Embracing Intense Emotions:
Nurturing Empathy Development in GT Children

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The Integrated Empathy Development Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parenting/Teaching Style</th>
<th>EQ Development</th>
<th>Empathic Response</th>
<th>Potential Problems</th>
<th>Needed Skills to Improve EQ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>High cognitive skills; low social and emotional skill development</td>
<td>“I know what feelings you should have, but I don’t really ‘feel’ them so I tend to judge your feelings and struggle to connect to your emotions”</td>
<td>High threat awareness, rigid response; poor relationships; weak attachments</td>
<td>Focus on connections, relationship skills, and emotional awareness/regularation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Limited cognitive, social, and emotional skill development</td>
<td>“I don’t feel feelings that much at all - yours, mine, or anyone’s”</td>
<td>Difficulty connecting socially, difficulty with connections or attachment</td>
<td>Concentrated focus on building all social-emotional, cognitive skills, starting with positive relationship/connections</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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Understanding Intensities, Potential Empathy Development Problems, and Potential Strengths:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Intensity</th>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Potential Concerns</th>
<th>Potential Strengths</th>
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</table>
| Intellectual      | ✓ Intense problem solvers  
                  ✓ High levels of concentration on preferred activities  
                  ✓ Detailed visual recall  
                  ✓ Enjoys learning for the sake of learning  
| ✓ Under-development of social-emotional skills and processes (high cog/low se)  
                  ✓ Can result in weaker attachments, high threat awareness  | ✓ Strong learner  
                  ✓ Good memory  
                  ✓ Innovative problem solver  
                  ✓ Quick thinker  
                  ✓ Other:__________ |
| Emotional         | ✓ Passionate approach to life  
                  ✓ Extreme emotions  
                  ✓ Complex and layered emotions  
                  ✓ Physical reactions to emotional status  
                  ✓ Ability to develop deep relationships  
| ✓ Can result in under-development of cognitive regulation and processes  
                  ✓ Can result in under-development of “theory of Mind” attributes  
                  ✓ Can lead to enmeshment and emotional distress  | ✓ Zest for life  
                  ✓ Empathy  
                  ✓ Resilience  
                  ✓ Compassion  
                  ✓ Other:__________ |

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| Psycho-motor      | ✓ Loves action  
                  ✓ Moves for the sake of movement  
                  ✓ Animated speech patterns  
                  ✓ Risk taker in some areas  
| ✓ May struggle with emotional regulation and behavior inhibition  
                  ✓ Can weaken appearance of attention and empathy  | ✓ Will take action when needed  
                  ✓ Typically strong orator  
                  ✓ Combines physical and thinking skills  
                  ✓ Other:__________ |
| Sensual           | ✓ Appreciation for the arts  
                  ✓ Appreciation for nature and beauty  
                  ✓ Highly impacted/influenced by sensory stimulation  
                  ✓ Strong sensory memory  
| ✓ Can become hyper-sensitive to environment  
                  ✓ Can heighten threat perception leading to imbalance in empathy skills  | ✓ Appreciation for beauty and “awe”  
                  ✓ Strong affective memory  
                  ✓ Awareness of sensory details  
                  ✓ Other:__________ |

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**Area of Intensity** | **Features** | **Potential Concerns** | **Potential Strengths**
--- | --- | --- | ---
Imaginational | ✓ Strong dream pattern  
 ✓ Strong daydream pattern  
 ✓ Good facility for fantasy  
 ✓ Strong imagination  
 ✓ Will turn to imagination when bored or stressed | ✓ Can misinterpret threats within the environment  
 ✓ May struggle with enmeshment, and imbalance in empathy development | ✓ Innovative  
 ✓ Creative  
 ✓ Resiliency  
 ✓ Typically gifted in artistic domains  
 ✓ Other: __________

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**Understanding and Developing Emotional Intelligence Domains:**
(adapted from Jones & Bouffard, 2012 and Harvard’s report “Navigating SEL from the Inside Out: Elementary School Focus”, 2017.)

