Many families within the United States struggle with substance abuse; in fact, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services, 1 in 4 children in the United States are exposed to substance abuse within their homes. Because substance abuse is a very sensitive and mature topic, it would be difficult to explain to a child that what they're going through is not normal and it is definitely not their fault.

Addiction is not a single victim disease; it also affects the loved ones of those who are battling this illness. Often, children feel neglected due to the emotional unavailability of their parents. Children of addicts often experience emotional or physical abuse or neglect, domestic violence, lack of boundaries, and inconsistent messages about right or wrong. These children may also be predisposed to behavioral problems and to abusing alcohol or drugs themselves as they are more genetically inclined to, they may also develop problems in school or social relationships.

As children are greatly affected by their parent's substance use disorder, it is highly important to reassure them by letting them know that they did not cause their parent's addiction and there is nothing they could do to prevent their parent from drinking or using drugs. Be sensitive when speaking to them, remind them that their parent's love them, and provide as much information as you can so that they aren't felt wondering and trying to create their own explanations. **Most importantly, remind them that you are there to support them and that it is not their fault.**

## Objectives:

- Addiction is a disease
- It is not your fault
- Identify other support system's in a child's life
- It's okay to talk
- Help a child be a child
- The 7 C's

## **Addiction is a Disease:**

Every parent wants to be there for their child. However, this disease may get in the way of their goals; for example, a parent may promise to show up for their child's sporting event or school play but regretfully forget their word they may be high or drunk. A child may even feel embarrassed when a parent does show up to their school event drunk or when they slur their words when speaking to their teachers; a child knows that this is not normal and may feel resentment for their parent for making them feel embarrassed or exposed to their peers. You must remind the child that these actions, or lack thereof, does not make their parent a "bad" person, they have an addiction which is a disease that they simply need treatment for.

## **It is not Your Fault:**

Although it is normal for a child to ponder the idea that they could do something to prevent their parent from using drugs, it is not healthy. The child may feel like they cause too much stress on their parents and drive them to continue their addiction, some parents may even say things to cause the child to believe they are the cause like "It isn't easy providing for you, I just need a break maybe if you would help me out sometimes I wouldn't be so stressed and do this." Some older kids may even limit their social outings in hopes that their presence will prevent their parent from abusing substances. You must remind the child that it is not their fault that their parent has a disease and that there's nothing they can do to stop it, healing has to come from the user themselves.

## **You are not Alone:**

Children of addicts often have to take care of themselves by making their own meals and such, because of this they often take on a survival role and mentality. Showing the child that they have a support system and there are people that love and care for them, whether it may be their grandparent, aunt, uncle, or a support group, it is important for them to know that they are not facing this battle alone. Many kids may feel like they are the only child going through this situation as well and reassuring that this happens to many kids, even ones in their own school may bring them comfort.

## **It's Okay to Talk:**

Addiction is very taboo from a societal and familial perspective, because of this, many parents may tell their children to not speak of their situation with others. This may lead

children to conceal their emotions and worries. It is unhealthy to repress emotions and may even lead to behavioral problems, this is why it is very important to encourage them to speak to someone they trust like a grandparent, aunt, uncle, teacher or counselor.

### Help a Child be a Child:

Children of those who suffer from substance use disorders may often mature quicker than their peers. They take on responsibilities they should not have to and it is important to remind them that they are still kids and allow them to find age-appropriate hobbies and pastimes to promote a sense of normalcy to their lives. It is important for them to feel included by their peers by spending time with their friends and being involved in activities that make them happy.

### The 7 C's:

I did not <b>cause</b> this	I cannot <b>cure</b> it
I cannot <b>control</b> it	I can <b>care</b> for myself
By <b>communicating</b> my feelings,	Making healthy <b>choices</b> , and
By <b>celebrating</b> myself!	

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"Talking to Children About a Parent's Substance Abuse." *The Oaks at La Paloma Treatment Center*, 3 Mar. 2015, [theoakstreatment.com/blog/talking-to-children-about-parents-substance-abuse/](http://theoakstreatment.com/blog/talking-to-children-about-parents-substance-abuse/).

