# CHAPTER 2
# THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILD, EMOTIONS AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

## 1. THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILD

### 1.1 Introduction

The primary school child's age ranges between seven and twelve years (compare Le Roux and De Klerk, 2003:23; Mwamwenda, 1996:353). According to the researcher this age range depends on the emotional maturity of a child. Some children start to move over to adolescence during their eleventh or twelfth year and others are still in their middle school age phase during these years. Age is thus only a rough indication of the period in which a child's next step in the developmental ladder may occur. This phase is a little more mature than the previous developmental phase of late childhood.

In the following sections the primary school child will be discussed using different elements of his development. His physical development, development on emotional and moral levels and cognitive development will be covered. Herewith the researcher also covered the influence of the needs of the primary school child and the fulfilment thereof.

The researcher discussed all these aspects of development as parts of a whole, where the whole is bigger than the sum of its parts. The different components of the primary school child's self are interrelated and change in one part will have an influence on the others. This holism will be discussed using the research of different theorists, including the Gestalt theory.

The child's emotional intelligence and the improvement thereof is the main focus of the following sections. This focus will be kept within the framework of Gestalt theory and a cultural sensitive approach.

## 1.2 Physical development

The child's physical body develops towards a more mature, stronger and independent physique than in his younger years. He gets permanent teeth, the hair becomes coarser, the nose grows larger and the child is less vulnerable in terms of health. Children now have tremendous energy, which they use for activities like running, dancing, swimming, and working at home etcetera. (Mwamwenda, 1996:61)

## 1.3 Emotional development

The child is now in the emotional developmental phase of industry versus inferiority (7-12 years) according to Erikson (in Mwamwenda, 1996:353). For successful personality development in this phase, the child needs to experience success in performing tasks. The child will then develop a sense of competence and industry. The child should thus achieve adequately in his schoolwork and develop the necessary skills to relate with others in a meaningful and acceptable way.

The child develops an interest in learning and to work with tools. If he succeeds he will develop a sense of industry, whereas failure results in feelings of inferiority.

(Mwamwenda, 1996:353)

Sullivan in Mwamwenda (1996:359) refers to this phase as the juvenile era. The child also develops a special need for some playmates. The school provides a good environment to fulfil in the child's needs now that could not be fulfilled at home anymore.

The child learn the following necessary skills for this developmental phase at school:

He adjusts to a new environment of peers and teachers. He learns to adjust to rules and a punishment-and-reward system. He learns to cope with anxiety in a more sophisticated manner and the self-system develops further. He also gets to know the reality of competition and compromise. Warm, positive teachers serve as good role models and

harsh, rude teachers can lead to maladjustment. The parents are now not flawless anymore – the teacher tends to be the preferred authority figure in many cases.

The child will thus now learn to relate to others on interpersonal level, learns to understand his own interpersonal needs and how to satisfy those. (Mwamwenda, 1996:359)

According to Newman and Newman (1987:298) team play is a new dimension added to the quality of the child's play in this phase – a sense of team and personal success begins to evolve now. The child learns the following in team play:

- Subordination of personal goals to that of the group
- The principle of the division of labour – not doing everything himself
- Competition – to win and to loose

Newman and Newman (1987:301) also state two important social consequences of team play namely, in-group and out-group attitudes. In-group attitudes include the value of team goals and to contribute to this, giving up some personal goals for the team, receiving feedback and help with his own skills, learning the importance of their own roles and values to the bigger system, and finally the feelings of satisfaction and frustration when the team wins or looses.

Out-group attitudes mainly incorporate the feelings of antagonism towards the other team – the enemy. The child learns the win-or-loose situation. They learn to try their best to win the other team and that it is unethical to assist the other team.

The child's self-concept and self-image will therefore greatly depend on his success with tasks as well as with interpersonal relationships. (Newman & Newman, 1987:301) According to the researcher, this phase is a very vulnerable time for the child's self-image. Children might act in unexpected ways to get attention and to be accepted. Children with a bigger sense of failure might be worse than those with little sense of failure. According to the researcher, the sense of failure will be present at times in nearly all children's reality by now. How to handle failure is therefore also an important skill to master now.

Seifert, Hoffnung and Hoffnung (2000:300) list five challenges, which are included in the psychosocial development of the primary school child. It resembles the theories above (compare Erikson in Mwamwenda, 1996:353-359; Newman & Newman, 1987:298-301). The researcher finds Seifert, *et al.'s* (2000:300) list of challenges to be a good summary of the paragraphs above. This list includes the following five challenges: knowing who you are, wanting to achieve, forming good family relationships, good peer relationships and performing in school. These five challenges are, according to the researcher, an integral part of the skills to be improved when emotional intelligence is improved. These challenges focus on self-awareness, a good self-image and self-confidence and good interpersonal relationships (3.5, Improving emotional intelligence). It is therefore very important to focus on the development of emotional intelligence in this developmental phase, as the skills to be developed resemble the most important emotional or psychosocial developmental milestones in this phase.

This is a very important phase as essential roles and attitudes of adult life begin to take shape in this phase namely, a person's orientation toward friendships / interpersonal relationships and work (compare Kiura, Gitau & Kiura, 1999:35-36; Newman & Newman, 1987:313; Seifert, *et al.,* 2000:300).

Le Roux and De Klerk (2003:23) also list the following aspects of emotional development during the middle school years:

Children like to play in groups using specific rules. They like to be part of the group. This will contribute to the fulfilment of the child's belonging needs according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. (Compare Maree, 2004:85; Newman & Newman, 1987:349.)

Children also experience times of heightened emotionality. They tend to express their emotions rather than to control it and can name emotions much easier than before. (Le Roux & De Klerk, 2003:23) This statement also shows the need for a better level of emotional intelligence where children are taught how to effectively identify, express and control their emotions.

