

39 - It's all about Social Emotional Learning!

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Purpose: The purpose of the transcripts is to provide readers and listeners with a written version of each episode of the UAGC Center for Early Childhood Education's Early Childhood Chatter Podcast so they can follow along with the audio content. URL at www.uagc.edu/ece-center/chatter-podcast

Audience: Current Active & Enrolled Students

Episode Transcript

Dr. Tisha Shipley: Hello everyone and welcome to Early Childhood Chatter with Dr. Shipley and Dr. Heald. We will upload a new episode every other week on Wednesdays.

Dr. Stephanie Heald: Twice a month, we will come to you with a 10-minute professional development that you can quickly listen to for new ideas to try. Don't forget to subscribe to this podcast to get notifications about future episodes. Today we are so excited to have Tom Limbert with us. Tom is a parent, coach, and early childhood educator and he's been working with young children and their families since 1992. He's also a published parenting author. Tom, welcome.

Tom Limbert: Thank you both for having me.

Dr. Stephanie Heald: Yeah, absolutely. And the title of his session was It's All About Social Emotional Learning. Why is this near and dear to your heart as an educator, Tom?

Tom Limbert: I just feel like in terms of working with parents and in terms of managing a classroom and managing a home, that nothing is more important than teaching children how to manage their emotions and how to communicate. And I just feel like that's what life is. And so, I can't imagine anything more that we should be modeling and teaching children.

Dr. Tisha Shipley: I completely agree with that. I actually was just doing some research on modeling and developmentally appropriate practices. I love this social emotional topic that we have going on and has been going on for the last few years. So, tell us a bit about intelligence and emotional coaching as it relates to preschool-aged children and the importance.

Tom Limbert: Well, if you think about a preschool child, they're at their home with their family and then they're kind of thrust into an environment where they suddenly have to share space and share things with others. So obviously, what's going to happen is they're going to need help with, again, the social emotional piece. So, how do you express yourself in a way that's respectful? How do you learn to listen to others and to take another perspective, which definitely doesn't come natural to, you know, they're just learning and they're just developing the brain capacity to be able to have empathy and to decenter from their own experience. So, we just gently model and teach that almost at every turn. It's just it can relate to everything they're doing can somehow relate to social emotional learning and emotional intelligence.

Dr. Stephanie Heald: It's interesting because our classrooms and our children are so very diverse and we have to use different differentiated methods, you know, to kind of guide them towards those positive behaviors that we're looking for. So, do you have any strategies or methods for doing this and coaching their behaviors?

Tom Limbert: I just gently tie, you know, every almost all of everything they're doing, especially when it comes to disciplining children or, you know, redirecting their behavior. My first question is, you know, what I will do is just narrate what I see. And again, this is things that I would tell parents to do as well as, you know, I feel like teachers should be doing it as well. You know, you narrate what you see and then and then you say and then you ask them plainly, like, what do you what are you feeling? What's going on? And so, you you just try to get in touch and help them get in touch with the idea that it's feelings and emotions that are that determine our behaviors. And once they learn that and then you then then you're also able to teach a new behavior that maybe is more appropriate for the moment. And that'll often be just, you know, teaching them to say something that instead of being physical or yeah, it's most often that you teach them how to how to the next time they're feeling that way, how they can express themselves in a way that's more productive for the whole for everyone in the community.

Dr. Tisha Shipley: So, when you're working with families and you're trying to get them to understand this and to use approaches at home, what are some things that you share with them on how to do this best?

Tom Limbert: I think a big key for families, because children can, especially your own children can kind of push your buttons and they find your buttons. And so, I think a real big key is is to not be dramatic. And, you know, a toddler is going to be dramatic. And I have a teenager, and he tries to be dramatic, too. And so, when they are dramatic, we it's we I think it's really important that we maintain, you know, and that we're modeling. And it's not easy. But believe me, and it's not easy for me either. But that we're that we try to maintain a model, a spirit of I'm I will I want to listen to you and understand you, you know, but, you know, to a point and that but is always just health, safety and respect. You know, you know, so you just keep hitting home those three themes, respect for others, safety and and health and, you know, trying to kind of take care of ourselves.

