



**MIND
MATTERS**



Monthly E-Newsletter

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

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EDITORIAL

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING: AN INVESTMENT IN MENTAL HEALTH



Three decades ago I developed a 15 day, 3 hours per day module on social emotional skills for teenagers and wow that was a hit with children and parents alike! Every summer and winter for 30 years, when schools shut for vacations my programs would run full. There was a huge demand for it for parents realized the benefits of it. What is not taught in school and many homes was taught in my class. According to my experience if we made it an integral part of education, it would be the best investment in mental health. A meta-analysis of 2013

For Rotary, this presents an extraordinary opportunity for meaningful service. Rotarians have long invested in education, literacy, maternal and child health, and community development. Supporting Social and Emotional Learning is a natural extension of this commitment. Clubs can partner with schools to introduce age-appropriate SEL programs, organize teacher-training workshops, support parent education, sponsor peer-support initiatives, establish student wellness spaces, and invite mental health professionals to guide school communities. Even small projects can have lasting effects on children's confidence, resilience, and sense of belonging.

Promoting SEL also aligns with Rotary's core values of service, integrity, diversity, fellowship, and leadership. A child who learns empathy today becomes an adult who builds stronger families, healthier workplaces, and more peaceful communities tomorrow. By helping children understand themselves and care for others, we are investing in a kinder and more emotionally resilient society.

The Rotary Action Group on Mental Health Initiatives encourages every Rotary club, district, and partner organization to consider Social and Emotional Learning as a priority area for community service. Whether through a pilot program in one classroom or a district-wide initiative, every effort contributes to a future where mental health is valued as highly as physical health.

The strongest communities are built not only by educating young minds but also by nurturing compassionate hearts. Social and Emotional Learning is one of the most enduring gifts we can offer the next generation—and one that will continue to strengthen families, schools, and communities for decades to come.

Rita

**-Rita Aggarwal.
Editor**

BRIDGING GENERATIONS, BUILDING CONNECTIONS: PANEL DISCUSSION WITH ROTARIANS AND ROTARACTORS

Darpan: The Coffee Club, a wing of Chaitanya Counselling Centre, conducted its first session for this Rotary Year on 6th August, 2026 at the Rotary Centre, with an engaging panel discussion featuring three parents and three children, creating a unique platform for an open and meaningful intergenerational dialogue. The panel discussion was moderated by Rtn Rozina Rana and Rtr Devika Gokhale, psychologists. Through thoughtful moderation, participants reflected on themes such as **communication, expectations, understanding one another's perspectives, and the common reasons behind parent-child conflicts**. The discussion encouraged both generations to move beyond assumptions, express their views on freedom, emotional needs, conflicts and other important aspects in the parent-child relationship. The interactive nature of the session fostered reflection, mutual respect and a deeper appreciation of the challenges and strengths each generation brings to relationships. The event set a meaningful tone for Darpan, reaffirming the importance of creating safe spaces for conversations that strengthen connection and understanding.

-Rtr Devika Gokhale



SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM: PREPARING INDIVIDUALS FOR LIFE AND WORK

Success is often viewed as professional and educational achievements. However, knowing yourself, forming healthy relationships, and making appropriate decisions are also important and valuable for assessing success in life. These are lifelong skills developed through Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). SEL has a life beyond the classroom and supports individuals in the face of personal challenges and even challenges at work and school.

The Social and Emotional Learning model is defined by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) as “a lifelong process in which an individual acquires the skills and knowledge for the understanding and managing of emotions, the establishment of positive relationships, the exhibition of empathy, the making of responsible decisions, and the accomplishment of both personal and collective goals”.

Children learn these skills in their early years through interactions with their parents, caregivers, teachers, and peers. Parents who model empathy, active listening, and respectful communication actually build safe emotional spaces that allow children to identify emotions and respond appropriately. In schools, everything from cooperative learning to the implementation of conflict resolution and responsible decision-making practices contributes to the development of these positive social skills. The positive social skills children develop from the application of SEL practices continue to serve children in their transition to the stressors and challenges of young adulthood (Jones & Kahn, 2017). The development of high-quality SEL programming has a positive influence on students' academic and behavioural issues and on their emotional and social well-being (Durlak et al., 2011).

Aarav, a first-year college student, relocated for the first time and is finding the adjustment to the stress of new academic challenges to be difficult. When he was feeling stressed, sought the support of one of his professors, focused on the strengths he had identified, and prioritised the tasks and goals he had organised. He then had meaningful dialogue with his peers to support his teamwork during the group project. It demonstrates that SEL is applicable in adulthood and is not limited to childhood.

CASEL describes self-management as the ability to recognise and regulate one's own feelings while managing one's impulses. One crucial component of self-management is developing the skills to interpret and regulate emotions and to cope with stress in difficult situations without being impulsive (Gross, 2015). People who manage their feelings well do not simply suppress them; they also take time to understand themselves and their feelings, and then respond to them in a constructive manner that helps strengthen and foster emotional well-being in others.

