

**BUILDING
EMOTIONAL
INTELLIGENCE**
Techniques to
Cultivate Inner
Strength in Children
LINDA LANTIERI

Introduction and
practices on CD
by Daniel Goleman

Hardcover
5 ½" x 8 ¼" / 128 Pages
with audio CD
ISBN 978-1-59179-789-0
U.S. \$22.95 / APRIL 2008

BUILDING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

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Sample Exercise: Getting Relaxed – Ages 5-7

In this session children will be introduced to the idea of having a regular quiet time together with you to help calm their minds and relax their bodies. They will contrast how they feel in a relaxed state and in a stressful one. They will learn two techniques for releasing tension stored in their bodies: deep belly breathing and progressive muscle relaxation. You'll help your child practice belly breathing through a "breathing buddy"—a soft toy that can be placed on their belly. After a guided experience on the CD of tensing and releasing various muscles, you'll introduce "reflection journals"—a place where both of you can regularly explore your feelings about the experience through art, writings, or other musings.

What You'll Need

- Bell/chime (optional) — see Materials Checklist to order this item
- Stuffed animal or small soft toy (about the size of a child's fist)
- The book *Building Emotional Intelligence*
- A CD player and the CD *Building Emotional Intelligence* cued up to Track 1: *Getting Relaxed: Ages 5–7*.
- Make or buy two journals (one for you and your child). You can use paper, pens, crayons, and/or color markers and yarn or ribbon for binding your own book *or* use a notebook with blank pages for a journal.
- A peaceful time and place to sit with your child, large enough to lie down comfortably within.

Time You'll Need: 30 Minutes

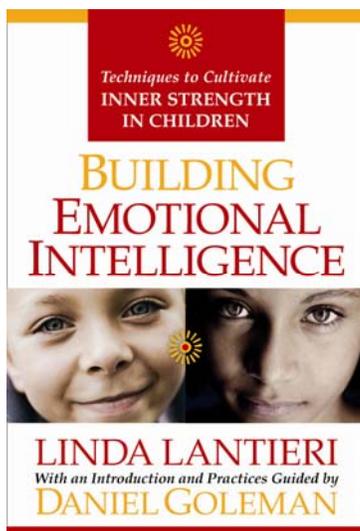
Concepts and Skills

Children will:

- Contrast how their bodies feel when they are calm versus when they are stressed.
- Practice using deep, belly breathing to relax their bodies.
- Experience relaxing their bodies through progressively tensing and releasing different muscles.

What to Remember

- One of the best and most accessible ways to release tension and built-up stress is through deep belly breathing.
- In order to let go of tension through progressively tensing and releasing muscles, it is important to hold the tension in each area of our bodies for a few seconds and then let go of the contracted muscle quickly, rather than gradually.



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What to Do Before Listening to the CD: Setting the Stage

- Begin by introducing your child to the new things you will be learning together through working with this book and CD. You might say something like:

We're going to be taking some special quiet time together, perhaps a couple of times a week. And during this time, we're going to practice some things we can do whenever we feel the need to relax our bodies and calm down.

- Mention to the child that you would like to always begin this special time together with a little silence and that you will ring a chime once (or signal) and ask her to listen to the sound of the chime until she hears it has stopped ringing and to raise her hand when she can no longer hear the chime. Be patient with your child especially if silence is something unusual for her. It may take time for her to adjust to the possibilities silence provides.
- Explain that you're going to help her notice what her body feels like when she is worried or upset about something and then notice how different her body feels when she is calm again. The following activity is rooted in creative play, which is how children of this age begin to make sense of their world. You might start by saying:

Let's go on a little imaginary journey and pretend we're climbing to the top of a big mountain....Let's stand up and put on our hiking boots and climbing gloves, (pause and put on imaginary boots and gloves) OK, here we go. . .follow me!
(Begin to slowly walk around the room.)

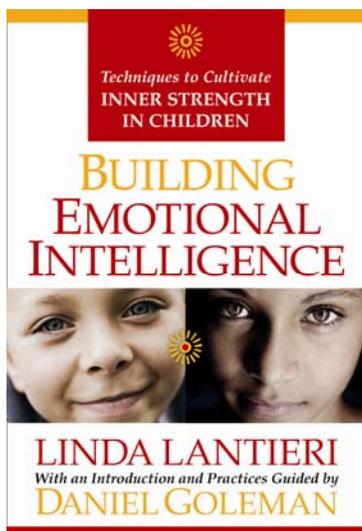
Oh, oh! We just walked into a giant mud puddle...the mud is really deep...we're sinking in up to our ankles...each step is hard to take...it feels like your feet might be getting stuck...you can barely pull each foot out....Try reaching up and pulling on one of these tree branches above us...like this. (Model reaching up, pulling with tight-fisted grip.) Keep going....Phew!...We made it across. Let's sit down and take a break.

- Together explore how that felt:

How are your legs feeling after walking through that mud?

What about your arms when you were grasping the tree branches and pulling yourself up?

Did you notice anything about how you were breathing or how your heart was beating? Let's feel our chests right now.



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Sometimes, we can notice changes in our bodies when we get upset, worried, or when we've been working really hard.... Our hands may feel different; they might get cold and damp.... Maybe our hearts beat faster.... Even our breathing can change. We might notice ourselves taking quick little breaths or even holding our breath.... (Explore any other sensations in your body either of you noticed.)

- Now let her explore how her body feels when it is calm:

I would like us to imagine where we just were. So let's stand up again. (Begin to walk slowly and stop.) Let's imagine, as we are walking, that we come to a beach on a warm summer afternoon. Let's lie down and get comfortable and feel the cool sand on our backs. (Lie down.) See if you can hear the ocean waves, one after the next.... Feel yourself relaxing into the sand.... Just enjoy resting your body here for a few moments.... (Pause for about 10 seconds.) Great... now gently sit up and ask yourself: How do my legs feel now? How about my arms and hands? How about my breath and heart beat?

Our hands might feel warm. Maybe our breathing became slower and deeper. Did our legs and arms feel relaxed? Our heartbeat might have slowed down. (Explore any other sensations in your body either of you noticed.)

- Mention that this special quiet time together can help us learn some ways we can calm down when we need to.

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