Le Roux and De Klerk (2003:23) also mention that children flourish on acceptance and unconditional positive regard during this phase. The researcher is of the opinion that such emotional boosting should be part of all the exercises of the current programme.
This developmental phase might be a little more difficult as children need to work harder to understand and control their emotions. (Le Roux & De Klerk, 2003:23) Attention to emotional intelligence skills is thus very important now.

According to Vermeulen (1999:92), emotional development happens in five stages. If you learn the lessons from all your experiences, then growth will take place. These stages take place at certain ages, but it also depends on the individual's growth. Some people mature fast, others get stuck and never reach the final stages. The researcher discussed the first stage in more detail, because the primary school child might still be in this stage and provided a summary of the next stage. Some children in their late primary school years might already reach stage 2 – rebellion (teenage years). The other stages were listed for better comprehension of emotional development through all life stages. Successful completion of the first stage will enable the child to complete following stages with less difficulty.

**Stage 1 – acceptance (early stage of life - childhood)**
This stage includes the primary school child. During the early stages of life the emotional brain dominates existence. Children accept what they are told and repeated messages are believed as the truth. This forms the beginning of the child's self-image and world-view, the baseline of who he believes he is. The child also learns what impact he can have on society. In this stage the child's opinions of himself are not his own. (Vermeulen, 1999:93)
The impact of this on the need for skills for a healthy emotional intelligence level for primary school children and the adults in their environment is apparent in the following quote from Vermeulen (1999:93): "If we're repeatedly told that we're gifted, special and lovable, we'll act that way… if others tell us that we're stupid, lazy and problematic, we'll prove these opinions correct too. Because we cannot yet discern about the information we receive, we act like sponges absorbing everything around us. If the water

is clean, we grow up in a healthy environment. If it's muddied with helplessness or cynicism, our young minds will be polluted with the same beliefs".

Children in this stage model themselves on the adults around them and their behaviour will form their early patterns. Children will also learn to hope or despair about their future from significant others. Children like to be around adults because they learn valuable tools to apply in their own lives in their own childlike way. Parents with a healthy self-image will carry this over to their children.

When children are arrested in this stage by cynical, critical parents, they tend to stay in this stage. They will deal with adult demands in ways that are successful in childhood. The following is a list of adult symptoms that might show that someone is stuck in stage one:

blaming, critical, depressed, emotional hijackings, helpless, manipulative, pessimistic, passive aggressive, unrealistic demands, unresourceful and victim behaviour. (Vermeulen, 1999:94)

If a person experiences some of these childlike behaviours, according to Vermeulen (1999:95), it means that he didn't learn from his childhood experiences and lack some vital knowledge to be able to move on.

This knowledge includes taking responsibility for himself by gaining control over his mind. Negative messages from adults in earlier years only exist in a person's mind and he can change it by changing his thought patterns (Möller, 1990). This is related to the concept of responsibility in Gestalt theory. (Compare Jarosewitsch, 1995:1; Yontef 1993.)

**Stage 2 – rebellion (teenage years)**

When a person learns that he hasn't been told the truth about himself, he starts to question theses messages. This is the rebellion stage, typical of the teenage years. This is healthy because teenagers then test their own thinking and they get more independent. Teens start to question their self-image and world-view. Healthy rebellion is therefore a sign of a child's positive development. According to Vermeulen (1999:96) rebellion shows the child how he can operate in his world. People, who do not experience this stage at all, seldom have a good idea of who they really are.

Some people never leave the rebellion stage and still use habits, which worked in their teenage years, but not anymore in adult life. (Vermeulen, 1999:97)

The following stages are:
**Stage 3 – transparency** (adult years, from late twenties or early thirties)
**Stage 4 – contribution** (mid-life, in the forties)
**Stage 5 – wisdom** (last stages of life)
Vermeulen (1999:99-105)

The researcher summarises emotional development of primary school children as follows:
They build on their self-image and form their view of themselves through success in tasks, messages from important others, interpersonal relationships with peers on individual and group base and relationships with authority figures who's opinions are seen as the truth.
The positive influence of adults, teaching children in the primary school emotional intelligence skills, is thus of vital importance for their growth into adulthood. Children now manage life on a more complex emotional level. They therefore need to work on their own self-image, healthy interpersonal relationships and success with tasks like schoolwork, sport and hobbies. The researcher can thus conclude here that children can grow into very effective, happy and successful adults if they learn to be emotionally intelligent. In later sections on emotions and emotional intelligence the value of this for healthy growth and the ability to fulfil the named tasks for adulthood will be discussed.

### 1.4 Moral development

According to Leman (2001:195) morals are social rules that shape and guide our interactions with others and our behaviour towards them. Children move into the adult world of rules and principles through their moral development. Morality is learned through a relationship with the child's parents or primary caregivers (Leman, 2001:197),

a feeling of connectedness to society (Durkheim in Leman, 2001:198) and through the child's own moral development (Piaget and Kohlberg in Leman, 2001:198-199,203), a cognitive process. Kohlberg in Leman (2001:203) placed even more emphasis on the child's own cognitive development as a bases for moral reasoning than Piaget who saw moral reasoning as grounded in social relationships between people. Kohlberg (in Leman, 2001:203) reasoned that children develop moral understanding through resolving cognitive conflicts in their minds. The researcher finds in this also the interconnectedness of the human as a whole. Morality or social reasoning is as closely connected to emotions as it is to cognition. As morality is partly social rules that have to be learned, it is part of emotional intelligence, which includes both intra- and interpersonal intelligences (Schmidt, 2001:8-9).

