

12-2019

## Teaching Emotion Coaching to Teachers of Toddlers

Anna Colosi  
*California State University, Monterey Bay*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps\\_thes\\_all](https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps_thes_all)

---

### Recommended Citation

Colosi, Anna, "Teaching Emotion Coaching to Teachers of Toddlers" (2019). *Capstone Projects and Master's Theses*. 706.

[https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps\\_thes\\_all/706](https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps_thes_all/706)

This Capstone Project (Open Access) is brought to you for free and open access by the Capstone Projects and Master's Theses at Digital Commons @ CSUMB. It has been accepted for inclusion in Capstone Projects and Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ CSUMB. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@csumb.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@csumb.edu).

Running Head: Teaching Emotion Coaching to Teachers of Toddlers and Preschoolers

Teaching Emotion Coaching To Teachers of Toddlers and Preschoolers

Anna Colosi

A Capstone Project for the Bachelor of Arts in Human Development and Family Studies

## **Introduction**

Toddlers and pre schoolers are at an age in which they are becoming aware of emotions and learning how to regulate and appropriately express their emotions. Emotion coaching is a communication strategy which supports young people to self regulate and manage their emotion responses. Teachers see these emotions and behaviors and don't know how to help the child express and deal with their emotions in certain situations. Young children need the guidance of adults to help them learn emotion skills. When toddlers have difficulty regulating and expressing emotion appropriately, they turn to other problem behaviors such as tantrums. Toddlers and pre schoolers that have so much bottled up emotion need to learn emotional regulation and emotional competence. To address this issue, I created a workshop for teachers on emotion coaching for toddlers. Emotion coaching is a communication strategy that supports young children to self regulate and manage their emotional responses. When teachers use emotion coaching, they use redirecting and social teaching. I presented to teachers at an infant/toddler center in Capitola, California.

## **Needs Statement**

Emotion coaching is a strategy used to support and sustaining children and young people's emotional and behavioral well being. Toddlers and Preschoolers need emotion coaching because they need to learn how to express emotion in constructive ways. Emotion coaching raises children who are more emotionally intelligent and better at regulating emotions. Emotion regulating is important for infants and toddlers because they learn how to regulate their emotions appropriately. Emotional competence is another concept to emotion coaching. Emotional competence includes skills in emotional expressivity, emotion regulation, and emotional knowledge

which helps a child to behave pro socially(Sophie S. Havighurst, Katherine R. Wilson, Ann E. Harley, 2012). A big issue today is how the child expresses their emotion in socially appropriate ways. It is important to understand the mechanisms of how young children develop emotional competence( Denham, 2012). Emotional competence is the essential social skills to recognize, interpret, and respond constructively to emotions in yourself and others. Teacher responses to children's emotions is another factor that influences children's emotion related abilities. Toddlers and pre schoolers are at a defining moment where they are learning and expressing emotions in certain situations. The best way to teach your children to express their feelings is to set an example yourself( Justina Goh, 2017).

Emotion coaching is the key to raising happy, resilient, and well adjusted children. Emotion coaching is a communicative strategy which supports young people to self regulate and manage their stress response. It is important for children to have emotional awareness which means the ability to recognize and understand our own feelings and actions and those of other people( Damon E.Jones, 2017).According to John Gottman, There are five steps to emotion coaching. The first step is for adults to be aware of the child's emotions. This means tuning into the child's feelings. A child sees a parent and a teacher as a role model. Adults have to pay attention to their own emotions, from happiness to sadness to anger, and how they are expressing them. Emotions are a vulnerable and natural part of our life.The second step is to connect with the child. Use emotional emotions as an opportunity to connect with the child. Bond with the child as they are expressing a certain emotions. Pay close attention to the child's emotions and try not to dismiss their emotions or ignore them. This can make the child more vulnerable to an even deeper emotions. Look at the child and see the emotion moments as a time to teach them.

Recognize the emotions and encourage the child to talk about the emotion. Provide guidance to the child to find a solution to the emotions before it escalates into misbehavior.

The third step is to listen to the child, respecting the child's feelings by taking the time and effort to listen to them carefully. Taking the child's emotions seriously is so important for their well being and emotional state. Show the child that you understand what they are feeling. Emotion regulation includes the abilities to handle emotions in productive ways, being aware of feelings, monitoring and modifying them when necessary, so that they aid in rather than impede coping in varying situations (Denham,2012). For example, " Dylan, I see that you are feeling sad by crying. Can I hold you to comfort you?". Showing a child you care about their emotion and identifying the emotion is vitally important in helping them learn emotion regulation. Always avoid judging or criticizing the emotion. This can turn into a denial of the emotion for the child. The fourth step is naming the emotion through helping the child identify and name emotions they are experience. Identify the emotions your child is experiencing instead of telling your child how he or she should feel. Naming emotions can help to soothe the child. For example, "Enzo, I see that you are frustrated because you are hungry. I am getting your food ready can you go sit at the table?". This shows that you are naming an emotion to help soothe the child. Set an example for the child by naming your own emotions too.