Technical knowledge and professional skills are crucial, but they can be made more effective by combining these with empathy, communication, self-awareness, and sound decision-making. Through the promotion of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in educational institutions and workplaces, we will be able to empower individuals not only academically and professionally but also socially and emotionally.



-Akansha Hirraani
Founder and Practising Psychologist
Calmfit Counselling
(<https://calmfitcounselling.com>)

EMOTIONAL SELF-AWARENESS

Self-awareness is the ability to be aware of one's inner life - one's emotions, thoughts, behaviors, preferences, goals, strength, challenges, attitudes, mindsets - and how these elements impact behavior and choices across contexts.

Emotional self-awareness is being in touch with your emotions and understanding them. It is an important trait to have since it makes it easier for people to co-exist in a society, and communicate how they feel.

Identifying one's own emotions helps them understand what they are going through. Our emotions often also affect the people around us. Emotional self-awareness also means that one **identifies what they are feeling, why they are feeling it, and how they can manage it.**

Understanding and managing our own emotions is very important. This will also help improve the relationship we have with ourselves. If you understand yourself and your emotions well, you will be able to communicate them with others. This helps maintain and improve interpersonal relationships.

One of the easiest steps towards emotional self-awareness is **self reflection.**

If you ever feel an emotion so deeply that it affects others around you or your work and responsibilities, sit and think about what the emotion is. It can be anger, sadness, even happiness. Try to understand where the emotion is coming from - did an event trigger it? Did a sound or something that a person said triggered it? Is it related to something that happened in the past? Once you find the answer to where the emotion is coming from, you can try and figure out how to manage it. If you can avoid or remove the source, do it. If it has something to do with a particular event that happened in the past, try using the same method you did to feel better.

Upon self reflection, we can learn many things about ourselves and our emotions. We can choose to stay away from things and people that trigger those negative emotions in us, whenever possible. We can also choose to surround ourselves with things and people that bring out our positive emotions.

When we completely understand our emotions, it becomes easier to explain it to the people around us - our family, friends, classmates, co-workers, and so on. This will not only help improve our efficiency at school/work, but also improve our relationships. We can help each other in a more effective manner, once we understand each other even better.

-Sara Pimprikar
Mental Health Ally
Member, DAGMHI 3030



THE UMBRELLA THAT NEVER OPENED: A JOURNEY INTO SOCIAL AWARENESS

It was one of those mornings when the rain seemed determined to wash away everyone's patience.

At the crowded bus stop stood a young woman, headphones on, eyes fixed on her phone. Beside her, an elderly man leaned heavily on a walking stick, his shoulders surrendering to the rain. A little boy stretched his tiny school bag over his younger sister's head as though it could become an umbrella. A delivery rider checked his watch every few seconds. Every face seemed to be carrying a different storm.

The young woman had an umbrella. A beautiful one. Large enough to shelter three people.

Yet somehow... it never opened. Not because it was folded. It stood proudly above her head. It simply never opened to anyone else.

The bus arrived. In the rush, the old man slipped. Before anyone could think, the little boy caught his arm. The delivery rider picked up the walking stick. Another passenger offered a seat. For a few fleeting seconds, strangers forgot they were strangers.

The young woman finally looked up. **Nothing around her had changed. Only her awareness had.**

I often wonder...

How many umbrellas like that walk among us every day?

Not made of cloth or steel. But of assumptions, hurry, prejudice, and certainty of a quiet belief that my world is the real world.

Perhaps the greatest poverty today is absence of attention.

We know what is happening in countries we have never visited, yet fail to notice the sadness in the eyes of someone sitting across our dining table. We react to opinions before understanding experiences. **We judge behaviour before discovering the story that gave birth to it.** Stubborn, lazy, difficult, arrogant and many more labels to author the stories we never real know.

Social awareness asks us to put the pen down. To read before we write. To understand before we conclude. To remember that every person we meet has been shaped by a different home, a different culture, a different language, different fears, different losses, different dreams. **No two childhoods are alike. No two families are alike. No two faiths celebrate the same way. No two hearts carry the same scars.** How then can we expect everyone to think, speak or respond exactly as we do?

The world has become wonderfully diverse. Our hearts must become equally spacious. **Social awareness is not about agreeing with everyone. It is about making room for everyone.** For the colleague who speaks imperfect English. For the neighbour whose festival is different from ours. For the child who learns differently. For the elderly who move more slowly. For the person whose silence hides a battle we cannot see.

The umbrella above our heads protects us from the rain. The invisible umbrella around our hearts often separates us from one another. Perhaps it is time to close that one.

Tonight, before you sleep, ask yourself only one question: whose story did I fail to notice today? Tomorrow, when you step into the rain, carry your umbrella. But leave your assumptions behind. Because the world does not become more humane when more people are right. It becomes more humane when more people are willing to understand.

