


# Artful Parenting- June's Edition

**Social and  
Emotional  
Learning:  
Creative  
strategies to  
support your  
child through  
Covid-19**



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## What is Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and why is it important for young children's development?

JC: Social and Emotional Learning for young children includes the knowledge, attitude and skills that they need for developing self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship management, and responsible decision-making.

SEL lays a strong foundation on which all other forms of learning are built. When children have confidence and a positive self-concept, they will be able to manage their emotions and behaviours better. This helps them to have better mental well-being and allows them to build positive relationships with others. In short, SEL enhances children's ability to succeed in life.

## How can parents reinforce Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) through art at home?

JC: Parents can set aside time in the week to involve children in art activities. When children draw, paint or sculpt, they become immersed in the process. Due to the sensory nature of art activities, art has a way of helping children to feel calmer, more focused and more regulated.

Have family art sessions to draw a variety of topics e.g. myself, my feelings, things I like, things I don't like etc. This allows each family member the opportunity to share about themselves and their feelings.

Model your thinking process out loud so that it provides children with an understanding of how you, as parents, deal with difficulties and solve problems. "Oops, I've squeezed too much yellow paint here. Let's see what I can do with the extra yellow paint. Maybe I can add a little blue paint to create green." Include children in the selection of activities and materials. While this allows them to make choices, parents can guide children so that they will not only choose what they want but also will consider the preferences of others.

Playing art games are a fun and interesting way of learning to take turns, follow rules and cooperate. Different members of the family can take turns to add marks or lines to create a picture. Children can be involved in constructing the rules.

**"Having a two-way conversation so that children also hear their parents' responses to the artworks, enables children's emotional vocabulary and expression to grow."**

Parents can read storybooks that provide a variety of scenarios and conflicts to discuss. Invite children to ask questions as well as to share their thoughts and feelings about events and characters in the story. After that ask them to draw some possible solutions.

## How can art help to educate children about the social impact of Covid-19?

JC: The main role of art is to express thoughts, ideas and feelings. Young children's social world revolves around their family, school and friends. In the midst of the COVID-19 circuit breaker period in Singapore, some children were not able to hug family members who work in healthcare services, visit their grandparents, play outdoors, go to school, mingle with friends, eat out etc. Some new social habits like more frequent handwashing, social distancing, wearing masks, staying home when ill etc. have also become required social practices that children are part of.

When children draw pictures related to these scenes, their drawings express their understanding of the social impact that COVID-19 has on them. We can invite children to share the details in their drawings and engage in conversation with them.

In addition, parents could use artworks that show children images of people wearing masks, safe distancing in public, people resting in bed, adults working from home, healthcare workers in personal protective equipment, migrant workers being tested etc. Such artworks will provide a springboard to have meaningful conversations with children about the social impact of COVID-19 in society.

**What are 2 creative strategies that parents could use to support young children's emotional expression?**

**JC: Parents could ask children to depict a variety of feelings e.g. happy, sad, angry, scared, worried, surprised etc. by drawing pictures or creating 3-D sculptures using recyclable materials. Invite children to describe the details of their artwork and ask questions to show your interest in how they have expressed their feelings.**

**Show children artworks that portray a variety of different emotions. Ask them what they see in the artwork that evokes such feelings and why. Having a two-way conversation so that children also hear their parents' responses to the artworks, enables children's emotional vocabulary and expression to grow.**