



The Benedictine Counselor

Newsletter of Benedictine Counseling Services

A Ministry of the Benedictine Sisters of Virginia

Christmastime 2006

Volume 1, Number 2

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Message from the Director

This issue explores the topic of “Emotional Literacy.” As you review the article, keep Jesus’ words in mind, “I have come so [you] may

have life and have it abundantly.” Emotional health is a critical aspect of the abundant life to which Jesus refers. All of us at Benedictine Counseling Services wish you and your loved ones happiness and health in 2007.



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What is Emotional Literacy and why is it important in our homes, schools and communities?

Emotional Literacy and **Emotional Intelligence** have been used somewhat interchangeably since the 1980’s. Simply put, they refer to the “ability to recognize, understand, handle, and appropriately express emotions” (Sharp, 2001). In his book, *Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goleman argues the importance of teaching children emotional literacy skills like self-awareness, self-discipline, persistence,

and empathy; skills he suggests may indeed be more important across the lifespan than traditional measures of IQ. As mentioned in the December issue of this newsletter, brain research has shown that emotions affect learning. (continued other side)

Emotional Literacy continued

Additionally, our emotions allow us to connect with and develop relationships with others; and it is through relationship that all of us connect to our families, schools, communities, and the world around us.

In the same way that children learn reading, math, or science, they can learn emotional literacy skills:

- Recognizing emotions is the first step, giving children the ability to label or define what they are feeling. For younger children just recognizing what they are feeling can help them begin to make connections between feelings and behavior (actions). Older children can be encouraged to identify the source of their emotion or feeling and think about how other people around them are impacted, a great way of increasing empathy.

- Understanding what they are feeling can help children begin to learn how to manage their emotions, which leaves them more open and available for learning. It is unlikely that a child who is overwhelmed by feelings of sadness or anger is going to be very attentive to a classroom lesson. Even adults who are stuck in an emotional state are distracted and less effective.

- Learning to effectively manage their emotions is an essential skill needed to develop healthy, balanced relationships with others. This takes time and practice, and children should be encouraged and praised with every attempt. Clearly, having adults model this skill at home and school will directly benefit children.

- Finally, learning how to appropriately express what they are feeling contributes to healthy development. Once they become adept at this skill, children can not only take care of their own emotional health, but can use these skills to help others.

Increased emotional intelligence has been shown to increase student motivation and achievement; promote creativity, innovation, and leadership; improve relationships; increase tolerance of differences, and contribute to psychological and mental well-being. Most of us would agree these are good things not only for our children, but for people of all ages.

A Few Resources:

Nurturing Emotional Literacy by Peter Sharp
Emotional Intelligence by Daniel Goleman
Emotional Literacy: Intelligence with a Heart by Claude Steiner

Christmastime in our Church year goes from Christmas eve until January 9th, the Baptism of the Lord. During that time we celebrate Jesus' birth, the visit of the wise men (Magi) and revelation of Jesus' coming for all God's children (Epiphany), the feasts of the Holy Family, Mary, the Mother of God, Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist and the beginning of his preaching.

During this time we watch Jesus grow up as a boy in Nazareth, helping and learning from his foster father, Joseph, to be a craftsman. In their home, under the guidance of Mary and Joseph, Jesus learned his Jewish prayers and observed the Sabbath. When he spoke in the synagogue they were amazed at his understanding of the Scriptures. "Holy Family help us to pass on our faith in the home."

The Anita Moreland Foundation was begun to help BCS provide counseling and psychological assistance for people who would otherwise be unable to pay for services. For more information contact: *Benedictine Counseling Services* below.

To contact *Benedictine Counseling Services*,
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