

LOVE AND BELONGING NEEDS

Lifelong Skills

Managing Emotions and Stress



Artwork by Hailey Choi

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Penelope Friday, MPH, CHES, is a PhD student at the University of Michigan's School of Kinesiology. She earned her undergraduate degree in kinesiology from Michigan State University and her Master of Public Health from Indiana University–Bloomington. She worked for three years as the Childhood Obesity Prevention Coordinator for the Indiana Department of Health, focusing on school and early childhood education wellness initiatives. Her long-term goal is to improve the quality and quantity of physical activity among school-aged children through policy, system, and environmental approaches.

What's Penelope's favorite physical activity?

I love to walk the dog and lift weights.

Heather Lewis holds an MA in psychology in education from Teachers College, Columbia University along with an MA in child development from Michigan State University. She is the District Health Resource Advocate/Mental Wellness Specialist for Williamston Community Schools. She specializes in social-emotional learning, mindfulness, and student athlete mental health.

What's Heather's favorite physical activity?

I love walking outside, lifting free weights, and yoga.

What are lifelong skills?

Lifelong skills are meant for success! Family members play key roles in helping their children develop the skills needed to be successful in life.

These important skills include:

- Managing emotions
- Setting goals
- Working well with others
- Creating good relationships
- Making good decisions

Children do not wake up one day and decide “Today is the day I won’t scream at my little brother for taking my crayons away.” We all know that it takes time for them to learn to manage their emotions. Families can help children process their feelings and make the best choices possible. We can help children understand and manage all emotions in the zones below.

"Low" Energy Zone	"Good-to-Go" Energy Zone	"On-the-Edge" Energy Zone	"Extreme" Energy Zone
Sad Bored Tired Sick	Happy Focus Calm Proud	Worried Frustrated Silly Excited	Overjoyed/Elated Panicked Angry Terrified

**Adapted from Zones of Regulation, Think Social Publishing, Inc.

**Adapted from the RULER program, Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence



Learning these lifelong skills will help your child be successful at school, at home, and in the community. You're probably already working on these types of skills in your family without even realizing it! Here are some examples of what you might be doing now:

- Do you ask your child how they feel about school?
- Have you talked with your child about working together while playing a sport?
- Have you helped your child figure out how and when to say "sorry"?
- Do you comfort your child when they are upset?
- As a family, have you taken turns while playing a game or activity?

If you've done any of these things, then you have helped your child learn important skills. That kind of learning is a huge part of your child's development – and you play a critical role!

How does physical activity help with managing emotions?

Children learn many lifelong skills as people teach them how to share, practice good manners, and treat others with respect. Did you know that physical activity can also help children manage their emotions? It helps children discover information about themselves and their place in the world. It gives them a chance to learn to make good choices and to care about others, too. Physical activity even gives children opportunities to challenge their feelings, release them, and move forward. Finally, physical activity can give children practice dealing with difficult emotions.

There are lots of ways to make sure your child gets physical activity – and not all options involve sports. You can offer quick bursts of activity at home and as a family.

The next three sections of this module give you and your family tips for developing lifelong skills that include moving together, thinking together, and being together!



MOVE

Making time for family physical activity

Good things happen when children feel safe and supported by their family. For example, their health and well-being improve. You have the power to make that happen as a family, and physical activity is a great tool.

You can work on being physically and emotionally healthy by being active together. It can help with many goals. You'll all be more physically healthy. You'll also strengthen family connections. This bonding time will help you see what your child needs. Sometimes, physical activity will energize your child; other times, they might need a way to calm down, like doing a [breathing activity](#). You know your child best!



Managing emotions through physical activity

Certain types of movement help children tune into their emotions, notice their breath, and be present. Trying these [InPACT at Home Activity Play Cards](#) may feel silly at times, but they can help your child understand and manage their thoughts and feelings while being physically active. Helping your child address their feelings in this way will build resilience. In other words, they'll have the skills they need when times get tough – they will know how to bounce back!

Here are some physical activities that can help your child manage their emotions.

