

Supporting Social Emotional Development for Children with DCD

During the middle childhood years, when children are six to twelve years old, they undergo many social and emotional changes. They develop the skills to solve problems and cooperate with friends. They are more able to regulate their emotions.

Social emotional learning (SEL) is the capacity to recognize and manage emotions, to solve problems effectively, and to establish positive relationships with others. Social emotional competencies include:

- ❖ **Self-awareness:** Being able to label, express, interpret and respond to a variety of emotions in oneself and others
- ❖ **Self-regulation:** Being aware of the body feelings that are linked to emotional responses; being able to use strategies to manage oneself and to recover from stress
- ❖ **Social awareness and group participation:** Being aware of oneself and others in a group and knowing how to work towards group goals
- ❖ **Relationship skills:** Relating to others by starting and maintaining connections with different people in a variety of situations
- ❖ **Problem solving and peaceful conflict resolution:** Being able to identify and solve a problem and negotiate conflicts
- ❖ **Social responsibility and the well-being of self and others:** Being able to understand similarities and differences in oneself and others; being able to contribute to the community in a meaningful way

Although many people think of DCD as a motor disorder, research shows that motor difficulties have an impact on a child's social emotional development. When a child has a neurodevelopmental condition such as DCD parents may notice delays in social emotional development early in their child's life. Helping children with DCD develop their social emotional competencies makes them less vulnerable to negative experiences such as being bullied, feeling alone, dealing with academic failure, abusing alcohol and drugs and engaging in high risk behaviours. Having social emotional competencies makes them less likely to suffer from chronic stress, anxiety and depression.

Working with children to support their social emotional competencies helps them to have satisfying relationships with family, other children and members of the community. These skills contribute to success at school, the ability to engage in community activities and eventually, the capability to support oneself and to live as independently as possible.

Questions to think about:

- How might your child feel in certain group situations?
- Can your child use emotion words to talk about his or her feelings and the feelings of others?
- Does your child start talking or playing with other children without your support?

Strategies/Tips:

- All feelings are acceptable. You can help your child by talking about and labeling your feelings.
- Observe your child at play, talk about play situations and discuss how he might ask a friend to play. Practice or role play with your child.

For further information, visit us at www.BCCFA-SEED.org