Piaget (compare Piaget in Leman, 2001:199; Piaget in Mwamwenda, 1996:149) made the following contribution towards our knowledge about the moral development of a child although his most popular contribution was towards cognitive development. Piaget divides moral development into two phases: before the age of ten – moral realism and after ten – co-operation.
The primary school child falls in the phase of developing from realism – morality as being externally made and imposed towards co-operation – to a more flexible view of rules, having the purpose to protect the rights of others.

Kohlberg sees moral development in three levels: pre-conventional (4-10 years), conventional level (adolescents and adults) and the post-conventional level (some adults) (compare Leman, 2001:204-205; Mwamwenda, 1996:150).

Barger (2000:1) lists the different stages within each level of moral reasoning and explains Kohlberg's levels and stages of moral reasoning as follows:

The **pre-conventional level** is generally found in elementary school.
During the first stage (Stage 1) people behave according to the norms told to them by parents, teachers etcetera. They obey because they fear punishment.

During the second stage (Stage 2) people view the right behaviour as that which is in one's best interests.

The **conventional level** is generally found in society.
During the first stage (Stage 3) of this level people seek what to do to gain the approval of others.
During the second stage (Stage 4) here people want to abide the law and respond to the obligations of duty.

The majority of adults never reach the **post-conventional level.**
Kohlberg states that the first stage of this level (Stage 5) involves an understanding of social mutuality and a sincere interest in the well being of others.
Although Kohlberg could never really get enough subjects to proof the existence of the second stage (Stage 6), he attempts to describe its attributes as follows: This stage is based on respect for universal principles and demands of individual conscience. He could unfortunately never really define this stage.
The following is a table to summarise the stages of moral development by Kohlberg (in Barger, 2000:1):

**Table 2.1: Kohlberg's stages of moral development**

| LEVEL | STAGE | SOCIAL ORIENTATION |
|---|---|---|
| Pre-conventional | 1 | Obedience and Punishment |
| | 2 | Individualism, Instrumentalism, and Exchange |
| Conventional | 3 | "Good boy/girl" |
| | 4 | Law and Order |
| Post-conventional | 5 | Social Contract |
| | 6 | Principled Conscience |

The primary school child generally falls into the pre-conventional category – good or bad depends on punishment or not and what is right makes you happy (Mwamwenda, 1996:150). Children in this category tend to live up to what is expected of them. They tend to maintain trust and respect if it conform to their social role. They follow rules if it does not conflict with other social duties. (Leman, 2001:205)
The primary school child might also develop to the next stage where he will do the right thing for the approval of others and acceptance by society.
Although the theory of social reasoning of Kohlberg (in Barger, 2000:1) seems very sensible it has been proofed that his research was not very culturally sensitive. His theory is much more applicable to a Western, male, educated population than a universal multicultural population. (Leman, 2001:207)

It is important to take the possible influence of culture on morality into account in the current study, as the intervention programme is culturally sensitive. The input of theorists such as Turiel (in Leman, 2001:207) is important because it involves the influence of culture on moral reasoning. According to Turiel (in Leman, 2001:207) moral rules are universal, thus true for all cultures and social contexts. He argues that through the process of moral development people separate conventional (culturally influenced) rules from moral rules, which are more universal. Children's ability to differentiate is accelerated by their experience of certain events or situations. According to Smetana (in Leman, 2001:207) children can make this distinction from as early as three years of age. It is thus reasoned that certain moral rules are universal and thus relatively free from the influence of culture. Other theorists like Shweder, Mahapatra, Miller and Bersoff (in Leman, 2001:208) proofed that morality is not really universal, but culturally determined. According to Leman's (2001:209) conclusion morality can be universalisable, but it has been proofed that no specific moral system is universal, because moral reasoning is so much influenced by culture.

Moral reasoning is thus the result of both cognitive reasoning and social influence. Leman (2001:110) summarises this as follows: "since morality is not just to do with our

understanding of rules but also our relationships with others it is hard to make sense of moral thinking outside of any social context".

The researcher summarises the primary school child's morality as follows: He bases moral decisions on what is expected of him by society, not to get punished and to gain other people's approval. Whatever is seen as moral will be influenced by the child's culture. In a culturally sensitive programme, like the current study, the latter statement is an important notion to consider. Children from different cultures considered different things as morally acceptable than others. It is thus important that the programme focus on increasing emotional intelligence and not moral values. Although the latter should be the case, cultural sensitivity include the consideration of culture, which is partly a socially learned process (Chapter 3, CULTURE). The connection between culture and morality is discussed in more depth in chapter three (Chapter 3, 1.4.6 Culture and morality). The researcher concludes here that the current programme is sensitive to culture and therefore also to the socially learned attributes of morality. This programme attempted to improve emotional intelligence without directly attempting to change moral behaviour or cultural attributes.

Although this is the case, Yontef (1993:11) states that, according to Gestalt therapy, people are responsible for moral choices. In Gestalt therapy people are helped to discover what is moral according to their own choices and values. Should people not make their own moral choice and thus not establish clear moral values, they experience problems to distinguish between figure and ground - that which is important to the person is the figure, it stands out, the rest is the ground (compare Yontef, 1993:13; Zinker, 1977:92,93).

The researcher therefore states in this study that morals were not taught, but emotional intelligence was increased, so that the children have a better ability to choose what is moral or not and to value these choices.

## 1.5 Cognitive development

### 1.5.1 Introduction

The following paragraphs cover cognition of the primary school child as a holistic being. It is clear from these discussions that cognition is interrelated with emotions, the physical body and behaviour.