And perhaps... the most beautiful umbrella is not the one that keeps us dry, but the one that makes sure **no one has to stand alone in the rain.**

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COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Communication skills are not something that one is born with, but can be inculcated in oneself by constant practice and self-awareness. Active listening, verbal clarity, empathy, non-verbal cues (body language, gestures) are the core of good communication skills. **Effective communication** is more about understanding thoughts, ideas and information clearly than just talking out loud and most importantly practice empathy, to build trust and clarity.

We all have gone through the feeling when we are heard but misunderstood. Miscommunication and misunderstanding can sometimes lead to a severe traumatic experience for an individual. Such past experiences or event takes a toll on the mental health and can trigger stress, anxiety, fear, depression, loss of trust, social isolation etc. Almost each of us manages different relationships at personal, platonic and professional levels. An honest, open and healthy communication at all the levels help the relationship grow positive, favourable and supportive for each other. Difficulties in any relationship make it uncomfortable and eventually toxicity builds up hampering the mental health and overall health as well. Majorly such disharmony or imbalance in relationships is because of lack of proper communication or miscommunication. If one is not feeling heard or misunderstood for time and again, the person starts to undervalue him/ her and starts questioning one's self-worth.

Communication is always a two-way street and it involves two or more individuals. Active listening and understanding the speaker clearly without misinterpretation is vital for effectiveness of the communication. A child does it all to grab the attention of the parents or caregivers. So we have the innate desire of being heard and understood since childhood. If a child is not heard during his childhood at home and school, grows up to be an adult with low self-esteem, anxious and depressed. The trauma of dejection is so deep rooted that the person faces difficulty in communicating effectively at professional and personal levels. Such individuals most likely face relationship issues and will abstain from speaking up which might lead to further misunderstandings.

In today's globalized world, cultural awareness is very important so that we respectfully acknowledge the social and business etiquettes while communicating. Bridging the communication gap due to diversity needs to be taken care of in order to avoid any misinterpretation and misunderstanding. We must be aware of the different body language norms of different cultures and follow them for better understanding clarity in communication. In the era of globalization, effective communication becomes a bigger challenge keeping diversity of different languages, cultures and backgrounds in mind. We should always be empathetic as a speaker or listener to bridge the barrier of diversity.

We as responsible individuals, professionals and Rotarians must take the charge of creating awareness about mental health and communication going hand in hand. Most of the people going through the trauma of miscommunication choose to live with it because they are conditioned that way through generations. Normalizing seeking help from professionals or a responsible person can change the meaning of one's life from hopelessness to happiness.

-Rani Agarwal

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Try this simple experiment. Take a box and fill it with as much sponge as you can. Keep adding more, pressing it down until you can barely close the lid. Now open the box. The sponge immediately bursts out, expanding in every direction.

Our emotions and unresolved disagreements often work in a similar way. When frustrations, misunderstandings, and differences are ignored instead of addressed, they build up over time. Eventually, the pressure becomes too great, and the conflict "explodes," often causing more damage than if it had been handled earlier. This is why conflict resolution is so important. It helps people express their concerns, understand one another, and solve problems before they grow into larger issues.

Every individual has a basic need to be seen, heard, and understood. In today's digitally connected world, where social media gives everyone a platform to share their thoughts, it is natural for people to develop strong opinions about topics such as relationships, education, politics, economics, and social issues.

At the same time, the vast amount of information and diverse perspectives available today means that people often have different beliefs and viewpoints. These differences can sometimes lead to disagreements, or conflicts. Conflicts can occur anywhere—in families, schools, workplaces, communities, and even between countries. Conflict itself is not always harmful; healthy disagreements can encourage new ideas, improve decisions, and create opportunities for growth. What truly matters is how we manage them.

Conflict resolution is the process of solving disagreements in a calm, respectful, and peaceful manner. Instead of arguing, blaming, or fighting, it encourages people to communicate openly, listen carefully, and understand different perspectives. The goal is not for one person to "win" the argument, but for everyone involved to work together to find a fair solution that everyone can accept.

Learning conflict resolution is an essential life skill. Small misunderstandings can quickly become major disputes if they are ignored. Conflict resolution helps build trust, strengthen relationships, and prevent disagreements from causing lasting damage. It also develops important qualities such as empathy, patience, open-mindedness, and respect. By learning to consider different viewpoints, people improve their communication, problem-solving, and decision-making skills, which help them handle challenges more effectively.

There are several ways to resolve conflicts. People can negotiate by openly discussing their concerns and finding common ground. They can compromise by making reasonable adjustments or collaborate to create solutions that benefit everyone. When conflicts cannot be resolved directly, a neutral third person, known as a mediator, can help both sides reach an agreement. These methods reduce misunderstandings, strengthen relationships, and transform conflicts into opportunities for learning and growth.

In conclusion, conflict resolution is not about avoiding disagreements; it is about learning how to handle them wisely. Just as releasing pressure from a tightly packed box prevents it from bursting, addressing conflicts with

communication, patience, and respect helps create stronger relationships and a more peaceful society.

-Kruthi Rath

