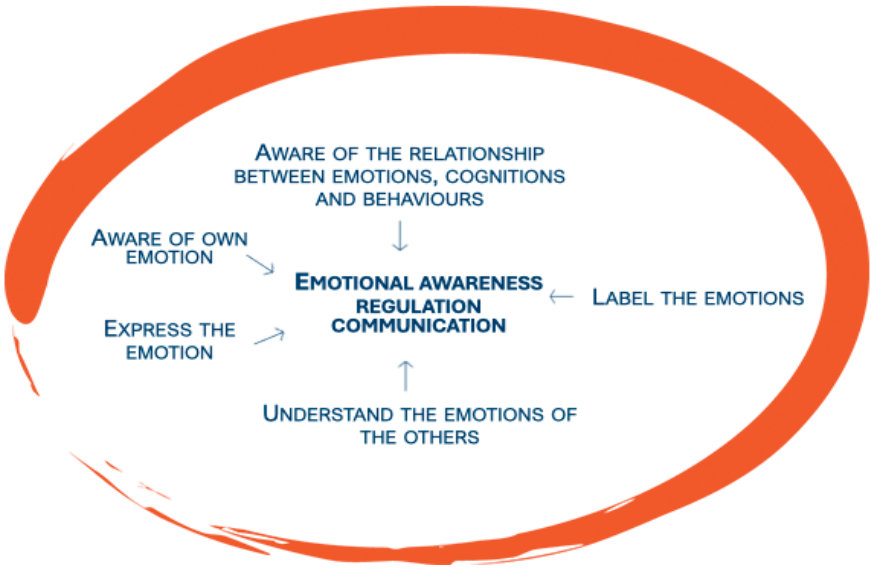
2. THE TEN SKILLS

2.1 Emotional awareness, regulation and communication

Definition of the skill

For the past 50 years, it has been evident that developing emotional competence is a cornerstone of promoting the well-being of children and adults. Emotional competences are broad and multifaceted, encompassing three key aspects: emotional awareness, emotion regulation, and communication of emotions. Emotional awareness is the ability to recognize and identify one's own emotions and those of others, involving understanding personal feelings and associating them with specific experiences. Emotion regulation refers to managing emotions appropriately and productively, rather than reacting impulsively, teaching children to calm themselves, express frustration constructively, and deal with intense emotions like anger or sadness positively. Communication of emotions involves expressing feelings clearly and respectfully, verbally and non-verbally, enabling children to share what they feel, avoid misunderstandings, and build deeper connections with others. Together, these components form the basis for emotional competence, supporting personal and interpersonal growth.

Complexity of the skill



- **Be aware of own emotions.** It is the ability to perceive and identify own feelings and emotions quite accurately.
- **Label the emotions.** It is the ability to use the appropriate emotional vocabulary for the feelings and emotions experienced, labeling them correctly.
- **Express the emotion** appropriately to yourself and others. It is the translation of your inner world into a language others can understand, spoken not just with words, but with your body and your actions.
- **Understand the emotions of the others.** It is the ability to accurately perceive the emotions and feelings of the others, as well as relate from empathy by putting into practice the appropriate verbal and extraverbal language for the situation.

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- **Become aware of the relationship between emotions, cognitions and behavior.** It is the ability to understand how emotional states influence thinking and behavior, as well as understand the influence of our ideas and behaviors on emotional states.

Importance of the skill for lifelong well-being

Emotional awareness, regulation and communication are vital for navigating the challenges of the 21st century, where rapid change and interpersonal collaboration are constants. They are essential for stress management and resilience, as children who can identify and regulate emotions develop stronger coping mechanisms, helping them adapt to challenges and prevent anxiety. Improved social relationships are another outcome, as children who regulate and communicate emotions effectively build trust, collaborate better, and resolve conflicts constructively. These skills are crucial in fostering meaningful connections in school and future work environments. Furthermore, they support decision-making and problem-solving by promoting balanced and clear thinking, even under pressure, ensuring that impulsivity or frustration do not hinder judgement. Emotional competence also contributes to growth in self-esteem and a sense of self, as recognizing and expressing emotions respectfully strengthens self-awareness and confidence, essential for thriving in an ever-changing world.

Manifestation and development of this skill in ages 6-10

Children aged 6 to 10 are in a significant developmental phase where emotional awareness, regulation and communication begin to manifest more clearly. At ages 6–7, children start recognizing basic emotions like joy, sadness, and anger in themselves and others, linking these emotions to specific events or circumstances, such as feeling happy when praised or sad when excluded. Their ability to regulate emotions remains basic, relying on external guidance from adults or simple strategies like seeking comfort, while emotional communication is often limited to non-verbal cues or short expressions like saying, "I'm sad," without further elaboration. Between ages 8–9, children develop a deeper understanding of their own emotions and those of others, becoming capable of identifying more complex feelings such as frustration or pride and understanding mixed emotions like being happy yet nervous about a new experience. They begin experimenting with simple regulation strategies, like taking deep breaths or counting to ten when angry and show an increased willingness to talk about their

emotions, while non-verbal communication improves as gestures and tone of voice become more aligned with their feelings. By age 10, children exhibit advanced emotional awareness, recognizing the role of emotions in decision-making and social interactions. They develop more effective regulation strategies, such as reframing negative thoughts or discussing problems to find solutions, and emotional communication becomes nuanced, with children expressing themselves more precisely and adapting their communication to different social contexts, such as speaking calmly during conflicts to avoid escalation. To nurture these skills, teachers and caregivers can use role-playing, storytelling, and reflective discussions, providing consistent opportunities for emotional expression and practicing problem-solving in a supportive environment to foster growth.

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Observation parameters for establishing class level

Level 1: Children recognize basic emotions in themselves and others, linking them to events that caused them. They begin understanding emotional signals, such as associating a smile with happiness.
Level 2: Children develop initial strategies for managing emotions, such as taking deep breaths or stepping away to calm down. They start noticing how their emotional reactions affect others, fostering a sense of responsibility.
Level 3: Children express emotions respectfully and use more complex regulation techniques, like changing perspectives to reframe situations. They exhibit empathy, understanding emotions' roles in relationships, and apply these insights to enhance social interactions.

Interconnections with other skills

Emotional awareness, regulation, and communication intersect with numerous other soft skills:

- Empathy: Emotional awareness, regulation, and communication enhances the ability to understand and share others' feelings, fostering stronger relationships.
- Resilience: Managing emotions supports bouncing back from challenges and building mental toughness.
- Assertiveness: Communicating emotions clearly and respectfully aids in advocating for oneself without aggression.
- Active listening: Emotional competence promotes attentive listening, crucial for understanding others deeply.
- Stress management: Emotion regulation helps prevent overwhelming stress, ensuring healthier coping strategies.
- Critical thinking: Recognizing emotions aids in analysing situations more objectively and making balanced decisions.
- Collaboration: Emotional communication strengthens teamwork by promoting trust and openness.
- Problem-solving: Regulated emotions support rational thinking and creative solutions in challenging situations.

Didactical tips for teachers

- Encourage the use of emotion words, asking students to label and share their feelings.
- Guide them through simple breathing exercises or relaxation techniques to regain calm.
- Model reflective listening by paraphrasing their emotions and validating their experiences.
- Introduce brief journaling activities, letting them express emotions through words or drawings.
- Role-play challenging conversations and highlight respectful language and tone.
- Celebrate constructive emotional exchanges and acknowledge efforts to resolve conflicts peacefully.

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