### 1.5.2 The Piagetian theories of cognitive development

Piaget proposes a theory of cognitive development stating that children move through specific phases of cognitive development with very specific thinking skills present in each phase. Transitions between each phase occur at roughly the same ages. According to Piagetian theories cognitive development takes place irrespective of the cultural influences of the child's environment. Piagetian theories and the Neo-Piagetian theories both claim that children's thinking is influenced by elements of their culture, but that progression through the phases of cognitive development is largely the child's own doing. (Kail, 1998:160) The Neo-Piagetian theories updated and elaborated the cognitive theory of Piaget. According to Kail (1998:159) these are theories rooted in Piaget's basic assumptions about cognitive development. The Neo-Piagetian theories support the researcher's opinion that the children in the primary school might roughly be at the same level of cognitive operation or logical reasoning. The Neo-Piagetian theorists like Case (in Kail, 1998:160) reason that only a limited number of schemes can be kept in mind at once and this number increases with age. Schemes are kept in the short-term memory space, which size increases with age. Older children can thus maintain more schemes than younger children and is thus capable of more complex reasoning. Thinking thus changes qualitatively with development, making it possible for us to determine roughly what a certain child is capable of at a certain age. (Kail, 1998:160)

The researcher thus used the theories of Piaget and the Neo-Piagetian movement to understand the type of logical reasoning possible for a primary school child.

At about six or seven years of age, a qualitatively new form of thinking develops, according to Piaget and Inhelder in Newman and Newman (1987:289). Piaget calls this

phase concrete operations. This stage ranges from about seven years to ten years of age (Mwamwenda, 1996:95). Children can now understand a large group of actions that can be performed on objects and can do so mentally, without having to do it behaviourally. Children start to master the following cognitive skills:

- Conservation skills – physical matter does not magically appear or disappear with the change of the container. This is the principle of identity – unless something is added or taken away the amount will stay the same despite the perceptual change in presentation.
- Classification skills – the ability to group objects according to a similar dimension that they share – this is the ability to hold a concept in the mind and to make a series of decisions (what should I choose and what not) on the basis of that concept.
- Combinatorial skills – certain physical transformations will not alter the number of units in a set – the number of objects will stay the same whether they are in a small bundle or widely spread out.
- Reversibility – if the amounts of two containers are the same and change in the form of one container takes place, the two amounts will still be the same when the changing container returns to its original form.
- Compensation – the size of a container can cause the level of the contents of the container to be lower than the former, but the level of contents is compensated by the size of the container. If the two containers' contents would be poured into equal containers, the levels would be the same again.

(Compare Kiura, Gitau & Kiura 1999:38; Mwamwenda, 1996:95; Newman & Newman, 1987:290-293.)

The child in the primary school can start to reason logically, basing reasoning on concrete facts. Reasoning now resembles that of adulthood. The difference though between the primary school child's reasoning and that of later stages lies in the following: The primary school child will base logical reasoning on concrete objects. The older person bases logical reasoning on either concrete facts or abstract reasoning. (Mwamwenda, 1996:95)

The children in the play therapy groups of this research thus usually based their logical reasoning on concrete objects. The reasoning through the play therapy techniques was thus concrete. It was not expected of the children in these groups to use abstract reasoning to increase their awareness and other emotional intelligence skills.

### 1.5.3 The influence of culture on cognitive development

The influence of culture is important in the current study, which is a culture sensitive approach. It is therefore important to consider the contributions of other theorists, like Vygotski (compare Kail, 1998:160-161; Sharron & Coulter, 1996:327-336; Das, 2001:168) who had a different view on cognitive development. Vygotski (in Kail, 1998:160) reasons that children advance in their cognitive development in collaboration with others who are more skilled. According to the researcher, Vygotski and other theorists like Feuerstein in Sharron and Coulter (1996:329-330) reasons that children have the ability to develop cognitively through certain stages, but need the help of more mature people to reach their full potential. The children in the current study thus have a specific level of cognitive potential, which was used to help them to develop their emotional intelligence.

### 1.5.4 Learning style and preferred brain dominance

According to the researcher children present or use their cognitive development in different ways. This is called their learning styles. There are many theories about learning styles. Children mainly use one of their two brain hemispheres as primary mode of learning. Although the latter is the case, human beings still use their two hemispheres as an integrated whole. (Neethling & Schoeman, 1999:8,19) The brain dominance of a child has an influence on the way he learns and organises his life as well as the way he presents himself in a group setting (compare Goldberg, 2001:41-46; Neethling & Schoeman, 1999:8). As children acquired important skills in this programme, they were learning. It is therefore of importance to gain some knowledge on learning styles. The programme was thus presented to accommodate the learning styles of the different children present in the groups.

In the Gestalt therapeutic process, especially the Schoeman model (Schoeman, 2004b:118) of Gestalt play therapy, it is very important to learn to know the child's process. The child's process is the way the child presents himself, handles the elements of life, communicate and learn.

Schoeman (2004:46) lists the following reasons why it is important to know a child's process: It enables the therapist to address the child on his own level and to be in congruence with him. It assists the therapist to empower the child and give him the opportunity to feel in control and to take responsibility for his own life and actions.

The researcher is of the opinion that a child might present his process in different ways depending on his developmental phase. The child's cognition, specifically his learning style and brain dominance, were used in this research as part of the child's process.

According to the researcher knowing the child's process involves knowing the child as a whole. The therapist in an emotional intelligence play therapy group should thus know the child's cognitive preferences together with his emotional and behavioural preferences.

The latter is the reason why it is important to find the child's learning style and preferred brain dominance. It is also the reason why it is important to gain knowledge on the child's cognitive development.

