



The Benefits of Social-Emotional Skills

by **MARISSA LEINART**

When I arrived in the U.S. 50 years ago, on a Pan Am flight from the Philippines, I remember it as if it was yesterday. The flight attendant gently pinned a Pan Am wing pin on the right side of my red dress as I calmly thanked her in a soft voice in my native tongue.

I clutched onto my grandfather's hand as I remember stepping off the plane onto U.S. soil. I left the comforts of having so many helpers and nannies to none at all. My brother and I were often alone to fend for ourselves as our parents struggled to earn a good living and adapt to a culture quite different from what they were used to.

I don't remember much of my childhood. I think it was because I don't remember having much fun. I became obsessed with achieving and considered myself an utter failure if I received a "B" on my report card. I realize now that my accomplishments were reminders that I had value and worth because my parents just weren't around to encourage me or even converse with me.

I simply don't remember having many conversations with my parents. I don't remember playing games with them. Family vacations were non-existent. I don't remember having those warm, cuddly feelings growing up as a child. In all honesty, I don't remember much of my childhood at all.

After years of counseling, I was able to forgive my parents for simply not being there. I know and understand they both weren't brought up in homes where they got a lot of attention. Both my parents came from large families of 7-8 siblings. They didn't have a lot of money growing up and suffered poverty as a result of the Japanese attack on the Philippines from 1942-1945.

Their friends would share with me how my parents and their families had to flee from their homes to the mountains to escape from being tortured or killed. My dad was the oldest of 8, while my mom was the oldest female, so they were thrust into huge responsibility at the young ages of 10.

I can't begin to imagine what my parents suffered to stay alive. That's why I was able to have a heart of compassion in my adult years. I'm grateful to have



heard these stories of survival from relatives and friends. I just wish I had heard them from my parents, instead.

So I vowed I would change that part of my childhood which I sorely missed, having a close relationship with my parents. After raising our two children, now 24 and 22, and homeschooling them for 17 years, I am grateful to God for the kind of relationship I dreamed about with Linzey and Will. We can share our hearts openly and freely with our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the strong foundation of how we live, move, and have our being.

Parents are the most influential people in their children's lives. The stronger the relationship they have with their children, the more their children will not want to disappoint them. Research also reveals that a strong parent-child relationship results in huge benefits:

- Young children who grow with a secure and healthy attachment to their parents stand a better chance of developing happy and content relationships with others in their life.
- A child who has a secure relationship with parents learns to regulate emotions under stress and in difficult situations.
- It promotes the child's mental, linguistic, and emotional development.
- It helps the child exhibit optimistic and confident social behaviors.
- Healthy parent involvement and intervention in the child's day-to-day life lay the foundation for better social and academic skills.

- A secure attachment leads to a healthy social, emotional, cognitive, and motivational development. Children also gain strong problem-solving skills when they have a positive relationship with their parents.

Parents with strong relationships with their children are happier and more satisfied.

The ability to recognize, understand, regulate, and express emotions are essential for healthy development. If parents can model these skills for their children (empathy, persistence, self-control), they will be able to provide a safe environment for their children to flourish and grow in.

As parents, we should not underestimate the power of our words and actions as they set the tone of what is considered normal behavior. If we are modeling social-emotional behaviors at home with our kids, we should do the best we can to help them develop these skills at an early age.

When we are focus on developing our social-emotional skills, we can better model healthy behaviors to our children. It is important that we are aware of the impact we have on our children and how it can shape the way they view themselves and the world.

The ability to connect with others and communicate well is key to developing social-emotional skills. Parents can model these skills by being mindful of their own emotions and how they are affecting their children.

We need to be mindful about showing anger, frustration, or abandonment in front of our kids. We should never put down our kids or make them feel bad about themselves.

The best way for parents to teach social-emotional skills is by modeling the behavior that they want to see in their kids. For example, if a parent wants his/her child to understand that it's ok to feel angry and frustrated sometimes but that it's not ok to take those feelings out on others, the parent needs to help show the child how they would react in different situations.

Parents should be aware that there are many resources available, specifically for children with



emotional problems and mental illnesses. They can look into these resources and find specific advice on how to help children learn more about managing emotions and empathy.

We at Parent Led Academy are all about equipping parents with social-emotional skills through virtual online huddles or 1:1 Soul Care Coaching.

If you feel we can assist you in any way, please sign up for an upcoming Parent Huddle or schedule a consultation with one of our coaches at www.ParentLedAcademy.org or email us at mom@ParentLedAcademy.org. We are here to serve you!

— *Marissa Leinart*

Marissa Leinart is the Founder and Executive Director of Parent Led Academy. She's been married to Bill for 28 years and mom to Linzey (24), a veterinarian, and Will (22), an entrepreneur and successful YouTuber (Joystick).