These skills, this understanding of values that help us build meaningful relationships with those around us, are part of a field referred to as social-emotional learning. There is increasing research that non-academic skills relating to kids’ ability to regulate their emotions and interact with others help them succeed in and out of school.

To help boost your child’s social-emotional skills, I’ve selected a list of my favorite attributes (or human superpowers) from the Essence Glossary™ co-created with Dr. Kristie Pretti-Frontczak. The Essence Glossary™ is a listing of 32 social-emotional attributes we’ve found to be essential to learning, overall health, and human well-being.
1. Adaptability

How we define it: Openness to changing conditions

How to start a conversation about it: “What is something unexpected that happened to you last year? How could you have dealt with it better?”

What you can do to promote it: Next time your child is witnessing you confront a change (big or small, expected or unexpected), point out what you are doing to cope. For example, if she is with you in the car when you get lost, talk her through how you are going to find a new route, and show her how the extra time in the car can be used for something fun — like a favorite song.

2. Attention

How we define it: Selective and purposeful direction of the mind

How to start a conversation about it: “Did you notice the sunset today?”

What you can do to promote it: Because so much of our days are spent on autopilot, it is important to stop and notice the little things — like nature, sounds, or our own thoughts and emotions. You can get your child to exercise her ability to pay attention by having her describe how she is using her five senses to perceive her surroundings.
3. Bravery

How we define it: Ability to overcome fear and uncertainty by taking action

How to start a conversation about it: “When you are doing something you feel is scary, what kinds of thoughts help you get through that moment?”

What you can do to promote it: Point out moments of bravery that happen around you, whether they happen on a TV show or in your neighborhood. You can also share a memory with your child about the last time you had to confront a fear.

4. Civility

How we define it: Use of respectful words and actions towards others

How to start a conversation about it: “Please don’t be afraid to tell me if I’m ever rude to you.”

What you can do to promote it: The words we use and our tone matter. Focus on the way that you communicate your disagreement in front of others and your child is sure to learn from your example.
5. Empathy

How we define it: Ability to intuit and sense what others may be feeling

How to start a conversation about it: “How can you tell if someone is sad?”

What you can do to promote it: Be intentional about sharing your own feelings and emotions at home so that your child can see that even grown-ups feel different things all the time. You can encourage your child to intuit how others may be feeling with thought exercises. For example, pick a character from a recent book and ask your child to imagine how that character may have felt in a given scene.

6. Forgiveness

How we define it: Acknowledgment of wrongdoing without seeking revenge or punishment

How to start a conversation about it: “How do you feel when someone says they are sorry for hurting you? How do you feel when you say you are sorry to others?”

What you can do to promote it: Share a story about a time you forgave someone who hurt you and what you learned from the experience. Then, ask your child to think about a time she forgave someone even though she was hurt by that person’s actions.

7. Gratitude

How we define it: Expression of thanks for things given or benefited from

How to start a conversation about it: “What are you grateful for today?”

What you can do to promote it: Post a simple gratitude list on your refrigerator door or dry erase board in a common area of your home. Encourage every member of your family to add an item once a day.
8. Honesty

How we define it: Expression of one's own truth

How to start a conversation about it: “When was the last time it was difficult for you to tell the truth about something? What about that situation was difficult?”

What you can do to promote it: Practice sharing honest observations about yourself (e.g., “I notice that when I do X, Y happens”).

9. Humor

How we define it: Playful and lighthearted approach to life

How to start a conversation about it: “How do you feel when you make other people laugh?”

What you can do to promote it: Share jokes with one another or watch funny shows or movies together. It’s also helpful to show your child that you can laugh at yourself; so next time you do something inadvertently silly, teach her that having a giggle at yourself can make embarrassing moments easier.
10. Patience

**How we define it:** Calm and steady approach despite discomfort

**How to start a conversation about it:** “I keep my cool when something is upsetting by doing X. What do you do?”

**What you can do to promote it:** Encourage “family silent time” for five minutes a few times a week — for best results, practice daily. This will teach your child to be able to appreciate stillness and develop her patience.

11. Resilience

**How we define it:** Capacity to recover from adversity

**How to start a conversation about it:** “When is the last time you had to try something a few times before you got the hang of doing it?”

**How to start a conversation about it:** Make a list of five difficult things you’ve overcome, then share this list with your child. Have your child do the same.

By modeling and encouraging your child to practice these skills, you are teaching her to integrate a major aspect of human intelligence — social-emotional awareness. In doing so, you open a new gateway of connections and enable her to experience what it means to be fully human. We need more human superheroes in our homes and communities; we need teachers, caregivers, and other adults who are sensitive, courageous, aware, and therefore naturally moved to take the necessary actions to co-create nurturing environments where the next generation of human superheroes can emerge.