# Emotions and the Brain's Reward System

By Dana White and Richard Brito



## Introduction

As humans, we all experience emotions, and both negative and positive emotions are encountered throughout our lives. However, we usually want to experience positive emotions. Positive emotions occur when our internal reward system is activated. Parents can utilize the following ideas and suggestions to create healthy habits that can lead to positive emotions.

## Objectives

- Understand the 27 emotions humans experience
- Understand how the brain's reward system works
- Understand the effects of natural chemicals on human functionality
- Understand the effects of cortisol on the brain and the body
- Understand the body's way of processing stress
- Learn about the effects of substances on the brain's reward system
- Learn about how certain activities encourage healthy habits

## Human Emotions

Every human experiences the same 27 emotions during their lifetime. These emotions can be experienced daily or can be felt less frequently. The emotions humans can experience include:

- Admiration
- Adoration
- Aesthetic appreciation: admiration of beauty
- Amusement
- Anxiety: a state of increased arousal turned into distressing worry that negatively effects multiple body systems
- Awe
- Awkwardness



- Boredom
- Calmness
- Confusion
- Craving
- Disgust
- Empathetic pain: understanding someone else's pain
- Entrancement: feeling delighted
- Envy
- Excitement
- Fear
- Horror
- Interest
- Joy
- Nostalgia: the feeling of longing for things of the past
- Romance
- Sadness
- Satisfaction
- Sexual desire
- Sympathy
- Triumph

(Cowen & Keltner, 2017)

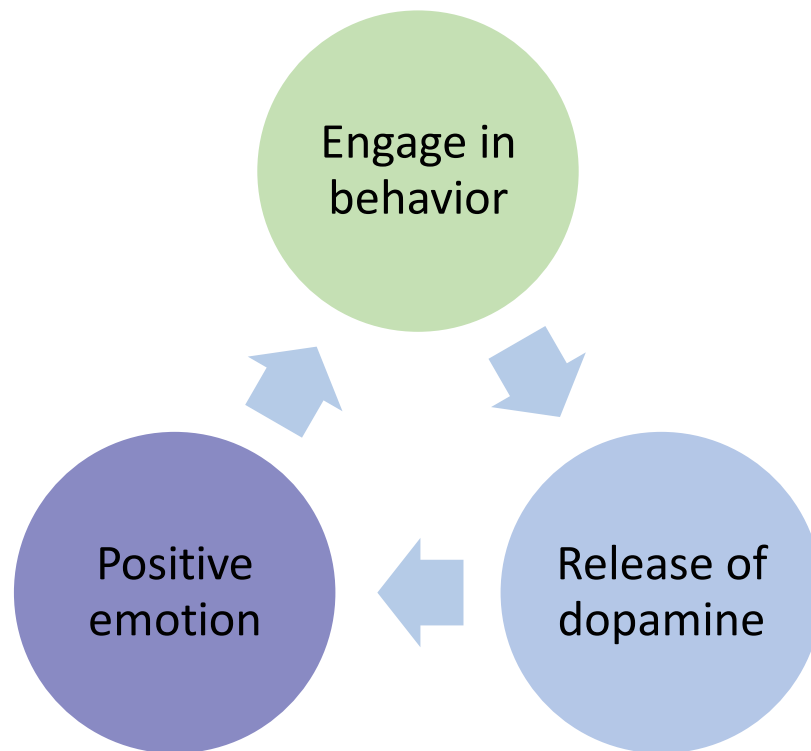
Emotions that we experience can be both positive and negative. Naturally, we desire to have more positive emotions than negative emotions. Positive emotions are experienced through the brain's reward system.

### **The Brain's Reward System**

As humans, we crave positive emotions. We experience these positive emotions when our brain releases dopamine. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter in the brain that makes us feel good and increases the body's level of arousal. To continue experiencing this positive emotion, we continue to engage in the act that caused this pleasurable experience. This cycle is referred to as the brain's reward system which is shown in the diagram below.







