

# Social Emotional Learning Activities for the Home

## *Resilience Counseling & Training Center*

The ultimate objective in the education of children/youth is to equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary for living successful, productive, and fulfilling lives. Accomplishing such a task requires the teaching and development of two types of life competencies, academic competence and social-emotional competence. All too often, however, we mistakenly focus too much on the academic (i.e., the 3 R's of 'Reading, wRiting and 'aRithmetic) at the expense of social-emotional learning, i.e., the 4<sup>th</sup> R, Resilience.

Research evidence now clearly demonstrates that, when parents and schools work together to develop children's skills in all four "R's" of education, improvement is realized in both social-emotional adjustment and academic achievement. After all, these are two sides of the same coin. We all need to have the academic knowledge and skills to perform well in our jobs and careers but also, we need the skills to "work and play well with others" on the job, in our homes and, in our communities.

A synergic effect occurs when both academic and social-emotional competencies are included in the education of children. As the famous Psychiatrist, Alfred Adler (1929) stated almost 100 years ago, "*The teacher who takes the time to work on students' social development will find [his or her] job simultaneously amplified and simplified. It is unquestionably far simpler and more efficient to teach the well-adjusted, cooperative responsible child than it is to nag, prod and threaten along the maladjusted, uncooperative, irresponsible child.*" No teacher has ever refuted that simple, but so important, statement!

The two sets of life competencies, academic and social-emotional, need not be, and indeed are best if not, thought of as separate lessons. Rather, our Resilience Counseling & Training Center (RCTC) program advocates for infusing academic instruction with social-emotional learning. Further, it is found to be most effective when both schools and parents are actively involved and collaborate in developing children's social-emotional competencies, the fourth 'R' of Resilience, in youth.

While there are many models and ideas as to what constitutes important social-emotional competencies, we focus here on what evidence suggests as being the essential, basic competencies:

- **Understanding & Respecting Self and Others**
- **Empathy**
- **Communication**
- **Cooperation**
- **Responsible Contribution**

So, while children are required to stay home during this pandemic viral outbreak, why not begin 'homeschooling' them in both academic and social-emotional learning (SEL). Each week, RCTC will post two new SEL learning activities that combine academic skills with social-emotional skills. Parents are encouraged to engage in these learning activities with their child (children). Doing so adds yet another benefit, improved family cohesion or connectedness. This is consistently identified as the #1 factor distinguishing happy, healthy families.

# Week 1: Understanding & Respecting Self and Others



## *Understanding & Respecting Self and Others* **Friendship Books**

**Objective:** To assist children in recognizing characteristics of a friendly relationship and to develop their appreciation of others and good friendship skills.

**Materials:** Newsprint, large sheet of paper, or computer & printer.

**SEL Home Activity:** Together, identify as many “Famous/Great Friendships” as you can and make a list (e.g., *Fictional Friends*: Pooh & Piglet, Charlotte & Wilbur, Shrek & Donkey, Forrest Gump & Bubba, Tom Sawyer & Huck Finn and *True Friendships*: Thomas Edison & Henry Ford, Ben Affleck & Matt Damon, Helen Keller & Alexander Graham Bell, Joe Louis & Max Schmeling, etc.). Then, brainstorm a list of what such good friends do for one another that makes them such good friends. Read the book, watch the movie or research online as needed.

Review the “Friendship Quotes” below and make a short journal entry as to your favorite quote and what it means to you. (Have all family members contribute)

### Possible Family ‘Homework’ Assignments:

- Both parents and children can write short journal entries about, “*Who is my best friend?*” and identify what that friend does that makes him/her special to you?
- Parents can write a short description of things their son/daughter has done to be a special friend to someone over the years.

### Famous Friendship Quotes

"A friend is a person with whom I may be sincere. Before him I may think aloud."	Ralph Waldo Emerson
"It is one of the blessings of old friends that you can afford to be stupid with them."	Ralph Waldo Emerson
"It is not so much our friends' help that helps us as the confident knowledge that they will help us."	Epicurus
"Anybody can sympathize with the sufferings of a friend, but it requires a very fine nature to sympathize with a friend's success."	Oscar Wilde
"Misfortune shows those who are not really friends."	Aristotle
"The best mirror is an old friend."	George Herbert
"My best friend is the one who brings out the best in me."	Henry Ford
"Walking with a friend in the dark is better than walking alone in the light."	Helen Keller
"Never injure a friend, even in jest."	Cicero
Go often to the house of thy friend, for weeds choke the unused path."	Ralph Waldo Emerson
"When we seek to discover the best in others, we somehow bring out the best in ourselves."	William Arthur Ward
"In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."	Martin Luther King Jr.



## *Understanding & Respecting Self and Others*

# Family Autobiographies

**Objective:** To assist family members in getting to know about the lives of famous and interesting people while also getting to know one another better and building family cohesion/closeness.

**Materials:** Choose any autobiography or biography about someone that your child finds interesting. (a quick Google search can identify good books, or see sample list below).

**SEL Home Activity:** Read the book with your son/daughter or, read it with the entire family during an evening family time (read one chapter each night with longer books). Take a few minutes after reading each section or chapter to share what each of you found interesting or want to know more about and, why.

### **Possible Family ‘Homework’ Assignments:**

- Each family member can write their own personal autobiography (Yes, parents too!!). Put the autobiographies in a 3-ring binder so all can look through at will and learn more about one another.
- Invite grandparents or other elderly friends, family and neighbors to write similar autobiographies focusing on how times were different (or similar) in their childhoods and how they experienced friendships, school, had fun, or important historical events (e.g. WWII, McCarthyism, Kennedy presidency and assassination, Civil Rights Movement and Segregation, Berlin Wall, Vietnam, Gulf War, Nixon and Watergate, etc.)

### **Some Recommended Books:**

#### ***Elementary Level (grades 1-4)***

*Life with Chimpanzees* - by Jane Goodall (also available as audio book in Jane Goodall's voice).

*Salt in His Shoes* - by Michael Jordan

*Who was Sacagawea* - by Judith Bloom Fraden & Dennis Brindell Franden.

*Who was Albert Einstein* - by Jess Brallier

*Who was Walt Disney* - by Whitney Stewart

#### ***Adolescent Level (grades 5 – 12)***

*A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a boy soldier* -- Ishmael Beah

*Red Scarf Girl: Memoir of the cultural revolution* - by Ji Li Jiang

*I am Malala: the girl who stood up for education and was shot by the Taliban* - Malala Yousafzai

*The Upstairs Room* - by Joanna Reis... 10 year old's story of being hidden from Nazi's in Dutch farmhouse.

*I am Najood: Age 10 and Divorced* – by Najood Ali. Yemen girl's struggle to resist tribal tradition of arranged child marriages.

*Smile* – by Raina Telgemeier. - A girl's struggle to fit in during middle thru high school.

*Knots in my Yo-Yo String* - by Jerry Spinelli ... young boy's journey from childhood to HS graduation.

*The Glass Castle* – Jeannette Walls... how growing up in a flawed family with unconditional love bred her fiery determination to succeed in life.

*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* – by Maya Angelou

*Diary of Anne Frank* - by Anne Frank

*The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* - by Benjamin Franklin

*The Hiding Place* – by Corrie ten Boom ... a Dutch girl becomes a leader in WW2 Dutch underground.