

- Parenting

How do emotionally intelligent parents raise their children?

Khaleej Times · 5 Jan 2021 · 6 · Meghna Singhal Meghna Singhal is a clinical psychologist and an internationally certified parenting coach — Psychology Today

You serve your child's favourite breakfast — a crunchy toast — on her favourite plate at her favourite seat at the table. And what do you receive in return? A highpitched “I HATE toast!”

“But this is your favourite breakfast. You told me so yourself!”

“NOOOO....”

“But last week you ate it happily!” “NOOOO...”

And so, it goes on.

Isn't it frustrating when you can't make your child see reason? When you're unable to help your young child understand hard logic?

All parenting battles aren't won with pure reason and logic. A lot of them require awareness and empathy.

Emotional awareness and the ability to manage emotions is a cornerstone of emotionally intelligent (EI) parenting.

Fostering healthy emotional development for children will determine how successful and happy they are throughout life, even more than their intelligent quotient (IQ).

A 19-year longitudinal study published in the American Journal of Public Health in 2015 shows that child's socialemotional skills at age five may predict lifelong success, such as the ability to obtain a college degree and attain full-time job by age 25. Fortunately, a person's emotional quotient (EQ) is not cast in stone and can be enhanced with practice (Matingly & Kraiger, 2019). Let us understand how EI parents can help their children learn these skills. In effect, this is what differentiates them from adults who don't practice these skills.

- They take care of themselves. Parenting is one of the hardest roles in the world. EI parents are compassionate toward themselves. They understand that they need to keep their cup full, that emphasising their own well-being will make them more patient, joyful, and energetic. They acknowledge their needs are valid and invest resources in practicing self-care. When they find themselves getting exhausted, they take steps to course-correct and prioritise themselves.
- They focus on connection. Establishing a connected parent-child bond is one of the most important priorities of EI parents. Our modern lives, marked by their pressures and distractions, leave us feeling stressed and disengaged. In taking care of all the to-dos, it seems that connecting to our children gets sidelined to our spare time. However, connecting to our children needn't take a lot of time. EI parents work on enriching their bond with their child in big and small ways — by creating micro-moments of connection, by having frequent rituals or by creating special memories together.
- They practise emotion coaching. Emotion coaching your child involves being cued in to your child's (and your own) feelings, helping your child identify and name their feelings,

and enabling emotional regulation. EI parents don't dismiss or criticise their child's feelings. They go by the mantra — all feelings are okay (even though they understand and convey to their child that some behaviours are not okay). They view their children's difficult feelings as opportunities to empathise, connect, and teach. They empower their children to figure out strategies for coping with emotionally difficult situations.

- They discipline to teach, not to punish. Disciplining entails teaching your child what you expect of them. EI parents focus on setting limits and boundaries, and the consequences of breaking those boundaries, respectfully. They don't discipline to punish. They understand that consistency and support go a long way in helping children stick to rules and limits. They also understand that yelling, ignoring, or punishing may lead to the desired outcomes in the short run. But in the long run, they don't enable children to learn skills to manage their behaviour.

- They develop their children's intrinsic motivation, which is the ability to persist and continue with a task despite obstacles and without seeking others' approval. EI parents help Emotionally intelligent parents work much harder to enrich bond with their children their child set their respective goals and help their child visualise the steps needed to achieve those goals. They reinforce their child's efforts on a task instead of the outcome and teach and model a love of challenge and persistence in the face of difficulty.

- They instill values in their children. Values are the beliefs each person considers important for themselves and for humanity as a whole. Since they so deeply impact our behaviours, attitudes, and decisions, values are crucial in parenting. EI parents work on identifying their own values and communicating them to their children. However, they realise that simply telling their child to be more honest, or hard-working, or grateful, or compassionate, doesn't work any better than telling adults to be. They model the values they uphold, and label and reinforce the expression of values. They discuss why they make certain decisions based on their values, and encourage their child's initiatives that express budding values.

So instead of saying, "You know you love toast! A crunchy toast is your favorite breakfast!" an EI parent says, "Sounds like you're disappointed about toast for breakfast. You're in the mood for something different."

They acknowledge their child's difficult feelings, not start whipping up pancakes instead.