## Human Functionality

Our brain is filled with all sorts of chemicals that have all sorts of functions on the brain and body. Below are the main chemicals found within humans and their respective impacts on the mind and body:

- *Melatonin*- prevention of weight gain and helps individuals sleep
- *GABA*- inhibits neuron activation which allows individuals to relax and to feel calm
- *Glutamate*- is responsible for excitatory functions within the body such as alertness, enhanced cognitive functions, and enhanced attention
- *Cortisol*- maintains blood pressure, regulates one's metabolism, and is released in response to stress
- *Adrenaline*- responsible for fight, flight, and freeze response, responsible for increasing blood flow circulation to one's muscles, and in regulating visceral functions which comes from one's internal organs

(Adrenaline, n.d.; Cherry, 2020; Figueroba, 2019; Martínez, 2019)

In addition to the chemicals listed above there are other neurotransmitters in our brains that, when released, make us feel happy among other benefits which are listed below:

Dopamine

- The reward chemical.

Endorphins

- The pain killer.

Oxytocin

- The love hormone.

Serotonin

- The mood stabilizer.

## Understanding Stress

Cortisol is known as the stress hormone that is found within one's body. Cortisol is responsible for the maintenance of blood pressure, blood sugar, regulation of one's metabolism, and the brain's response to stress. There are two forms of cortisol that have different functionalities within the brain and body which are listed below:

### 1. Basal Cortisol

- Basal cortisol are the resting levels of cortisol (the amount of internal stress) found in our day-to-day lives
- Basal cortisol elevation causes damage to the hippocampus (which is responsible for memory formation, thus memory formation is impaired so learning retention rates significantly drop)
- Basal cortisol elevation causes damage to one's memory-sensation connection and causes other adversities to the body (one does not feel connected to their senses and past experiences)
- Having elevated basal cortisol levels means that one's resting stress levels are heightened in one's body compared to the normal amount of stress that supports productivity

- Having elevated basal cortisol also impairs hippocampus-dependent learning (which is responsible for one's self-awareness capabilities), memory formation, and memory storage
- Having chronic or life-long high basal cortisol levels causes functional atrophy (cellular death) which leads to system impairment of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis (HPA is responsible for the modulation of the body's inflammation response), the hippocampus, the amygdala (responsible for emotional regulation), and the frontal lobe (responsible for logic and reasoning) are all impacted within the brain

## 2. Reactive Cortisol

- Reactive cortisol is cortisol release in reaction to external stressors
- Reactive cortisol is mainly caused by external stressors that are out of one's control which only exacerbates the internal levels of cortisol production which leads to even more cellular death
- Having high levels of cortisol leads to more cellular death which can cause chest pain, anxiety, depression, heart attacks, strokes (coagulations of one's blood within the body or brain), and other adversities to the body and brain

(Sroykham & Wongsawat, 2019)

## **The Effects of Substances on the Human Reward System**

Most of the time, the brain's reward system rewards positive behavior and helps us create healthy habits. Other times, we engage in unhealthy or harmful behaviors in order to experience the "feel good" emotions associated with the release of dopamine, such as drug use. The use of drugs can cause a massive surge of dopamine in the brain. The effects are listed below:

- The amount of dopamine that is produced from the use of drugs is far more than one would experience during a meal or through other natural reward processes.
- The amount of dopamine released by drugs tends to be anywhere from two to ten times higher than natural rewards, and this "feel good" sensation that comes from drugs usually lasts much longer
- One's body builds a tolerance to the drug(s) and more is required than once used
- This constant exposure makes the body become accustomed to having drugs be the source of one's production of "feel good" feelings which reduces the body's natural production and processing of dopamine.
- Excessive production of dopamine through drugs leads to drug-use becoming that much harder to quit

- Drugs can activate neurons because their structure is similar to neurotransmitters. This similar structure allows drugs to attach to neurons and activate them, which releases dopamine and endorphins.

(Drug Abuse, Dopamine and the Reward System Explained - The Cabin, 2018).

## **Activities That Positively Benefit Humans' Reward System**

After engaging in unhealthy habits, the brain is able to change and heal under beneficial conditions. This process is called neuroplasticity. Neurons in the brain are able to make new connections when we engage in healthy activities that release "happy" neurotransmitters. Instead of engaging in unhealthy or harmful behaviors, parents can find healthy ways to activate the brain's reward system. It is important for our bodies to release these neurotransmitters because it prevents us from experiencing deficits in our mental health, such as anxiety or depression. In addition to mental health therapy, examples that have been proven through research are shown below.