The fifth and final step is to explore and find positive solutions to problems together. Redirecting misbehavior children for what they do, not for what they feel. Encourage emotional expression but set clear limits on behavior. It is important not to expect too much too soon. Creating solutions where the child can explore without hearing lots of do nots. When you catch the child is doing lots of things right and praise them. An evidence-based and standardized program that targets children's emotional competence, assists teachers to emotionally connect with their

children, and fosters a positive teacher child relationship would thus provide an important alternative, or complement, to behavioral teacher programs( Wilson, 2011).

Emotion coaching has many developmental benefits. Teachers responses to children's emotions differed by child's age. Such as, Toddler teachers were more encouraging and using physical comfort and distraction in response to children's negative emotions more often than pre school teachers(Denham, 2012). Emotion coaching emphasizes emotion regulation rather than behavior modification. It views all behaviors as a way of communication between the child and the surrounding environment. This communication strategy can make a certain distinction between the child's behavior and their feelings which underlie their actions. Talking over the emotion is important for the child and their development. Some strategies for teachers using emotion coaching would be using child's emotions as a time to connect. Connecting is very important when it comes to the child's emotions and needs.

Emotion coaching is important to do for teachers of toddlers and preschoolers because it supports the children socially and emotionally. It promotes nurturing relationships with teachers and children will be more self confident and perform better in social and academic settings. My project gave teachers a perspective on how emotion coaching benefits toddlers.

### **Theory Application**

Developmentally, toddlers are at an age where they are learning to express and regulate different emotions and feelings. The theory I have chosen for my project is Erik Erikson's *Stages of Social Emotional Development*. I chose to focus on the 2nd and 3rd stages of social emotional development which are Learning Autonomy vs Shame(Will) and Initiative vs Guilt(Purpose). The 2nd stage of Autonomy vs Shame is the stage, which Erikson believes happens in early childhood from 18 months to 2 years. The child goes through a stage of autonomy and building

self-esteem. The child is sure of themselves and carrying themselves with pride rather than shame. The 3rd stage of Initiative vs Guilt is the “play age” or the later pre school years where children are healthily developing and the child learns to broaden skills through active play, and to cooperate with others with purpose. This theory relates to emotion coaching by children learning to build autonomy in relationships with teachers. Children get a sense of personal control when it comes to their emotions and act on the environment. Toddlers and preschoolers are socializers of emotions.

A theory that relates to the teachers is Vygotsky’s theory of social development. This theory emphasizes on teachers because it focuses on the social interaction/conversations with children as important to children’s learning. It also highlights the role of adults in children’s learning. The area of emotion coaching is influenced by Vygotsky’s ideas.

### **Consideration of Diversity**

My project on emotion coaching was conducted at the Campus kids Connection Inc Infant Toddler center. When considering diversity, the ethnic composition at Campus kids Connection is somewhat diverse. We have 70% White, 5.9% two or more races, 5% Hispanic or Latino, 4% Pacific Islander, and 2% African American. This project is geared toward toddlers and pre schoolers. The development of emotional expressiveness and regulation is important for children of all ethnicities. This project is sensitive to different age groups because it has an impact on the kids and not the parents.

### **Learning Outcomes**

I conducted a workshop/ presentation to teachers at the organization Campus Kids Connection Infant Toddler day care center.

By the end of the project, Teachers will be able to:

1. Identify the characteristics and practices of emotion coaching
2. Identify the benefits of emotion coaching
3. Apply emotion coaching to everyday situations with toddlers

## **Method**

### **Participants(Audience)**

I conducted my workshop on emotion coaching at Campus Kids Connection Infant Toddler Center in Capitola, California. A total of seven teachers and one teacher assistant participated including the director and assistant director. The participants were all over twenty years of age. The participants were a mix of white and hispanic teachers and the gender distribution of the teachers were all female.

### **Procedures/Materials**

I implemented my workshop on Thursday, December 5th. I presented my workshop during a work meeting so most of my co-workers could be there to see my presentation. The steps in my project included creating the powerpoint presentation and addressing my project. I talked to my director about how I wanted to implement my capstone at my work and talked about the topic of emotion coaching and the benefits to emotion coaching and how it applies to the children in our center. The director's response was very positive and was encouraging me to present my workshop at our center. She was interested in the research behind emotion coaching and how it applies to the early childhood age.

For my presentation, I did a powerpoint presentation on emotion coaching and many of its aspects and benefits for children. I described how it applies to the age group of toddlers. I did my presentation and then had a handout for the teachers to test the learning outcomes for the project. The learning outcomes of the workshop were that the teachers should be able to identify the



benefits of emotion coaching, applying emotion coaching to everyday situations with toddlers, and being able to identify characteristics and practices of emotion coaching. In the introduction of the workshop, I started by giving them a basic definition of what emotion coaching is, listing the learning outcomes for this workshop, and a needs statement on the importance of emotion coaching for teachers who work with early childhood kids. In the second part I went through toddler's emotional needs such as learning how to regulate negative emotions, through emotion coaching and note that for toddlers commonly express emotion through crying. I then went through the five steps to emotion coaching. Finally, I concluded with benefits of emotion coaching and applying scenarios for teachers to practice such as role playing and social teaching.

