

Parent Seminar 2010 (1)
Understanding the Emotional Needs and Characteristics of Children
家長專題講座二零一零 (上)
了解孩子的情緒需要和特質

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During infancy, parents know about their children's needs, whether they are hungry or sick, through their cry. As children grow, their emotions become more complex, then how can their parents comprehend their needs? The Center hosted a talk "Understanding the Emotional Needs and Characteristics of Children" on May 21, 2010 to offer parents more information on how to better understand the emotional needs of their children.

We are honored to have Mrs. Eva Sum, a well-known educational psychologist, as our speaker. Mrs. Sum is a registered educational psychologist from the Hong Kong Psychologist Society, and she is currently a teaching consultant at the Faculty of Psychology of The University of Hong Kong, focuses on courses in educational psychology. Before joining the University, she worked in the educational psychology services team at Education Bureau. She has rich front line experiences, and she supports many primary and secondary schools in providing assistance to solve students' learning, emotional, or behavioral problems. She pointed out that "it is very important to understand children's emotional needs, especially gifted students, as their emotion is more sensitive than the ordinary children. We need to put in more effort in teaching them how to deal with their emotion. We need to spend more time, patience, and acceptance in order to communicate with children more effectively emotionally."

嬰孩時期，父母從孩子的哭聲去了解孩子的需要，孩子是肚子餓，還是身體感不適；隨著孩子漸漸長大，情緒也跟著變得複雜，父母又能怎樣去了解他們的需要呢？為了讓父母更能了解孩子在情感上的需要，本中心特意於本年五月廿一日安排了一場名為「了解孩子的情緒需要和特質」的講座，希望能為家長提供更多資訊。

是次講座，中心有幸邀得著名教育心理學家沈李以慧女士為主講嘉賓。沈女士為香港心理學會註冊教育心理學家，現時在香港大學心理學系任職教學顧問，專注教育心理課程。在香港大學工作前，她曾於香港教育局教育心理服務組服務，擁有豐富前線經驗，支援多間中、小學，幫助學生解決學習、情緒或行為上遇到的困難。她指出「了解孩子的情緒需要是重要的，特別是資優的孩子，他們的情緒比一般孩子敏感，要教導他們處理情緒，要付出更多的心思。有效地與孩子在情感上的溝通，需要多花一點時間，多一點接納及多一點耐心。」

Getting together everyday

In Hong Kong, parents need to go to work so they have less time to spend with their children. "A study reported that, excluding the time that parents spend in studying with and disciplining their children, the time that fathers spend chatting with their children is less than 6 minutes in average. Mrs. Sum said, "An effective conversation doesn't take long, 5 minutes a day is good enough. Parents can try to set a "get together time" everyday. In these 5 minutes, you focus your attention solely on your children without being disturbed by anything else. When your children notice that you are not being disturbed by anything else while you are chatting with them, they will understand you value the time you spend with them. Apart from chatting in these 5 minutes, parents can also read with the children, take a walk, or play chess. The frequency of this "get together time" is more important than the duration. Five minutes everyday is more effective than 50 minutes per week in one session."

We might not notice that we might send some inconsistent message in our tone or manner of speaking, body movement, and wording when we talk to people. Mrs. Sum pointed out "when we talk to kids, we must be careful of our tone and body language. For example, a father said to his son with a fed up tone "I really want to know how your day at school was today." The level of impatience he expressed in his line is worse than the literal meaning. And kids actually picked up the tone rather than the words which leads to their confusion."

A mother once shared with a colleague at our Center, "My kid almost never talked to me, sometimes he is mad at me with no reason." From our experience, if kids do not want to talk to you, you can not force them. The more you pressure them, the more withdrawn they are. Just like those children that joined our activities in the past, at the beginning they did not know our staff well. We always took the initiative to share our feeling with them while engaging in the activities and built a trusting relationship, and the children would gradually open up their heart and soul. Parents can first ask themselves, "Why my children do not want to talk to me? How can I encourage them to communicate with me?" Mrs. Sum suggested, "A good relationship takes time to develop."