### **1. Exercise:**

Researchers have concluded based on the overwhelming evidence that exists that having lifelong exercise is associated with the following benefits:

- A longer health span outcome
- The delaying of the onset of 40 chronic conditions/diseases
- The body becomes capable of learning mechanisms because exercise sustains and improves quality of life through the engagement and activity of muscles and bones
- Endurance exercise training positively effects cardiovascular fitness
- Stronger muscles are formed from endurance training which benefits one's mental health resilience

(Ruegsegger & Booth, 2018)

### **2. Yoga:**

Researchers have concluded based on the overwhelming evidence that exists that engaging in yoga is associated with the following positive benefits:

- There are beneficial effects demonstrated that yoga is essential for improving pain-associated disability and mental health (Büssing et al., 2012)
- Experienced yoga practitioners demonstrated that the brain increased one's GABA levels after a session of yoga which could potentially benefit individuals with low GABA levels (Streeter et al., 2007)

- People who cannot naturally produce a calming effect include those that have depression and anxiety disorders (Streeter et al., 2007)
- Abnormalities in HPA (HPA is responsible for the modulation of the body's inflammation response) causes excessive production of cortisol and it is known as Hypercortisolemia (Thirthalli et al., 2013)
- The inflammation response is usually occurring when the body is exposed to a foreign body or when the body is put through a stressful situation (Thirthalli et al., 2013).
- Hypercortisolemia can cause depression and yoga has been demonstrated to reduce levels of stress through the reduction of cortisol levels (Thirthalli et al., 2013)
- Researchers found that more patients in the yoga groups had a drop in cortisol levels compared to the group that received drug-only as an intervention (Thirthalli et al., 2013).
- In the yoga-only group, the cortisol drop correlated with the drop in the Hamilton Depression Rating Scale which demonstrated an antidepressant effect on the body and mind (Thirthalli et al., 2013)
- Researchers found that subjects that participated in yoga had a greater improvement in their mood and a greater decrease in anxiety than that of subjects that only walked (Streeter et al., 2010)
- It was also found that there were positive correlations between improved mood and decreased anxiety and thalamic GABA levels (thalamic GABA levels has to do with controlling one's attention and controlling one's sensory processing) (Streeter et al., 2010)
- Researchers noted that subjects in the yoga group had positive correlations between one's changes in their mood scales and changes in their GABA levels (Streeter et al., 2010).
- Changes such as increased GABA levels causes a calming effect and this can be done through yoga (Streeter et al., 2010)