"Low" Energy Zone	"Good-to-Go" Energy Zone	"On-the-Edge" Energy Zone	"Extreme" Energy Zone
Emotion: Sad Activity: Self-Hug (Mindfulness)	Emotion: Happy Activity: Disco Party (Buddy)	Emotion: Worried Activity: Polar Bear Stretch (Flexibility)	Emotion: Overjoyed/ Elated Activity: Tornado Squat (Strength)
Emotion: Bored Activity: Texture Trek (Mindfulness)	Emotion: Focused Activity: Bubblegum Flow (Flexibility)	Emotion: Frustrated Activity: Split Squat (Cardio)	Emotion: Panicked Activity: Butt Kickers (Strength)
Emotion: Tired Activity: Clap Jack (Cardio)	Emotion: Calm Activity: Hacky Sack (Cardio)	Emotion: Silly Activity: Mario Jumps (Strength)	Emotion: Angry Activity: Body Scan (Mindfulness)
Emotion: Sick Activity: Child's Pose (Flexibility)	Emotion: Proud Activity: Seat Belt Crunch (Strength)	Emotion: Excited Activity: Finder's Keeper (Buddy)	Emotion: Terrified Activity: Punching Bag (Cardio)





THINK

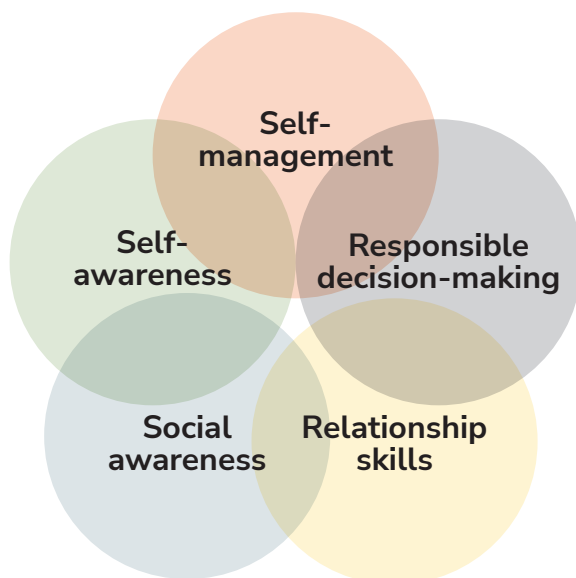
What does lifelong skill building look like at home?

One important lifelong skill is the ability to tell people how we're feeling. Talking about feelings can be a challenge for children of all ages; kids are still learning to understand and manage their emotions. Physical activity can "prime" you and your child for a conversation as you enjoy a quick burst of energy together. Think of physical activity as the primer you put on your walls before you start to paint. Playing games and moving with your child are wonderful ways to have quality time while developing lifelong skills.

No matter what your child might be feeling, physical activity can help! They don't have to wait a day, a week, or a month to feel better; exercise is an immediate mood lifter. The play card exercises are meant to help your child when they are feeling a negative emotion. As you do these activities over and over, your child will learn to cope with any reaction that comes along. Physical activity can help your child overcome challenging emotions, and it can help reinforce positive feelings!

"Understanding these energy zones will help your child manage their emotions. I am a teacher and a parent, and I use these myself every day to have a quiet moment where I can tune into how I am feeling. I have my students do the same. This teaches children about their feelings and gives them practice at managing them!" – Heather Lewis (parent and former kindergarten teacher at Discovery Elementary in Williamston Community Schools)

As you do these activities together and explore emotions, your child will build essential skills. These lifelong skills will help your child recognize, name, and respond well to various feelings. Physical activity also contributes to other important abilities, such as getting along with peers and making good decisions. The next page describes five lifelong skills and ways to nurture them in your child.



LOVE AND BELONGING NEEDS: LIFELONG SKILLS

Lifelong Skill	Ways to Practice
Self-awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about your child's unique qualities and strengths • Name feelings as they come up • Discuss how thoughts and feelings affect behavior
Self-management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice staying calm when angry and thinking before you speak • Set goals for the week, month, and year • Talk about being a leader and a self-starter to complete tasks
Responsible decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage being curious and open-minded • Talk about solutions to problems • Discuss the consequences of choices (both good and bad) • Talk about how to be well as a person, as a family, and as a community
Relationship skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly communicate what you mean • Work on relationships with people who support you • Practice teamwork and problem solving as a family • Ask for, or offer, support when needed
Social awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider others' perspectives and feelings • Notice others' strengths • Practice empathy and kindness • Practice being thankful for the good things

**Adapted from the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (2021)



[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



Putting physical activity to work for your family

Being together is important, especially when it comes to your child's health and well-being. Families who spend time together create strong bonds that are protective. Moving together as a family, thinking together about lifelong skills, and simply being together is a recipe for success for all members. Try adding one of the powerful practices below to your routine!