Dr. Stephanie Heald: You bring up a really great point. It leads me to the thought that sometimes the environment at home and sometimes the environment in the early childhood education setting differ a little bit in expectations and even kind of boundaries. So what suggestions do you have for a new ECE teacher that might have a child in their classroom? I know you just kind of touched upon those three points. We obviously want to make it safe. But what advice do you have for a new ECE teacher that has a child in their class that is has very different boundaries in home than what they need in school?

Tom Limbert: Oh, yeah, you're going to have to just be, you know, consistent. And and I think a big key there is to convey some sense of empathy and understanding and, you know, and again, to tie in emotions. Hey, I see that you're really excited, you know, but we can't run in here because it's not safe for everyone. So, you I mean, my answer would be that that you just keep consistently tying things to emotions and also that you convey to that child. I understand you and I and I and I, you know, I appreciate what you're trying to do. But let's just try to do it this way. You know, I don't think you'll get there the compliance and the cooperation unless, you know, the the children that need a little more help here that they're the ones that want to be understood a little more. So, you just have to kind of convey to them. Look, I get you and I want to understand you. But, you know, but health, safety and respect.

Dr. Tisha Shipley: So honestly, what I'm hearing you say is, you know, treat little people just like they have big emotions like adults have empathy, be engaged with them and build that relationship. So, I love what you're saying here. As we wrap up, what are three takeaways that you have for our listeners?

Tom Limbert: I would say that it's that you, one, that your attitude and your energy are really, really important that you are always maintaining a positive and a solution seeking kind of, you know, interactions with your child. The second would be that you want to build a culture of respect. So, you do that by treating children with respect. And that's, you know, offering them limited choices and talking to them in a way that you would want to be talked to. But you also ask the same of them. And again, you know that it's not going to come natural for them. So, it's not like you punish them when they can't, when they act somewhat disrespectfully. But you just teach them, and you say, hey, that's not the way we talk to each other. Are you hungry or tired? You know, that's OK to be hungry and tired. But it's not OK to, you know, I don't, it doesn't feel good to be talked to like that for me. And then the third, I would just say that this process of emotional coaching, how important it is that you, that you help children, you know, express how they're feeling, and you help tie that to their behavior. And then you talk about what you could do next time again. And it's often going to be that there was some language missing.

Dr. Stephanie Heald: We talk about this so much throughout our podcast. We really are working hard to build cultures, cultures in our environments, cultures outside of our environments and the culture with the families also. So that's just such great advice, Tom. So, we always leave our listeners with a challenge. Can you present our listeners with a challenge?

Tom Limbert: I can present them with a challenge to practice active listening with their children. And that is just kind of repeating back to them, you know, what they say to you, repeating it back to them, you know, and articulating it back to them just so they know with no doubt that you understand and that you heard them and that you're listening. So just it's just as simple as saying, I hear you. I can see, you know, that you're frustrated. And again, tying some emotion into there is great, too, if you can label it. But just active listening is going to always calm a child down and let them build trust with you. And that's going to help you guide their behavior.

Dr. Tisha Shipley: Well, Tom, that was amazing. I think that this is something really good for every single new teacher, veteran teacher families out there listening, because we do have to worry about a child's social emotional learning. And, you know, you've given some very good points on how to do this inside the classroom, at home. And we really appreciate you being here.

Tom Limbert: Sure, if it's OK. I used to work with a colleague of yours, Frank Guevara, right?

Dr. Tisha Shipley: Yes.

Tom Limbert: And I want to I want to share with your listeners a song that he taught me.

Dr. Tisha Shipley: OK, go for it.

Tom Limbert: I have a pet gorilla. Matilda is her name. Matilda likes to sing all day. This is what Matilda would say. (monkey sounds are made) And the fun part on that with two-year-olds is that your kind of scratching your under arms and you're showing your hands. So, two-year-olds just eat that up.

Dr. Tisha Shipley: OK, so my nephew is two and he loves to pretend he's a monkey. And I'm not kidding you. He would love that song.

Tom Limbert: It's just innate. Yeah, it's innate in all of us. Yeah. All right. I had to share that. I wanted to embarrass Frank, but I think I embarrassed myself.

Dr. Tisha Shipley: But we'll make sure he hears it. All right.

Tom Limbert: Thanks for having me.