### **3. Sunlight:**

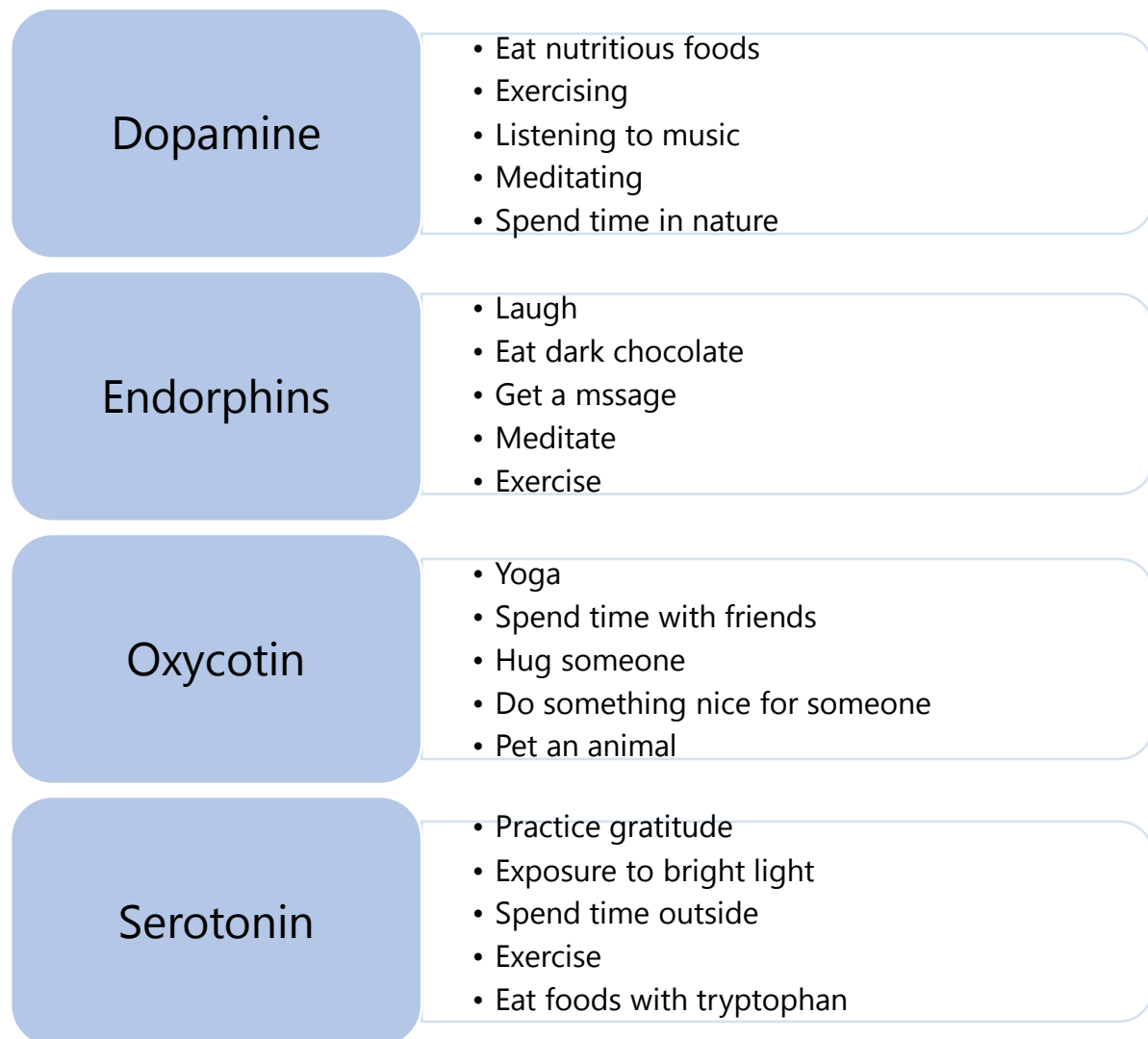
Researchers have concluded based on the overwhelming evidence that exists that engaging in a balanced and brief sun-exposure is associated with the following positive benefits:

- Vitamin D production occurs with sun-exposure
- Brief optic-exposure (seeing daylight) to daylight allows melatonin production in the nighttime which is what allows someone to sleep
- Melatonin which is a pineal hormone serves as a pacesetter for many of the body's natural circadian rhythms (sleep-rhythm)

- Melatonin also plays a crucial role a countering infection, inflammation, cancer, and in increasing autoimmunity within the body
- Melatonin reduces cytokines (can be toxic to the body) which are proteins that are built and elevated in people with sleep-disturbances
- Melatonin suppresses ultraviolet radiation-induced skin damage which counters the effects of one's exposure to sunlight if done in excess
- Ultraviolet radiation causes increased blood levels of the body's natural opiates called endorphins which are responsible for reducing stress and in reducing feelings of pain

(Mead, 2008)

Healthy and worthwhile activities that will release these various neurotransmitters and make us feel happier are listed below:



## Conclusion

Of the 27 emotions we can experience, humans want to experience positive emotions. These positive emotions are experienced when certain neurotransmitters are released from the brain. There are many healthy activities parents can participate in that will lead to a release in dopamine, creating positive emotions.