This study used the PASS theory of intelligence as bases to explain the concept and value of brain dominance and the mental seat for emotional intelligence. The abbreviation, PASS, indicates the following four processes as part of intelligence:

- P for Planning processes (related to emotional intelligence skills)
- A for Attention processes (mental focus)
- S for Simultaneous processes (right hemisphere)
- S for Successive processes (left hemisphere) (Naglieri & Das, 1997b:2-5)

Although the researcher indicates a mental seat for emotional intelligence, it is reasoned that the human being acts as a whole. The researcher found in literature that body and mind is interrelated (compare Goldberg, 2001; Goleman, 1996; Pert, 1999) to such an extent that it is too simplistic to try to locate or isolate emotional intelligence completely in one specific part of the brain. The whole human system has an influence on emotional

intelligence and vice versa. Goldberg (2001:114) states that, “the frontal lobes produces wide ripple effects through the whole brain” and at the same time any damage “anywhere in the brain sets off ripple effects interfering with frontal lobe function”. The researcher argues that most of the skills related to emotional intelligence are located in the frontal lobes though. The frontal lobes of the brain handle many of the emotional intelligence related skills, which the intervention programme of this study attempted to enhance. Goldberg (2001:24,108-111) discusses the following skills related to emotional intelligence as being located in the frontal lobes: setting goals and objectives, plans of action to reach those goals, self-evaluation, social skills and interpersonal relationships, empathy, and self-awareness. Naglieri and Das (1997b:2,11,14-17,109,120) and Das (2001:35-36) pinpointed skills related to emotional intelligence in the PASS theory of intelligence.

The researcher will discuss the PASS theory of intelligence in the following paragraphs, as it will be used as the foundation to explain brain dominance and a mental location for emotional intelligence skills. The PASS theory of intelligence was the underlying theory for the assessment of emotional intelligence in this study. The current research focused on this particular theory of intelligence because it is very recently developed (Naglieri & Das, 1997a) and the research on this theory and the instruments to measure it is still ongoing. Professor Das is still practicing and continuing his research at the University of Alberta, Canada. Naglieri and Das (1997a) also developed a tool to assess the effective use of mental processes including those of the left and right brain hemispheres, the attention processes and the frontal lobes, namely the Das-Naglieri Cognitive Assessment System (1997a). The Das-Naglieri Cognitive Assessment System is a well researched and standardised assessment instrument that can be used in the current research to determine certain attributes needed to gain knowledge on the subjects’ level of emotional intelligence and other cognitive information.

The PASS theory of intelligence is a merging of theoretical and applied psychology. This theory of intelligence is based on the theory that the four essential activities of planning, attention, simultaneous processing and successive processing form the base of human

cognitive processes that underlie an individual's knowledge. (Das in Naglieri & Das, 1997b:2) The four processes of the PASS theory involve the following:
"planning processes that provide cognitive control; utilisation of processes and knowledge, intentionality, and self-regulation to achieve a desired goal; attentional processes that provide focused, selective cognitive activity over time; and simultaneous and successive information processes that are the two forms of operating on information" (Naglieri & Das, 1997b:2).

The researcher used all four of the processes above to access the children who participated in the intervention programme. Planning processes were used to gain information about emotional intelligence related skills and the other processes were used for a better understanding of the child as a whole.
The following paragraphs cover the skills assessed in each one of the processes with a short discussion on each process:

**Planning processes** involve the following skills:

- Generation of strategies
- Execution of plans
- Anticipation of consequences
- Impulse control
- Organisation of action
- Planned responses to new situations
- Self-control
- Self-evaluation
- Self-monitoring
- Use of feedback

(Naglieri & Das, 1997b:102)
According to Pert (1999:138,166,288-289), Goleman (1996:53-54) and Goldberg (2001:24, 106-111) the frontal cortex or forebrain controls the same skills than listed as those of planning processes. The skills controlled by the frontal cortex especially focus on the generation of strategies, planning, decision-making, organisation of action but also

on the awareness of emotions, including self-consciousness, self-evaluation, self-control, self-monitoring, intentionality, and the use of feedback. (Compare Goldberg, 2001:24,26, 111-112; Goleman, 1996:52-53; Pert, 1999:288.) The following are some emotional intelligence skills, listed by Akers & Porter (2003: 3-5): emotional awareness, self-control, conscientiousness, adaptability, innovation, motivation, initiative, optimism, empathy, understanding others, social skills, etcetera.

According to the researcher the frontal cortex thus controls many skills related to emotional intelligence processes. The scores on the functioning of the planning processes, can therefore be used to gain insight on the child's emotional intelligence.

**Attentional processes** involve the following skills:

- Directed concentration
- Focus on essential details
- Focus on important information
- Resistance to distraction
- Selective attention
- Sustained attention over time
- Sustained effort

(Naglieri & Das, 1997b:109)

Attention is a mental process by which the individual selectively focuses on particular stimuli while inhibiting responses to competing stimuli presented over time. Successful performance on attention assessments focussed on the PASS theory of attention requires attention to be focused, selective, sustained, and effortful.

Focused attention involves directed concentration toward a particular activity.

Selective attention requires the inhibition of responses to some stimuli in favour of others, which may be hard to ignore.

Sustained attention refers to the variation of performance over time, which can be influenced by the varying amount of effort required to solve the task. (Naglieri & Das, 1997b:3-4)

**Simultaneous processes** involve the following skills:

- Integration of words into ideas
- Seeing parts as a whole or group
- Seeing several things at one time
- Comprehension of word relationships
- Understanding of inflection (intonation)
- Understanding verbal relationships and concepts
- Working with spatial information

(Naglieri & Das, 1997b:109)

It is a mental process by which the individual integrates separate stimuli into a single whole or group. The essence of simultaneous processing is that the person must interrelate the elements of the stimuli into a perceptual or conceptual whole. It has strong spatial and logical-grammatical components. The spatial aspect involves both the perception of stimuli as a group and the internalised formation of complex visual images.

The logical-grammatical dimension of simultaneous processing allows for the integration of words into ideas. This is done through the comprehension of word relationships and comprehension of tone to obtain meaning – understanding what has been said. (Naglieri & Das, 1997b:4-5) The researcher summarises the simultaneous processes as understanding and having insight in what the person sees and also in explanations and instructions, which are more language related.