**COGNITIVE REGULATION SKILLS:**

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| Cognitive Regulation: Attentional Control | The ability to attend to relevant information and goal-directed tasks while resisting distractions and shifting tasks | ✓ Sustain attention by focusing on immediate task  
 ✓ Ignoring distractions when doing a task  
 ✓ Uses specific strategies to maintain attention  
 ✓ Uses listening strategies to maintain focus | ✓ Name Games  
 ✓ Games that require selective attention with distractions  
 ✓ Explicit routines for listening to the teacher (look at the speaker, sit still, be silent, etc)  
 ✓ Explicit instruction for maintaining attention (self-talk)  
 ✓ Monitoring strategies |
| Cognitive Regulation: Working Memory/Planning Skills | The ability to maintain and manipulate information over a short period of time. Planning skills include identifying and organizing the steps / sequence of events needed to complete an activity or achieve a goal | ✓ Uses strategies to plan and complete tasks of varying complexity (with assistance and independently)  
 ✓ Uses strategies to remember and execute complex commands  
 ✓ Use strategies to remember and recall information  
 ✓ Plans, organizes, and engages in task/goal directed behavior | ✓ Memory board games  
 ✓ Name game  
 ✓ Creating a plan to accomplish tasks  
 ✓ Goal-setting activities  
 ✓ “Quests” in which you must make a plan |

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| Cognitive Regulation: Inhibitory Control | The ability to suppress or adjust a behavioral response in order to obtain a long-term goal (i.e. “put first things first”) | ✅ Uses strategies to inhibit inappropriate automatic responses in favor of more appropriate behavior (i.e. raising your hand instead of shouting)  
✅ Uses contextually appropriate coping and self-control strategies in order to meet task demands  
✅ Uses contextually appropriate strategies to wait for your turn (inhibit responses) | ✅ Games: mother may I, Freeze frame, Simon says, etc  
✅ Explicit strategies for self-monitoring  
✅ Explicit strategies for impulse control |
| Cognitive Regulation: Cognitive Flexibility | The mental ability to switch thinking about two different topics to thinking about multiple topics simultaneously; The ability to shift or redirect thinking from one important object, task, or instruction to another. | ✅ Uses strategies to transition easily between tasks or parts of tasks  
✅ Shifts attention from one task, aspect, perspective or problem, to another  
✅ Compares and contrasts information  
✅ Generates and updates hypothesis  
✅ Approaches problems in innovative ways | ✅ If-then statements  
✅ Creative problem-solving games (i.e. STAMPER)  
✅ Transition activities |

**EMOTIONAL PROCESSES:**

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| Emotional Processes: Emotional Knowledge and Expression | Ability to recognize, comprehend and label one’s own and others’ feelings. Ability to express one’s emotions appropriate to context | ✅ Identity emotions in self and others  
✅ Identify intensity of emotions in self and others  
✅ Use a range of feeling words of varying intensities appropriate to context  
✅ Understands relationships between situations and emotions  
✅ Effective use of I-statements  
✅ Differentiates between feelings and behaviors | ✅ Chart of feeling words  
✅ Emotional vocabulary games  
✅ Emotional detective games  
✅ Zones of regulation  
✅ Identify character emotions in stories |
| Emotional Processes: Emotional and Behavioral Regulation | Ability to use strategies to moderate emotional reactivity and behavioral responses | ✅ Can regulate ones emotions effectively at varying times, including when upset  
✅ Uses effective strategies to cope with disappointment and failure  
✅ Distinguishes between appropriate and inappropriate expressions of emotion  
✅ Identifies and communicates behavior and emotions, including how situations make one feel | ✅ Develop personal coping wheels or booklets  
✅ Using “Stop and Stay Cool” or similar anxiety strategies  
✅ Explicit teaching of coping skills  
✅ Using stories to build emotional vocabulary |

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| Emotional Processes:          | Ability to understand and accept another’s point of view, opinion and/or feelings. Includes   | ✓ Identify, acknowledge and accept the experiences, feelings and viewpoints of     | ✓ Active listening games  
| Empathy and Perspective Taking| emotional matching and vicarious experiencing of another’s emotions                           | others                                                                          | ✓ Examining why characters feel and act the way they do  
|                               |                                                                                                | ✓ Identify and acknowledge how another’s feelings are similar and different        | ✓ Discussing parallels between characters and personal feelings  
|                               |                                                                                                | from one’s own                                                                    | ✓ Retelling stories from alternate perspectives  
|                               |                                                                                                | ✓ Make connections between self and other                                         | ✓ Generating coping skills to help a classmate or character in distress  
|                               |                                                                                                | ✓ Verbally demonstrate active role-taking                                          |                                                                                       |
|                               |                                                                                                | ✓ Recognize ways to respond to empathetic concern and differentiate most appropriate|                                                                                       |
|                               |                                                                                                | and effective responses                                                           |                                                                                       |
|                               |                                                                                                | ✓ Demonstrates self-control strategies to manage distress caused by empathy       |                                                                                       |