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## Video Resources for Parents



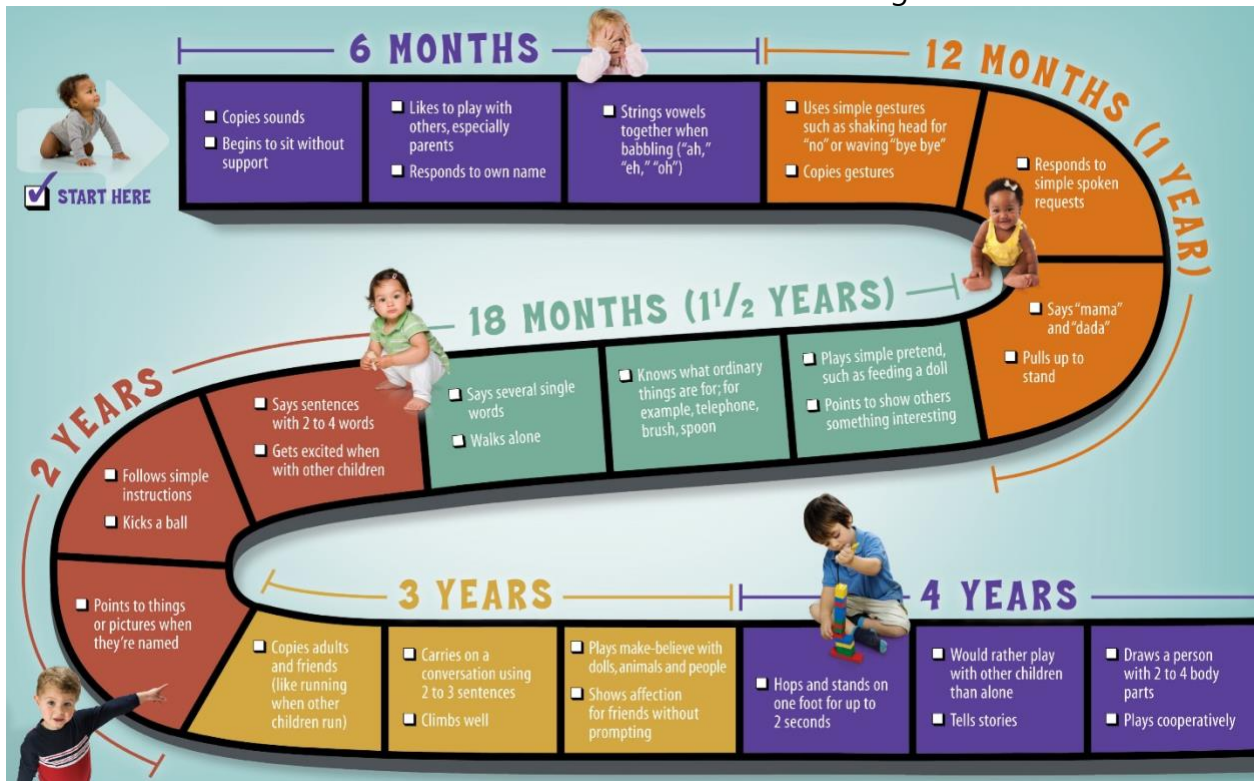
### Infants:

1. This link, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jskG0yVDMLk> offers parenting advice for new parents with infants. This video is hosted by TEDx Talks and the speaker is Diana Eidelman. The video is 12 minutes and 29 seconds long. This video highlights possible experiences of new mothers or fathers and their sense of conflict of interest that may occur like comfort vs caretaking. A parent may want to relax after a long day of work or after taking care of their baby. Diana Eidelman mentions how there is no guidance and how one may feel overworked. There may be a sense of no achievement that may arise from the parent and these feelings are completely normal. Focusing on the psychology of the parent and the child are crucial.
2. This link, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CyVYnYKzjyg> offers advice for parents that are overwhelmed and emphasizes that self-care is not selfish. The speaker is Liz Carlile, and it is hosted by TEDx Talks. The video is 9 minutes and 27 seconds long. From the worries of having prenatal vitamins, to birth, to raising an infant, taking care of one's child is difficult. It is crucial for one to take care of themselves to be able to provide the most efficient care to one's child. If one does not take care of themselves then how are they going to efficiently provide the required support that an infant requires? This video addresses Mom's Guilt and how to counteract it.

