

Many researchers consider the growth of emotion regulation in children as fundamental to the development of social competence (Cole, Loughheed, & Ram, 2018; Cole & Hollenstein, 2018; Perry & Calkins, 2018). Emotion regulation can be conceptualized as an important component of self-regulation or of executive function. Recall that executive function is increasingly thought to be a key concept in describing the young child's higher-level cognitive functioning (Cheng & others, 2018; Liu & others, 2018; Muller & others, 2017; Schmitt & others, 2017). Cybelle Raver and her colleagues (Blair, 2017; Blair & Raver, 2012, 2015; Blair, Raver, & Finegood, 2016; Raver & others, 2011, 2012, 2013) are using interventions, such as increasing caregiver emotional expressiveness, to improve young children's emotion regulation and reduce behavior problems in Head Start families.



What are some differences between emotion-coaching and emotion-dismissing parents?
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Emotion-Coaching and Emotion-Dismissing Parents Parents can play an important role in helping young children regulate their emotions (Bendezu & others, 2018; Norona & Baker, 2017; Quinones-Camacho & Davis, 2018). Depending on how they talk with their children about emotion, parents can be described as taking an *emotion-coaching* or an *emotion-dismissing* approach (Gottman, 2018). The distinction between these approaches is most evident in the way the parent deals with the child's negative emotions (anger, frustration, sadness, and so on). *Emotion-coaching parents* monitor their children's emotions, view their children's negative emotions as opportunities for teaching, assist them in labeling emotions, and coach them in how to deal effectively with emotions. In contrast, *emotion-dismissing parents* view their role as to deny, ignore, or change negative emotions. Emotion-coaching parents interact with their children in a less rejecting manner, use more scaffolding and praise, and are more nurturant than are emotion-dismissing parents. Moreover, children of emotion-coaching parents are better at soothing themselves when they get upset, are more effective in regulating their negative affect, focus their attention better, and have fewer behavior problems than do children of emotion-dismissing parents.

Researchers have found that fathers' emotion coaching is related to children's social competence (Baker, Fenning, & Crnic, 2011) and that mothers' emotion coaching is linked to less oppositional behavior (Dunsmore, Booker, & Ollendick, 2013).

Parents' knowledge of their children's emotional world can help them to guide their children's emotional development and teach them how to cope effectively with problems (Bendezu & others, 2018; Hurrell, Houwing, & Hudson, 2017). For example, one study found that mothers' knowledge about what distresses and comforts their children predicts the children's coping, empathy, and prosocial behavior (Vinik, Almas, & Grusec, 2011).

Regulation of Emotion and Peer Relations Emotions play a strong role in determining the success of a child's peer relationships (Smetana & Ball, 2018). Specifically, the ability to modulate one's emotions is an important skill that benefits children in their relationships with peers. Moody and emotionally negative children are more likely to experience rejection by peers, whereas emotionally positive children are more popular. For example, a recent study found that young children who were more skilled in emotion regulation were more popular with their peers (Nakamichi, 2018).

Moral Development

Unlike a crying infant, a screaming 5-year-old is likely to be considered responsible for making a fuss. The parents may worry about whether the 5-year-old is a "bad" child. Although there are some who view children as innately good, many developmental psychologists believe that just as parents help their children become good readers, musicians, or athletes, parents must nurture goodness and help their children develop morally.

moral development Development that involves thoughts, feelings, and actions regarding rules and conventions about what people should do in their interactions with other people.

heteronomous morality The first stage of moral development in Piaget's theory, occurring from approximately 4 to 7 years of age. Justice and rules are conceived of as unchangeable properties of the world, beyond the control of people.

autonomous morality The second stage of moral development in Piaget's theory, displayed by older children (about 10 years of age and older). The child becomes aware that rules and laws are created by people and that in judging an action, one should consider the actor's intentions as well as the consequences.

Moral development involves the development of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors regarding rules and conventions about what people should do in their interactions with other people. Major developmental theories have focused on different aspects of moral development (Gray & Graham, 2018; Hoover & others, 2018; Killen & Dahl, 2018; Narváez, 2017a, b, 2018; Turiel & Gingo, 2017).

Moral Feelings

Feelings of anxiety and guilt are central to the account of moral development provided by Freud's psychoanalytic theory. According to Freud, children attempt to reduce anxiety, avoid punishment, and maintain parental affection by identifying with their parents and internalizing their standards of right and wrong, thereby developing the *superego*, the moral element of the personality.

Freud's ideas are not backed by research, but guilt certainly can motivate moral behavior. Other emotions, however, also contribute to moral development, including positive feelings. One important example is *empathy*, or responding to another person's feelings with an emotion that echoes those feelings (Kim & Kochanska, 2017).

Infants have the capacity for some purely empathic responses, but empathy often requires the ability to discern another person's emotional states, or what is called *perspective taking*. Learning how to identify a wide range of emotional states in others, and to anticipate what kinds of action will improve another person's emotional state, help to advance children's moral development (Thompson, 2015).

Also, connections between emotions can occur and the connections may influence children's development. For example, in a recent study, participants' guilt proneness combined with their empathy predicted an increase in prosocial behavior (Torstveit, Sutterlin, & Lugo, 2016).

Moral Reasoning

Interest in how children think about moral issues was stimulated by Piaget (1932), who extensively observed and interviewed children from ages 4 through 12. Piaget watched children play marbles to learn how they used and thought about the game's rules. He also asked children about ethical issues—thrift, lies, punishment, and justice, for example. He concluded that children go through two distinct stages in how they think about morality:

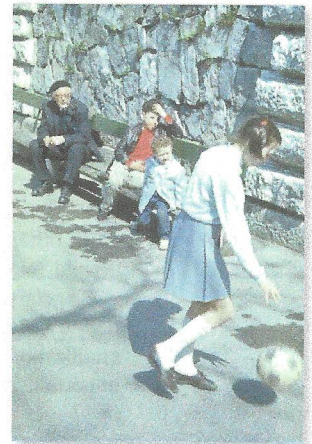
- From ages 4 to 7, children display **heteronomous morality**, the first stage of moral development in Piaget's theory. Children think of justice and rules as unchangeable properties, beyond the control of people.
- From ages 7 to 10, children are in a period of transition, showing some features of the first stage of moral reasoning and some of the second stage, autonomous morality.
- From about age 10 and older, children show **autonomous morality**. They become aware that rules and laws are created by people, and in judging an action they consider the actor's intentions as well as the action's consequences.



How Would You...?

As a health-care professional, how would you expect a child in the heteronomous stage of moral development to judge the behaviors of a doctor who unintentionally caused pain to a child during a medical procedure?

Because young children are heteronomous moralists, they judge the rightness or goodness of behavior by considering its consequences, not the intentions of the actor. For example, to the heteronomous moralist, breaking twelve cups accidentally is worse than breaking one cup intentionally. As children develop into moral autonomists, intentions become more important than consequences.



Piaget extensively observed and interviewed 4- to 12-year-old children as they played games to learn how they used and thought about the games' rules.

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