The simultaneous skills list of Naglieri and Das (1997b:109) above relates to the processes of the right hemisphere of the brain. These include intuition, understanding how the parts form the whole, insight, understanding analogies and metaphors, visualise, subjective, intuitive problem solving, good with spatial and visual information (Fourie, 1998:19), prefer novel tasks, creative, and spatial processing (Goldberg, 2001:45,103).

**Successive processes** involve the following skills:

- Articulation of separate sounds in a consecutive series
- Comprehension when word order drives meaning
- Execution of movements in order
- Perception of stimuli in sequence
- Serial organisation of spoken speech
- Working with sounds in a specific order

(Naglieri & Das, 1997b:109)

This is a mental process by which the individual integrates stimuli into a specific serial order that forms a chain-like progression. Successive processing is needed when things must follow each other in a strictly defined order. During successive processing each element is only related to those that precede it, and these stimuli are not interrelated. It has strong serial and syntactic components.

The serial aspect involves both the perception of stimuli in sequence and the formation of sounds and movements in order. Examples of such tasks are the organisation of spoken speech and the synthesis of separate sounds and motor impulses into consecutive series.

The syntactic aspect allows for the comprehension of the meaning of narrative speech because the serial presentation of a narrative drives the meaning. (Naglieri & Das, 1997b:5-6) The researcher summarises successive processes as the understanding and remembering of facts in a sequence. It also includes good detail orientation, systematic work, logical thinking and work with language. This relates to skills of the left hemisphere namely, language, structure, sequence, being cautious and conventional, following rules (Goldberg, 2001:45,103), detailed, analytical, and objective (Fourie, 1998:19).

### 1.5.5 Application of planning and attention processes of the PASS theory of intelligence to the research study

In the current study the four processes that underlie intelligence or knowledge according to the PASS theory were utilised as follows:

The planning processes were used as an indication of the child's level of emotional intelligence. This indicates the skills that will form the focus of the presented programme.

The scores of the successive and simultaneous processes indicate a specific way of dealing with information and learning. This formed part of the researcher's understanding of the child's process, which is of vital importance in a Gestalt therapy environment. Children with higher successive than simultaneous scores tend to prefer a well structured and controlled environment with rules they know and follow and with little change from the set programme. Children with higher simultaneous processes prefer variety and action, creative thought and actions and a less controlled environment. Putting children with higher successive and simultaneous processes together in a group helped them to increase their skills of the lower process. It might also help them to learn to accept differences in people and make them aware of their own process. This was valuable in the current study as self-awareness is important in both Gestalt therapy as well as emotional intelligence. (Schoeman, 1996a:30)

Attentional processes also form part of the process of the child, because it had an influence on the way the children acted in the research groups. It also influenced how the children react on the information received and influenced the amount of learning that could take place within a certain time limit.

According to the researcher the child with lower attention scores should rather do a variety of shorter exercises and the child with higher scores could be busy with one exercise for a prolonged period of time. The children's attention processes indicated the boundaries to be set and the type of rules planned for a specific group. The attention processes related to the child's behaviour, although it also had an influence on the emotional and cognitive levels. Children with lower attention processes experienced emotional difficulties like a lower self-image, inconsistency, emotional lability, a low frustration threshold and unpredictability (compare Levine, 2003:82; Smith in Derbyshire, 2002:394-395) because of negative feedback on their behaviour. Naglieri and Das (1997b:75) noted that children with attention problems also show behavioural problems. According to the researcher these children in generally will greatly benefit from emotional intelligence training, because they will be exposed to important skills lacking because of their problems with attention. Self-awareness and self-control are two of the emotional intelligence skills, which will, when enhanced, help the child with

attention problems. The latter is the case because such a child has the opportunity to gain insight in his behaviour and can learn a more effective behaviour style.

### 1.5.6 Learning styles, successive and simultaneous processes of the PASS theory of intelligence and brain dominance

As children were learning certain skills, although through play and with an emotional focus, they still handled their learning in different ways. Bradway and Hill (2004) agree with the latter statement.

According to Bradway and Hill (2004:6) there are three different learning styles. They name people with the three presented learning styles, Lookers, Listeners and Movers. These represent visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learners. Throughout life people use their senses to learn, but usually favour one sense over the others. This dictates how they learn best.

The learning styles of the different children in the play therapy groups, where emotional intelligence were enhanced, had an influence on their preferred play techniques. The following are general learning styles associated with each of the types:

Lookers rely on their sense of sight to learn. They easily understand and remember motion, colour, shape and size. Their hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills are usually very well developed. They tend to look at something and quickly use their hands to show what they have learned. (Bradway & Hill, 2004:6, Brooke, 2004:11) Creative play therapy techniques, like drawing, clay work, modelling and sand tray work (Van der Merwe 1996d:138-148) were used to accommodate lookers in the current study. Creative play is very valuable for growth and heeling of emotions as it activate growth and change of emotions and feelings (Allan & Clark in Van der Merwe, 1996d:148).

Listeners prefer sounds and words over what they can learn by sight and touch. They like to talk and have a good vocabulary. They like to read, talk, ask questions, listen to music and memorise the lyrics, and games where they can speak out loud. They usually involve their friends in games where they make up and act out stories. (Compare Bradway & Hill, 2004:7-8; Brooke 2004:11.) Play therapy techniques focused on biblioplay, drama and music are best for these learners and were incorporated in the programme (compare Schoeman, 1996b:44-45; Van der Merwe, 1996b:108-126, 128-137).