每天一小聚

在忙碌的香港，父母都要上班，能與孩子接近的時間較少。「曾經有一個研究指出，扣除與子女溫習、管教的時間，香港父親陪伴子女聊天的時間，平均少於六分鐘。」沈太說。「有效的對話，不用花很多時間，每天撥出五分鐘已足夠。家長可試著設定一個『小聚時間』，每天與孩子相處五分鐘，這段時間你的注意力完全在孩子身上，不受外界事物干擾。當孩子看到你因為和他傾談而拒絕干擾時，他會了解你很重視與他相處。這五分鐘除了聊天外，家長也可以多花心思地運用，例如：一起閱讀故事書、散步或下棋。『小聚時間』的次數比時間長短重要，每天一次五分鐘比每星期一次五十分鐘更有效果。」

平常我們可能沒察覺，原來與別人對話時，聲調語氣、身體語言和用詞很多時都會傳遞了不一致的訊息。沈太指出：「與孩子談心時，我們要注意說話的語調及自己的身體語言。例如一位父親以厭煩的語氣說：『我真想聽聽你今天在學校的事』，話中不耐煩的程度超過字面的內容，而孩子比較相信語調，這樣會令孩子產生困惑。」

曾經一位母親與本中心同事分享：「我的兒子幾乎不跟我講話，有時候更會對我不理的生氣。」依從我們的經驗，孩子若不想和你溝通，也不能強迫他，越是強迫，他就會越是退縮。就如參與中心活動的孩子，起初他們跟工作人員也是互不認識，我們透過活動中不斷主動與他們分享自己的感受，建立互信的關係，孩子會慢慢放開自己的心靈。家長可以先自問：「為什麼孩子不願跟我對話？我怎樣鼓勵他主動和我溝通？」依沈太建議：「良好的關係需要時間來建立，不能期望孩子立刻就和你完全溝通，所以每天需撥出五分鐘來親親孩子心。」

We can not expect children to communicate with you immediately. Therefore we need to allocate 5 minutes everyday to get close to the children's heart."

Accept the emotions, find out the reason behind it, and help them grow

"We need to discipline the children's behavior and teach them how to handle their emotions instead of restraining their right to express themselves. If emotions cannot be expressed in the right way, the most common alternative way is self-harm." We can see what Mrs. Sum referred to on daily news about injuries or death led by certain family issues. This is because family members cannot channel negative emotions in the correct way, thus violent incident is caused. So we need to learn how to handle emotions from young as it is not an innate ability.

One day I saw a lady with her daughter who is around 6 years old, she was arguing with her husband, and the little girl aside cried loudly. Mrs. Sum mentioned in the talk, "The reason why children have negative emotions maybe because they do not know how to express themselves, they may feel being neglected, they are jealous, or they are affected by parents' emotions." That little girl saw their parents argued and didn't know what was happening nor express herself in words. So she could only cry out loud to express her uneasy feeling. We can see that parents' emotion or the atmosphere of family is a major factor that directly affects children. When parents argue, children become panic. In their emotional development, their emotions of being unstable, irresolute and hesitant, and insecure may easily appear. Mrs. Sum said, "Parents have their right to have their emotions, so do the children. However, parents must first amend their behavior and be able to control their emotions better than their children, so that they can become their children's role model. It is reasonable for parents to argue occasionally, but they should avoid arguing in front of their children."

In general, when children appear to have negative emotions, their parents usually blame them for losing their temper. According to the talk, the proper way to handle children's negative emotions is to help them find

接納情緒，找出原因，協助成長

「我們要管教孩子的行為，教導他們處理情緒，而不是抑制他們抒發情緒的權利。若情緒無法以正確途徑抒發，最常見的其他途徑就是自身傷害。」沈太所言是我們可以從日常新聞經常看到一些家庭糾紛而導致人命傷亡的案件，就是因為家中成員無法利用正確的途徑疏導負面情緒，因而引致暴力事件出現，所以怎樣處理情緒，是需要從小學習，並不是與生俱來。