INTERPERSONAL PROCESSES:

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| Intercultural Processes: Understanding     | Processes through which one interprets cues from the social environment, including causal       | ✓ Uses social cues (body language and tone of voice, etc) in contextually         | ✓ Discuss social cues of characters  
| Social Cues                                | attributions and intent attribution for others’ behavior                                        | appropriate ways (refers to SELF)                                               | ✓ Play emotional charades  
|                                            |                                                                                                | ✓ Responds to social cues in ways that communicate understanding (refers to      | ✓ Play nonverbal games  
|                                            |                                                                                                | OTHERS)                                                                            | ✓ Develop social story scripts                                                      |
|                                            |                                                                                                | ✓ Correctly identifies motivation and intention of others                          |                                                                                       |
|                                            |                                                                                                | ✓ Uses social cues to communicate active listening and prosocial skills           |                                                                                       |
| Intercultural Processes: Prosocial and      | Ability to generate and utilize effective strategies/solutions to deal with challenging       | ✓ Understands that anger and conflict are normal aspects of life.                 | ✓ Explicit social skills training  
| Cooperative Behavior Skills                | interpersonal situations                                                                      | ✓ Faces and deals with conflict in healthy, appropriate ways                      | ✓ Social Story games  
|                                            |                                                                                                | ✓ Uses self-management techniques to cope with challenging behaviors             | ✓ Creative problem-solving games that require cooperative behavior  
|                                            |                                                                                                | ✓ Identifies triggers and problems; generates effective responses and evaluates   | ✓ Interview a classmate about likes/dislikes  
|                                            |                                                                                                | potential consequences.                                                          | ✓ Community Building activities  
|                                            |                                                                                                | ✓ Develops appropriate self-advocacy skills                                       | ✓ Community circles  
|                                            |                                                                                                |                                                                                   | ✓ Group classroom activities                                                      |

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| Interpersonal Processes: Conflict Resolution/Social Problem-Solving | Ability to generate and utilize effective strategies/solutions to deal with challenging interpersonal situations | ✓ Understands that anger and conflict are normal aspects of life.  
 ✓ Faces and deals with conflict in healthy, appropriate ways  
 ✓ Uses self-management techniques to cope with challenging behaviors  
 ✓ Identifies triggers and problems; generates effective responses and evaluates potential consequences.  
 ✓ Develops appropriate self-advocacy skills | ✓ Upstander activities  
 ✓ Explicit teaching of conflict resolution skills  
 ✓ Explicit teaching and use of shared problem solving skills  
 ✓ Restorative practices  
 ✓ Identifying and evaluating triggers, problems, and responses of various challenging interpersonal situations represented in books  
 ✓ Debriefing activities to reflect on behavior choices made during challenging interpersonal situations |

### CHARACTER AND MINDSET:

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| Character | Understanding, caring about and acting upon core ethical values including respect, justice, responsibility, etc | ✓ Verbalizes opinions about right/wrong  
 ✓ Weighs consequences of actions prior to acting  
 ✓ Accepts responsibility for one’s words, actions and attitudes  
 ✓ Identifies and understands personality/character traits and works to strengthen core traits  
 ✓ Demonstrates forgiveness, compassion, patience and appreciation for others  
 ✓ Shows a willingness to grow from mistakes | ✓ Strength-based practices  
 ✓ Identification of values and character strengths  
 ✓ Upstander activities  
 ✓ Classroom service activities  
 ✓ Strengths spotting  
 ✓ Compassion activities |

| Mindset | A way of thinking, attitude or belief about oneself, others and situations/circumstances | ✓ Understands that one’s abilities (intelligence and talents) are not fixed traits but can be developed through hard work and dedication  
 ✓ Identifies strengths in others  
 ✓ Develops and maintains an optimistic outlook  
 ✓ is aware of and in touch with the present moment (mindfulness)  
 ✓ Understands the importance of physical and mental lifestyle balance  
 ✓ Understands the relationship between thoughts/mindsets, feelings and how they influence each other  
 ✓ Understands and expresses thankfulness/gratitude | ✓ Social skill games that promote optimism  
 ✓ Kindness activities  
 ✓ Strengths-based practices  
 ✓ Mindfulness activities  
 ✓ Growth mindset activities  
 ✓ Grit activities |

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