

COUNSELING CORNER

Monthly school newsletter from Lutheran Counseling Services

Word of the Month: Social-Awareness

Resource Highlight:



Purchasing a book through our link supports expansion of our school counseling program. Thank you!

Consider the following books highlighting social-awareness:

For young children, Julia Cook writes a book about monitoring personal space in **Personal Space Camp** and about interrupting (erupting) in **My Mouth is a Volcano!**.

For your teen, consider this guide to build social skills for job success: **Smile & Succeed for Teens: A Crash Course in Face-to-Face Communication**.

Parents, teachers & anyone in a workplace can benefit from reading **Social Intelligence: The New Science of Human Relationships**, by Daniel Goleman

Humans are social creatures. From birth, babies learn about the world around them from their caretakers, later modeling some of the very behavior they saw in others. Children also form attachment to others that allows them to grow and to function well in their environments. Adolescents look to others for a sense of belonging and to shape their own identity. From very early on and throughout our lifespan, how we get along with others shapes our lives.

The Christian faith has a lot to say about social connections as well. Our God is a relationship in essence, made of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Additionally, Matthew 18:20 (New International Version) states, "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them." We were created to be social creatures and to use our relationships to better know God and learn about ourselves.

Science and psychology further prove the importance of social awareness in that we are "wired" for connections. Daniel Goleman discusses this in his book **Social Intelligence: The New Science of Human Relationships**. He describes 5 components to emotional intelligence: 1) Self-Awareness, 2) Managing Emotions, 3) Self-Motivation, 4) Empathy & 5) Handling Relationships. The final 2 components relate most in this month's focus on social awareness. What's more is that, unlike IQ which is largely fixed, EQ or Emotional Intelligence Quotient, can be increased by building new skills.



Car Conversations



Whether in the car, store line, or at the dinner table, here are some ideas to build social-awareness in your child.

- **Consider Psalm 94:19 (ESV)** ***“When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul.”*** Discuss as a family how God sees social interactions and relationships. Which social connections help you grow most close to God?

- Watch a show/movie as a family and mute the sound. See how many social cues and body language signs you can pick up on to decipher what is going on. Talk about how these clues help to understand and get along better with others.

COUNSELOR CONNECTION

Could your child use more social awareness skills? Reach out to your school to contact your school counselor or contact us at LCS at (407) 644-4692 or lcsfl.com.

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Goleman shares that human brains are designed to connect to the brains of others. For example, when we have direct eye contact, dopamine, the neurotransmitter of pleasure, is released in both people. He further discusses how one person's brain impacts the emotions of another person by influencing their brain chemistry. Describing the role of mirror neurons, he shares how we feel the same feelings as someone we observe, explaining why we feel emotions similar to a character in a movie we watch, or cringe when seeing someone stub their toe. The same neurological pathways fire in our brain as those of the person we observe, leading to shared emotions.

What is further interesting is that this emotional contagion gets stronger when a person is a leader, such as a teacher, parent or boss. This makes the mood of a person in power much more influential than a group of people who are considered equals. Parents and teachers, consider how quickly your mood impacts your children's moods.

For this month, make it a priority in your family to build social skills and understanding of others. Build your emotional vocabulary as a family. As is age appropriate, help your child understand the difference between being frustrated and angry, or between being happy and elated. Use a variety of words when talking about your own feelings. Talk about movie characters' feelings and have each family member share clues that helped them to decipher how the character feels. Watch body language and what it communicates. Practice active listening by using eye contact, focusing on word use. Clue in to tone of voice and pace of speech. Find ways this month to focus on ways to build this skill in yourself and your children.

