

Attaining Emotional Literacy

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Emotional Literacy describes the condition of a person's ability to know, experience, understand, process and use for growth the emotions which arise as s/he experiences daily living. It means learning how to be in charge of directing and processing feelings, rather than allowing feelings to be in charge of us (whether by overwhelming our lives, or by spending our energy fending them off). It also signifies learning to accept emotions as friends (instead of enemies), and making use of the information emotions give us to create daily change and harmony.

Learning emotional literacy involves these assumptions:

- ✓ *We visualize the earth as a giant school wherein the primary lessons are love and faith. The name of our teacher would be experience; and each experience presents an opportunity for personal growth/transformation.*
- ✓ *An emotional reaction is involved in each experience.*
- ✓ *Emotions operate as signals, calling our attention to the areas needing examination and growth.*
- ✓ *Emotions are a form of energy. Each emotion is a slightly different form and, therefore, needs to be understood and processed differently.*
- ✓ *Because emotions are energy, they need to be moved. The human system is a channel for the energy of emotion, much like a river bed acts as a channel for water.*
- ✓ *To be complete with any emotion, a person must (a) notice it; (b) allow him/herself to feel it; (c) identify the lesson taught by the emotion; and (d) develop and follow a new course of action (the result of change created by the decision to learn the lesson).*

Because our culture has evolved into its present state, the mental process and activity has come to be valued above the emotional. In reality, both are equal partners. Therefore, emotional literacy involves restoring emotions to their rightful place in our minds, hearts, and daily lives; and also having them become an acceptable and valued part of life. To achieve this involves going all the way in the opposite direction -- valuing emotions and feelings over thoughts and ideas. Once begun, this process will inevitably lead to the natural re-balancing of placing the mental and the emotional on equal footing within each of us.

Personal empowerment is involved in becoming emotionally literate -- emotions connect us to ourselves and thus to our true inner power. Our greatest power lies in our ability to feel.

Becoming emotionally literate also underlies the development of intuition. Emotional literacy is attainable, and an emotionally literate child requires an emotionally literate parent.

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Ilene L. Dillon, M.S.W, L.C.S.W and M.F.C.C., is the originator of "Conscious Parenting," a practical method which redefines the job of parenting and the role of children so that children are led to conscious, self-directed choice. In this new partnership model, the child teaches the parent, too, providing permission for everyone to grow and change.

Mother of two, Ilene has experienced parenting as both a married and a single parent. She is the author of a series of self-help booklets, "The Bounce Back Series," and maintains a private psychotherapy practice in Fairfax, California. She is a professional speaker and has lectured in both the United States and Australia. She is also a member of the National Speakers Association