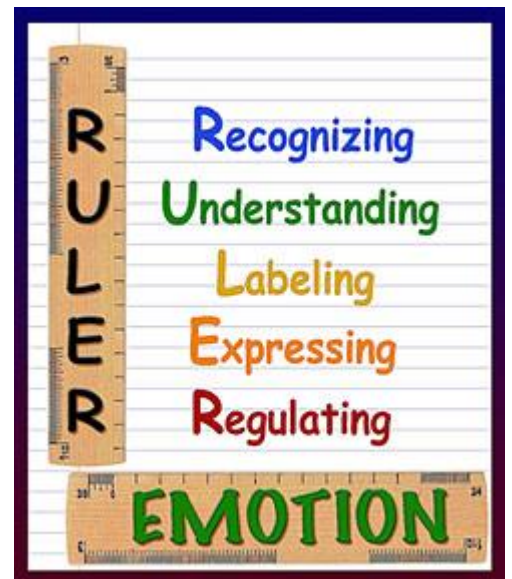


## Toddlers:

1. This link, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OUSsss6imZOM> demonstrates to parents the developmental stages/milestones of toddlers. Learning this will allow parents to successfully track their child's social developmental milestones up to three years of age. The spokesperson is Catherine Crowley, J.D., Ph.D. from Teachers College, Columbia University. The video is 11 minutes and 25 seconds. The video outlines what the norm should be from birth to age three.



2. This link, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-H14NNUYwVc> offer teachings on an evidence-based practice technique that can be used by parents to help their children with emotional regulation. The Technique is called RULER and stands for Recognizing, Understanding, Labeling, Expressing, and Regulating. This video is offered by Yale University and is four minutes and 53 seconds long.



3. This link, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6fL09e8Tm9c> is a Ted Talk by Lael Stone and it is 12 minutes and 11 seconds long. This video teaches parents on how to raise emotionally intelligent children. The video describes how society values IQ more than EQ, when in reality it is recommended to focus on both.

## Emotional intelligence is being **smarter with feelings.**



### **Adolescents:**

1. This link, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VzflpW91yMg> offers insight on how to turn parent-teen stress into parent-teen success. Neil D Brown is the guest speaker, and it is hosted by TEDx Talks. The video is 12 minutes and 14 seconds long. This video addresses two keyways to bypass conflict and pain within the dynamic of a parent and an adolescent. As an adolescent grows older it is important to encourage accountability not just to please their parent but to please themselves. The two ways are as follows: 1) reclaim the wonderful qualities of your son or daughter within your mind and 2) stop trying to change and control their son or daughter because that is the responsibility of the adolescent. This can be done through the addition of privileges for good behavior.



2. This link, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S05PBOIdSeE> offers insight to parents on the needs of adolescents and teenagers to thrive in society. The speaker is Charisse Nixon who is a developmental psychologist, and it is hosted by TEDx Talks. The video is 29 minutes and two seconds long. The protective factors of adolescents as well as their strengths are highlighted. Human are

hardwired to connect, and spirituality is included within that hardwired connection. Among the most significant protective factors was found to be connection to a non-parent or adult and spiritual meaning. This video encourages parents to discuss these topics to develop a strong emotional stability from within.



### Teens:

1. This link, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0vdPxLfAsqo> offers insight on parenting from a teen's perspective. The speaker is Lucy Androski, and it is hosted by TEDx Youth. The video is five minutes and 14 seconds. Lucy mentions that parents should not set restrictions that the parents cannot keep themselves. For example, if parents only limit a teen's phone screen time to only one hour but the parent has 12 hours of phone screen time, that is not appropriate. This video teaches fairness within restrictions and offers the emotional perspective of a teenager and advises parents to stay calm in encounters.



2. This link, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CiYJHA-H6bQ> offers insight from Caleb Miller on the dangers of comfort. The video is hosted by TEDx Youth and it is eight minutes and six seconds long. This video mentions the importance of encouraging teens to step out of their comfort zone. It also demonstrates that through exposure to different experiences, there is an investment in discomfort that ultimately leads to the success. Having someone believe in you only makes it much more possible for it to be accomplished.



3. This link, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uzhmBDrB8E4> offers insight on how to establish a relationship with one's child through partnering through relation with their teens. This Ted Talk is hosted by David Kozlowski and it is eight minutes and 58 seconds. Emphasis is put on a parent-teen partnership. Shaming and coddling are highly discouraged because it causes psychological distress.

**Contact the Clearinghouse at  
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