Movers prefer hands-on learning through both touch and movement. Their gross motor skills are usually good. They therefore tend to do activities where they can use their arms, hands, legs and feet. They tend to be restless, with excellent sense of space. They have a frantic pace of doing things making them impatient, easily frustrated and "an emotional lot – as quick to anger as they are to share a laugh" (Bradway & Hill, 2004:.8). (Compare Bradway & Hill, 2004:8; Brooke, 2004:11.) These children need active play with a variety of techniques used. These children in the research study needed the awareness and emotional control skills (compare Maree, 2004:74-75; Vermeulen, 1999:31,181) of this emotional intelligence programme very much to control their emotional energy.

The successive processes (Naglieri & Das, 1997b:109) of the left hemisphere incorporate the listening learning style. According to Brooke (2004:2) and Goldberg (2001:41,44-45,71) the left hemisphere is what people mostly see as more academic. It focuses on language, logic, number, sequence, words of a song, phonetic reading systems and detail. This is the same focus as the listener learners. They are thus also more structured and organised in their behaviour style, as they prefer sequence, linearity and order (Brooke 2004:2).

According to Brooke (2004:2) and Goldberg (2001:101) the right hemisphere or simultaneous processes of the PASS theory of intelligence (Naglieri & Das, 1997b:109) are more creative. It involves the way lookers are learning and also a little of how kinaesthetic learners are learning. They focus on forms and patterns, spatial information, rhythm, movement, music, images and pictures, dimension, imagination, and tune of song. (Brooke, 2004:2)

The researcher thus used the following theoretical indications of the level of cognitive development of the children in the research groups: the PASS theory of intelligence of Naglieri and Das(1997b), left- and right hemisphere focus (compare Brooke, 2004; Goldberg, 2001:44-108; Naglieri & Das, 1997b; Neethling & Schoeman, 1999), and learning styles (compare Bradway & Hill, 2004; Brooke, 2004:11) together with the level

of cognitive development based on the theory of Piaget (compare Mwamwenda, 1996:95; Newman & Newman, 1987:289).

The following section covers the needs of children in primary school and the implication of this for the intervention programme developed in this research study.

## 1.6 Needs

The most important needs of the primary school child can be derived from the discussions above.

The researcher is of the opinion that if a child in this phase feels good about himself and his abilities most of his needs will be fulfilled. This incorporates a wide variety of attributes though – from a feeling of success in schoolwork, physical work and physical activities like sport to success feelings concerning interpersonal skills.

Teachers, primary caretakers and friends play a very important role here. If a child feels safe, accepted and regarded positive he will have the courage to be what- and who-ever he can or will be. Such a child will thus have a positive attitude about himself.

According to Maslow (compare Maree, 2004:85; Newman & Newman, 1987:349) man exists with a natural hierarchy of needs. The basic needs have to be satisfied before higher needs could be gratified. Basic needs are physiological in nature like, sleep, food, water, oxygen and elimination of waste matter, etcetera.

Physical needs are followed by safety needs, which include being safe from physical or psychological maltreatment, a safe and secure environment, which is stable and free from harm.

After these come the love and belonging needs. The child needs to feel part of a group, part of friends and family and needs to be accepted by them.

This is followed by self-esteem needs. This includes self-confidence, competence, respect, recognition and a rightful place in the family and society.

Finally there are self-actualisation needs, which will be fulfilled by achieving one's full potential. Beyond this are cognitive, aesthetic and transcendental needs.
(Compare Newman & Newman, 1987:34; Maree, 2004:85.)

According to the researcher the primary school child can fulfil all of these needs within his developmental abilities. The implication here is very important. In this phase love and belonging needs, self-esteem needs and self-actualisation needs are the most important. If a child is physically or emotionally neglected he will not be able to develop through this developmental phase successfully. This has a very important influence on this study – it is important to notice the impact of this on the level of emotional intelligence. The researcher is of the opinion that unfulfilled needs inhibits development on emotional, cognitive and physical levels. This means that a child with unfulfilled needs might not reach his full potential on emotional intelligence level. The intervention programme therefore also focused on the present needs of the group members in each session.

## 1.7 Conclusion

The researcher can therefore summarise the primary school child with the following explanation:
This is a physically more mature, stronger and independent child than in his younger years. On emotional level, he builds on his self-image and forms his view of himself through success in tasks, messages from important others, interpersonal relationships with peers on individual and group base and relationships with authority figures who's opinions are seen as the truth.
He bases moral decisions on what is expected of him by society not to get punished and to gain other people's approval. Whatever is seen as moral is influenced by the child's culture.
On cognitive level he usually bases his logical reasoning on concrete objects. He will thus not use abstract reasoning to increase his awareness and other emotional intelligence skills, but reasoning based on concrete objects.

He needs, other than basic physical care, especially love and to belong somewhere, to have a good self-esteem and to develop to his full potential.

The following section focuses on the comprehension of emotions in the current study.

## 2. EMOTIONS

"One only understands the things that one tames" (De Saint-Exupery, 1997:65).
It is the researcher's opinion that a person can only understand his emotions if he is aware of it. The researcher thus discussed information related to a better understanding of emotions and its applicability to this intervention research study. This discussion is aimed at awareness of emotions, a definition of emotions, its value and meaning, and to be able to have a good understanding of this.

### 2.1 Origin and definition of emotions

The researcher found that emotions and the definition thereof is not merely an abstract or philosophical process. Emotions are not only subjective experiences, which cannot be pinpointed or located. It will be showed in the following discussion that emotions have a biological and cognitive base. It is closely interrelated with cognition and the physical body. It shows the interrelatedness of the three systems of emotions, cognition and physical body. Through the following process of assessing the origin and defining emotions, the value thereof is also clear.

#### 2.1.1 The origin of emotions

According to Goleman we have two minds – one that thinks and one that feels (Goleman, 1996:8).