- Set aside time once a week to go for a 20-minute family walk. It's a great way to get some physical activity, to unplug, and to be together as a family.
- [Try some breathing exercises](#) (movement and stillness are each important)
- Spend some quiet time listening to music or journaling your feelings.
- Use the [InPACT at Home Activity Play Cards](#) once a week to try a new physical activity.
- Talk about what teamwork looks like in your family and show it through buddy activities.
- Make physical activity a tool to manage stress in your family. If you're feeling overwhelmed, anxious, or trying to solve a problem, do some physical activity by following along with a 5- or 10-minute fitness video.
- In the hustle and bustle of daily life, make movement a priority! Every minute counts, and it all adds up.

Physical activity is a strategy that can help children stay or move into the "good-to-go" energy zone. Over time, and with practice, your child will learn to cope with tough feelings in positive ways. But teaching lifelong skills isn't always easy, and you might need some support. To learn more, you can reach out to your school social worker or doctor.

Here are some additional resources especially for parents:

[Social Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Parent Resources from Edutopia](#)

[SEL with Families and Caregivers from Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning](#)

[SEL at Home: Top Resources to Share with Families from Panorama Education](#)

Now it's time to practice the skills that you've learned in this module. To get started, take the 20-day InPACT Lifelong Skills Activity Challenge.

20-day InPACT Lifelong Skills Activity Challenge

The 20-day challenge aims to enhance your child's social-emotional skills. Studies suggest that it takes 21 days to form a habit and over 90 days to establish a lasting lifestyle change. Our hope is that by completing the 20-day Lifelong Skills challenge, your family will continue practicing the most effective activities until they become a lasting and positive habit.

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Week 1 Welcome to the Lifelong Skills Challenge! Each week will have activities focused on a specific topic to help you build lifelong skills. Topic: Self-Regulation	Powerful Practice: Practice what different emotions look like in the mirror with your child.	Playcard Practice: Flamingos (Lifelong Skills Playcards)	Powerful Practice: Put a weekly family chart of values on the fridge. Pick a value each week to talk about with your children.	Playcard Practice: London Bridges (Lifelong Skills Playcards)	Powerful Practice: Apologize to your child when you are wrong.
Week 2 Topic: Self-Management	Powerful Practice: Have a list of activities on the fridge that your child can turn to when feeling stressed. Practice morning gratitude with your child.	Playcard Practice: Monster Walks (Lifelong Skills Playcards)	Powerful Practice: Call out stress management strategies you see in pictures, books, or in real life. For example: deep breathing, journaling, or meditation.	Playcard Practice: Good Morning (Lifelong Skills Playcards)	Powerful Practice: Talk about self-discipline, patience, and what it should and shouldn't look like.
Week 3 Topic: Responsible Decision-Making	Powerful Practice: Find one time a day to ask about your child's day.	Playcard Practice: Inch Worm (Lifelong Skills Playcards)	Powerful Practice: Ask your child how they would solve an issue and write down a game plan together.	Playcard Practice: Hershey Kiss Push-up (Lifelong Skills Playcards)	Powerful Practice: Set family guidelines for consequences and communicate what each means.
Week 4 Topic: Relationship Skills/Social Awareness	Powerful Practice: Volunteer as a family and have your child pick what kind of service they want to be a part of. Talk about everything and anything!	Playcard Practice: High Five Plans (Lifelong Skills Playcards)	Powerful Practice: Communicate "I-messages" with your child and model responding over reacting.	Playcard Practice: Fast Feet (Lifelong Skills Playcards)	Powerful Practice: When offering support, ask what kind of support your child is wanting. "Do you want me to listen or problem solve with you?"