

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

Introduction and
practices on CD
by Daniel Goleman

Hardcover
5 1/2" x 8 1/4" / 128 Pages
with audio CD
ISBN 978-1-59179-789-0
U.S. \$22.95 / APRIL 2008

BUILDING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE **Techniques to Cultivate Inner Strength in Children** **Excerpt: Introduction by Daniel Goleman**

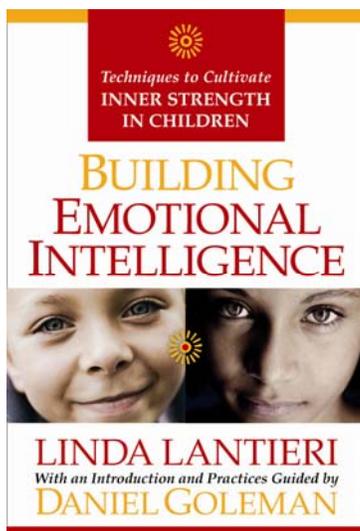
Recently I spoke with a mother about how her daughter was doing in school. “Well,” she said, “she’s good at math, better at English—but even better at emotional intelligence.”

That was a conversation that could not have occurred just a while ago. It was 1993 when Linda Lantieri and I, along with a small group of like-minded colleagues, got together to establish the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. Back then there were but a handful of programs that exemplified the best promise of “social emotional learning” (or SEL), the systematic classroom teaching of emotional intelligence. These programs add to the regular school day a curriculum for handling life: improving self-awareness and confidence, managing disturbing emotions and impulses, increasing empathy and cooperation.

Linda was at the helm of one of those programs, Resolving Conflict Creatively, which had already found its way into hundreds of schools as a way to fight rising rates of violence. Many of the early social and emotional learning efforts in schools were developed to combat just such a challenge: teens’ use of drugs and alcohol, dropouts, unwanted teen pregnancies, and other pitfalls of adolescence. When the W.T. Grant Foundation commissioned a study of all such programs to see what actually made some of them work (while others did not), the teaching of social and emotional skills emerged among the crucial active ingredients.

Over the years since Linda and I first worked together, social and emotional learning has spread to tens of thousands of schools worldwide, and it continues to grow. Some of that growth was helped along by my 1995 book *Emotional Intelligence*, which argued that schools would better equip children for life if the curriculum included not just the academic basics, but also coaching in the basics of social and emotional competence. A heightened self-awareness, better ability to manage distressing emotions, increased sensitivity to how others feel, and managing relationships well are vital throughout life. But the foundation for these life competencies is laid in childhood.

Brain science tells us that a child’s brain goes through major growth that does not end until the mid-20s. “Neuroplasticity,” as scientists call it, means that the sculpting of the brain’s circuitry during this period of brain growth depends to a great degree on what a child experiences day-to-day. During this window these environmental influences on brain growth are particularly powerful in shaping a child’s social and emotional neural circuits. Children who are well-nurtured and whose parents help them learn how to calm down when they are upset, for instance, seem to develop greater strength in the brain’s circuits for managing distress; those whose parents neglect them will be more likely to act on aggressive impulses or



**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

have trouble calming down when they are upset.

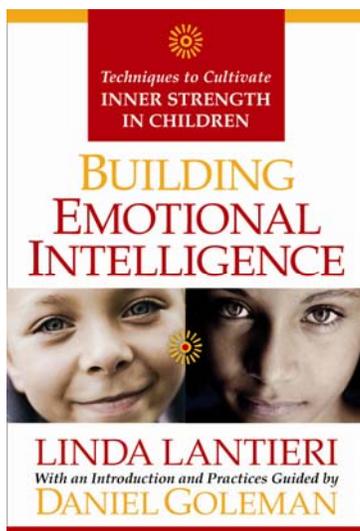
Good parents are like good teachers. By offering a secure base, the caring adults in children's lives can create an environment that lets children's brains function at their best. That base becomes a safe haven, a zone of strength from which they can venture forth to explore, to master something new, to achieve. That secure base can become internalized when children are taught to better manage their anxiety and so more keenly focus their attention. This enhances their ability to reach an optimal zone for learning as well.

One way to ensure every child gets the best lessons of the heart is to make them part of the school day as well part of a child's home life. As I noted earlier, Linda and I are founding members of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), an organization based at the University of Illinois at Chicago that has set standards for SEL and helped school systems around the world bring these programs into their curriculum. The best social and emotional learning programs in schools are designed to fit seamlessly into the standard school curriculum for children at every age.

The question is, does social and emotional learning make a difference in children's lives? Now we have the answer: a definitive meta-analysis of more than one hundred studies compared students who had SEL with those who did not. The data shows impressive improvements among the SEL students in their behavior in and out of the classroom. It showed that students not only mastered abilities like calming down and getting along better, but they also learned more effectively: their grades improved and their scores on academic achievement tests were a hefty 14 percentile points higher than similar students who did not have such social and emotional learning programs. Helping children master their emotions and relationships makes them better learners.

Why helping children handle their inner world and relationships better can boost learning can be understood, too, in terms of the impact of SEL on children's developing neural circuitry. One area of the brain most shaped by experience during childhood is the prefrontal cortex, the brain's executive center. This area holds the circuits both for inhibiting disruptive emotional impulses and for paying attention—for calming and focusing. When children do not have strategies for decreasing their anxiety, less attention is available to them to learn, solve problems, and grasp new ideas. A child, for example, who gets panicked by a pop quiz, will actually imprint that response rather than the details of any material in the quiz. Distress kills learning. Scientists now believe that improving attention and memory, along with freeing the mind from impulsivity and distress, puts a child's mind in the best zone for learning. And social and emotional learning does just that.

Linda Lantieri has continued to be a pioneer in the movement to integrate social and emotional learning into schools throughout the world. Currently



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

Introduction and
practices on CD
by Daniel Goleman

Hardcover
5 1/2" x 8 1/4" / 128 Pages
with audio CD
ISBN 978-1-59179-789-0
U.S. \$22.95 / **APRIL 2008**

she has been facing one of education's greatest challenges: how to help children who have suffered a shock like the events of 9/11 become more resilient, so they can bounce back from trauma and get on with their lives and education. Working with children in the schools closest to the former World Trade Center, Linda has developed a curriculum that can help any child calm the body, quiet the mind, and pay better attention.

These are skills that all children need not just in school, but throughout life. Parents and teachers tell children countless times, "calm down," or, "pay attention." But the natural course of a child's development means that the brain's circuitry for calming and focusing is a work in progress: those neural systems are still growing. Yet we can help them along, by giving children systematic lessons that will strengthen these budding capacities. That's what Linda has done in her state-of-the-art curriculum in the New York City Schools, and what she offers any family or classroom here in this book and CD set.

When Linda asked if I would narrate the instructional exercises that teach these skills, I jumped at the chance. I'm honored to once again be involved with Linda Lantieri's groundbreaking work, this time as the voice that narrates the instructional CDs. And I'm delighted by the thought of the many children whose lives will benefit from this practical wisdom.

CONTACT: **Beverly Yates**
303-665-3151 ext. 153
beverly@soundstrue.com

Sounds True
413 South Arthur Avenue / Louisville, CO / 80027
www.soundstrue.com