有一次我在路上看到一名婦人攜著年若六歲的女兒與丈夫突然在路上吵架，小女孩只在旁大聲的哭泣。沈太在講座中提及：「孩子負面情緒的出現，可能是未懂得表達、感到被忽略、妒忌，或受父母的情緒所影響。」那位小女孩看到父母吵架，不知發生什麼事，又不懂用言語來表達，結果只能放聲大哭，以抒發自己內心的不安。從而可見，父母的情緒或家庭的氣氛是直接影響孩子的主要因素。當父母吵架，孩子會產生恐懼，如此日後孩子的情感發展上，容易出現情緒不穩定、優柔寡斷、缺乏安全感等現象。沈太說：「父母親有權擁有自己的情感，孩子亦是；不過父母親必先修正自己的行為，而且要比孩子更能控制自己的情緒，作為孩子成長的榜樣。雙親吵架偶爾出現，但盡量避免出現於孩子面前。」

總括而言，當孩子出現負面情緒，一般家長都會責怪孩子發脾氣，從講座中所述，正確處理孩子負面情緒的方法，是要幫助他們找出情緒的根源，並加以協助。就上述例子，小女孩是因為父母吵架才大哭，這是家庭因素，父母避免在孩子前吵架，或當孩子經歷此事後，父母可以作出適當的輔導，以遊戲或說故事方式，解釋給孩子知道，父母因為突然生氣作有這樣的反應，來協助孩子日後的情感發展。

out where the origin is and solve the problem. As the above example, the little girl cried because her parents were arguing, this is a family factor. Parents should avoid arguing in front of their children, or after children experienced such incident, parents can counsel the child in a suitable way, explain to them through a game or by telling a story that parents act like so because they are in anger. This would help the children's emotional development in the future.

Learn from reading

Mrs. Sum suggested that in order to improve children's ability to express their emotion, the most effective way is to maximize the vocabulary that they can use to express their feelings. Reading story books can not only enrich children's language skills and also help them express emotion as well as bridging the communication between adults and children. Mrs. Sum explained, "There are many story books about emotion management, and these stories usually include unhappy scenes happened in daily life. Parents can choose some of these books which are suitable for kids. If children encounter problems in social life, we can choose stories with some similar situation for children to read. In the process of reading with the children, we can discuss with them, let them think of how the character of the story feels, and ask them if they can give examples of when they have had similar feelings in daily life."

Lastly, Mrs. Sum reaffirmed, "Apart from expressing negative emotions and understanding how children feel through reading, we can also cultivate children's habit of listening patiently. While discussing with your children, they will talk about their own feeling, express their opinion regarding the topic of discussion, and seek opportunity to express their agreement or objection. Managing negative emotion effectively is to know how to express oneself. And of course, it is most important to have support from parents. Parents should be a role model as well as setting goals with their children and discovering their strength together."

從閱讀中學習

沈太建議，增進孩子表達情緒的能力，最有效的方法就是增加孩子表達情緒的字彙。閱讀故事書，除了可以增加孩子的語文能力外，還可以幫助孩子抒發情緒，更能在成人和兒童溝通上發揮橋樑的作用。她解釋：「坊間有很多關於情緒管理的故事書，故事中通常包含日常生活遇到的不愉快事件，家長可以選擇一些適合孩子的故事，若孩子在社交上出現問題，可以選擇一些相類似的故事，從閱讀的過程中，與孩子共同討論，讓孩子揣摩故事中角色的心情感受，並問問孩子在日常生活中，舉例說明自己何時曾有過這種感覺。」

最後，沈太重申：「透過閱讀除了能抒發不愉快情緒和了解孩子的內心外，更可以培養孩子耐心聆聽的習慣。孩子在與你討論的過程中，孩子除了會說出自己感受外，更自然會針對談論的話題，說出自己的意見，會尋找機會表示自己贊同或反對。懂得表達自己，才能有效地處理負面情緒。當然，最重要的還是得到家長的支持。家長應該以身作則，與孩子共同訂立目標，一起發掘孩子所長。」