### **Results**

Learning outcome 1 was identifying practices and characteristics of emotion coaching. I believe this learning outcome was fully met. On the handout/post test I gave to the teachers at the end of the presentation, I asked the question, "This presentation gave insight on the practices and characteristics of emotion coaching and the meaning of emotion coaching. Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree with this statement? Seven teachers answered strongly agree and one teacher answered agree. I felt that this question was limited because I didn't get to see answers where they wrote examples down. I could have received better results if I would have made that question open ended. However, they all answered with strongly agree and agree, which met the learning outcome.

Learning outcome 2 was to identify the benefits of emotion coaching. I believe this learning outcome was met. On the handout/post test I gave a question that was asked, "Name a few benefits of emotion coaching". Some common answers included regulating children's emotions, saying the emotion to the child, helping children recognize emotions, and identifying different

emotions in children. One teacher put down in their responses that she liked the listing of the important aspects of emotion coaching useful. This did not exactly answer the question . I think she was confused by the question which gave unexpected results, but all the other teachers responded with anticipated answers to the post workshop question.

Learning outcome 3 was applying emotion coaching to everyday situations with toddlers. I believe this learning outcome was fully met. On the handout/post test, The question that was asked stated, “Name a few scenarios to apply emotion coaching with infants and toddlers.” Answers included social teaching, redirecting, and naming emotions. One teachers put down examples of applying emotion coaching to children in our center. For example,” Enzo wanting to say something by hitting.” or “ Jacob wanting to say something but screams.” Another teacher gave examples such as behavioral challenges, stranger anxiety, and separation anxiety. Another teacher gave different examples of applying emotion coaching to children in our center such as, “When a child has a hard drop off, it is important to be with the child, show comfort, acknowledge their feelings, and encourage them to engage in an activity.” The second one was, “A child is going through a biting phase, talk to the child, explain what they are doing wrong, and help them for better choices.” Overall, I think all my learning outcomes were met.

### **Discussion**

I believe that this workshop was successful. I believe that all the teachers were engaged in my workshop and learned a lot from my presentation. I received great feedback on my presentation from the teachers and all my learning outcomes were met. I think that my workshop gave teachers a perspective on how emotion coaching is a necessary teaching strategy for early childhood educators. Since it was a new topic, they were open to learning and exploring the research behind it.

Some limitations of my workshop included not being able to implement the workshop at a preschool age site. For future direction, I hope to implement my workshop at a pre school age site and include role playing scenarios for teacher to practice emotion coaching. I also hope to practice emotion coaching at my work currently and practicing role playing with my co-workers in the next workshop. Nonetheless, I believe I changed teachers perspectives on emotion coaching and teachers are walking away with an understanding of what emotion coaching is, the benefits of emotion coaching, and understanding the importance of what emotional competence and emotion regulation is for young children.

### References

Jones, D. (2017). Fostering Healthy and Social and Emotional Development in Young Children. Retrieved 2019, from <https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/earlylearning/talk-reading/feelings-teachers.pdf>

Admin, M. (2019, March 25). 5 Ways to Help Children Identify and Express their Emotions. Retrieved October 01, 2019, from <https://www.mindchamps.org/blog/help-children-identify-express-emotions/>

Running Head: Teaching Emotion Coaching to Teachers of Toddlers and Preschoolers

Bullock, M., & Russell, J. A. (1984). The Emotion Concepts of Young Children. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com.library2.csumb.edu:2048/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=ED248023&site=ehost-live>

Denham, et al. "Early Childhood Teachers as Socializers of Young Children's Emotional Competence." *Early Childhood Education Journal*, Springer. 233 Spring Street, New York, NY 10013. Tel: 800-777-4643; Tel: 212-460-1500; Fax: 212-348-4505; e-Mail: Service-Ny@Springer.com; Web Site: <Http://Www.springerlink.com>, 31 May 2012, <eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ963274>.

Havighurst, S. S., Wilson, K. R., Harley, A. E., Kehoe, C., Efron, D., & Prior, M. R. (2013). "Tuning into Kids": reducing young children's behavior problems using an emotion coaching parenting program. *Child Psychiatry & Human Development*, 44(2), 247–264. <https://doi-org.library2.csumb.edu:2248/10.1007/s10578-012-0322-1>

Wilson KR, Havighurst SS, Harley AE, Wilson, K. R., Havighurst, S. S., & Harley, A. E. (2012). Tuning in to Kids: an effectiveness trial of a parenting program targeting emotion socialization of preschoolers. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 26(1), 56–65. <https://doi-org.library2.csumb.edu:2248/10.1037/a0026480>

Ellis, B., Alisic, E., Reiss, A., Dishion, T., & Fisher, P. (2014). Emotion Regulation Among Preschoolers on a Continuum of Risk: The Role of Maternal Emotion Coaching. *Journal of Child &*

Running Head: Teaching Emotion Coaching to Teachers of Toddlers and Preschoolers

Family Studies, 23(6), 965–974. <https://doi-org.library2.csumb.edu:2248/10.1007/s10826-013-9752-z>