

Dear Families/Caregivers,

As humans, we have the capacity to feel a myriad of emotions. They drive our feelings, thoughts, and behaviors and impact our self-esteem and social interactions. As teens mature, they become more aware of how emotions impact their behavior and affect their bodies and their relationships.

We have been learning to recognize the negative effects of emotional avoidance and practicing strategies for accepting and expressing our emotions. Just like we can't avoid physical pain to improve our physical strength and endurance, we cannot avoid emotional pain to become emotionally stronger and better able to manage our emotions. All emotions are an important and natural part of life and everyone will experience every emotion at some point. Trying to avoid unwanted emotions is not only impossible, it is also bad for us.

We learned these 4 steps for emotional acceptance:

- Pause and identify the feeling.
- Identify the trigger.
- Accept the feeling.
- Express the feeling.

Here are a couple of ways to help your teen develop his or her emotional intelligence:

- Talk with your teen about his or her emotions during the week. What emotions does he or she try to avoid? Help your child to accept negative emotions and effectively manage them.
- Look at your own emotional intelligence. Do you avoid certain emotions? Are you able to accept and appropriately express your emotions? Model strong emotional intelligence for your teen and talk about strategies that work well for you to deal with negative emotions.

When you view your emotions as a source of information, you are better equipped to accept and manage them.