

Transcript: 2.3 Emotional Development

[MUSIC]

Hi, I'm your host, Brenda Close. And I'm your co-host, Kaili Smalley. And this is our podcast: Treasuring Education.

[MUSIC]

Welcome to another episode of Empowering Parents, where we provide practical advice to help you navigate the joys and challenges of supporting your children on their educational paths.

Today, we're going to talk about an important topic: the stages of emotional development in children between the ages of 5 and 18. Understanding these stages can help you better support your child's emotional well-being, including how they might react to trauma.

That's right, Kaili. Emotional development plays a crucial role in shaping your child's overall growth and ability to handle life's ups and downs. We've included trauma in this discussion because we all experience it, and sometimes it takes more than we can do on our own to get through it. If your child seems to be having difficulties with trauma beyond your help, it's wise to seek out outside resources.

Great advice. It's also noteworthy that children can also experience the effects of trauma from others they are close to. Emotion tends to bleed into the lives of those we spend the most time with.

It's so true. Okay, so let's start by discussing the emotional milestones that you might observe in your five to nine-year-old, and how they might react to trauma.

During this period children become more aware of their own emotions and those of others. They start to learn to name their feelings like happiness, sadness, and anger, but when faced with trauma such as a significant loss or a frightening event, they may show regressive behaviors such as bedwetting, clinginess, and changes in appetite, etc.

And as parents, it's important to create a safe and warm environment where children can freely express their emotions without fear of judgment. This is especially crucial when they've experienced a trauma. Help them understand that their feelings are valid and provide reassurance and comfort.

For instance, when your eight-year-old expresses that he is mad at his brother, validate his feelings with an "I hear" statement. "I hear that you're angry. Tell me what happened." And then turn that into an opportunity to guide healthy expressions of anger.

Right. I wasn't the greatest at this. You were more likely to hear from me something like, "oh stop being mad. He's just playing."

Yeah, I remember. And it was frustrating because I didn't feel heard. I questioned whether anger was even the right emotion to feel sometimes.

Yes, and I've learned that it's very powerful to validate a child's or anyone's feelings as they express them. Even adults need to have their feelings validated.

I know I do! Moving on to the pre-teen and teenage years between the ages of 10 and 14. Children undergo significant emotional changes. They may experience mood swings, increased self-consciousness, and a desire for more independence. When faced with trauma -- and we know trauma has many forms at a spectrum of intensities -- they might start to withdraw, become irritable, or have changes in sleep patterns.

Instead of dismissing those feelings, take the time to listen and empathize. Encourage open communication and let them know that it's okay to ask for support when they need it.

Now let's talk about the emotional development of teenagers ages 15 to 18. During this time, they're exploring their identity, they're seeking more autonomy, and developing a sense of purpose. When faced with trauma such as a breakup or academic pressure, they may become volatile, isolate themselves, or have changes in academic performance.

I actually see that quite regularly in my own high school students. Teenagers might face new challenges and when trauma enters their lives, it can have a significant impact. We cannot over-emphasize enough how that open line of communication is necessary, and how a judgment-free zone where they can openly discuss their concerns is essential at every age. Support them by connecting them with professional help if needed and provide a supportive network of trusted adults.

It's important to remember that during this stage, teenagers are learning to navigate their emotions independently. When they face trauma, it's crucial to be patient and understanding and encourage them to express their emotions in healthy ways such as through art, writing, or talking with a trusted adult.

That's right, Kaili. Supporting your child's emotional development throughout their journey is a continuous process, especially when they experience trauma. It requires patience, understanding, and a willingness to adapt as they grow. Remember, seeking professional help can also be beneficial for both the child and the family.

And always remember, you are their role models. By practicing healthy emotional expression and resilience yourself, and by reaching out for help when you need it, you're teaching them valuable life skills that will serve them well into adulthood -- even in the face of trauma.

Well, we hope this brief discussion on the stages of emotional development including how children might react to trauma has been helpful to you. Remember, you have the power to positively impact your child's emotional well-being both in their everyday lives and during those challenging times.

Thanks for tuning in to our introduction to emotional development. Be sure to view our video for a more in-depth look. We'll be back soon with more practical advice and empowering tips. Tune in next time for a look at the different types of public schools available.

See you next time! Follow us on your favorite podcast platform to get notifications of our next podcasts and sign up for our newsletter at www.treasuringeducation.com.

[MUSIC]