In order to define emotions the researcher wish to explore the origin of emotions as described by Goleman (1996:9-12) in the following paragraphs:

The brain grew from the bottom up. The higher centres are elaborations of the lower, more ancient parts.

**The most primitive** part is the **brainstem.** It surrounds the top of the spinal cord and regulates basic life functions like breathing, metabolism of the other organs, and controlling stereotyped reactions and movements. It is like a set of programmed regulators that keep the body running and works toward ensuring survival. It cannot think or learn. (Compare Goldberg, 2001:29; Goleman, 1996:9-10)

**The emotional centres** emerged from the brainstem and form **the next layer.** As this part rings and borders the brainstem, it is called the limbic system from the Latin word, "limbus". As the limbic system evolved, two powerful tools were refined namely, learning and memory. The latter helps animals to make much smarter choices concerning survival. Most of these decisions are based on smell and is done by the "rhinencephalon", the nose brain. This part of the limbic wiring formed the basis of the neo cortex, the thinking brain. (Compare Goleman, 1996:10-11; Goldberg, 2001:31; Le Doux, 1998:200) Researchers like Goldberg (2001:31) and Le Doux (1998:200) question the theory of the limbic system as the centre of emotions. They do agree that it is a more primitive part of the brain than the neo cortex.

The neo cortex developed about 100 million years ago in mammals. Animals had a two-layered cortex on top of the limbic system, for planning, comprehending what is sensed and coordinated movement. **Several layers of brain cells** were added to form the **neo cortex.** The neo cortex provided an extraordinary intellectual edge. The neo cortex of homo sapiens is much thicker than all the other mammals' ones, with all the distinctly human characteristics added. It is the seat of thought. It adds to a feeling what we think about it and allows us to have feelings about ideas, art, symbols, imaginings etcetera. It also allows the addition of nuance to emotional life – the subtlety and complexity of emotional life – such as to have feelings about feelings. The complexity of the human neo cortex allows a far greater range of reactions to our emotions and more nuances. This flexibility is much needed in a more complex social world like that of the homo-sapiens.

The emotional areas are connected via a myriad of connecting circuits to all parts of the neo cortex, as the emotional area is the root from which the newer brain grew.

An almond shaped cluster of interconnected structures above the brainstem called the **amygdala** was a key part together with the hippocampus of the primitive nose brain that gave rise to the cortex and then the neo cortex. (Goleman, 1996:11-12)

Goleman (1996:17) and Goldberg (2001:30-31) state sensory information that enters the brain first travel to the **thalamus** where it is decoded to the 'language of the brain', it is then send across a single synapse to the amygdala and a second signal is send to the neo-cortex. This branching allows the amygdala to respond before the thinking brain.

LeDoux (in Goleman, 1996:18) states that this signal over the shorter single synapse to the amygdala allows the amygdala to respond to signals from the senses before they are fully registered by the neo-cortex.

Goleman (1996:17-18) state the longer route of emotions as starting from a sensory experience going to the thalamus, which are the central processing areas of the neo-cortex. The signals are sorted for meanings and then signals are sent to the limbic brain to create an appropriate response. This was the old theory, until Le Doux (in Goleman, 1996:18) found the route of the amygdala as described above and state the following: "Some emotional reactions and emotional memories can be formed without any conscious, cognitive participation at all".

According to the researcher the importance and value of emotions is clear in this history of origin. It is the base of higher intellectual processes and will thus play a very big role in our whole mental being. Furthermore Le Doux (1998:19) states that emotions "easily bump mundane events out of awareness, but nonemotional events (like thoughts) do not so easily displace emotions from the mental spotlight". The researcher thus concludes that the influence of emotions is stronger than reason. It might thus take very hard work to learn to control emotions with reason alone. The researcher therefore found a holistic approach towards emotional control much more significant. The body-mind theory of Pert (1999) seems applicable towards the latter frame of mind.

Pert (1999:135) raised the question on whether emotions originate in the body (thus in the physical or biological system) and then get perceived in the brain (James in Pert,

1999:135) or the other way around, as Cannon in Pert (1999:135) states. According to the researcher, Goleman (1996:9-18), James in Pert (1999:135-136) and Pert (1999:135-141) all concluded that emotions originate physically, although in the brain, and not merely on an abstract thinking level. According to Pert (1999:187) the mind / emotions and the body / physical system is one. They influence each other. “Mind doesn’t dominate body, it *becomes* body – body and mind are one” (Pert, 1999:187).

Emotions thus have a physical or bodily origin – it is a biochemical substance and not only an abstract thought process. It is part of the physical body, but can also be experienced as a feeling or abstract experience.

### 2.1.2 A definition of emotions

According to Pert (1999:189) emotions are the messengers in our bodies. They are carrying the information in the system we call the body-mind. The body-mind is the interconnected system of the physical body and the brain (Pert, 1999:140). Pert (1999:189) has the following very good comparison to define emotions: “Every second, a massive information exchange is occurring in your body. Imagine each of these messenger systems possessing a specific tone, humming a signature tune, rising and falling … and if we could hear this body musing with our ears, then the sum of these sounds would be the music that we call the emotions”. Emotions are thus cellular signals that are translating information into physical reality. Emotions are travelling between mind and matter, influencing both.

In this study the researcher used emotions in its broadest sense. Pert (1999:131) states emotions in this broad sense to include not only human experiences like anger, fear, sadness, joy, contentment and courage, but also basic sensations like pleasure and pain. It also includes drives like hunger and thirst and an assortment of other uniquely human subjective experiences.

Vermeulen (1999:29) further the definition of emotion to its origin in language. The word emotion stems from the Latin word “*e-motere*”. This means, “to move”. Vermeulen

(1999:29) states that feelings influence the decisions that guide our actions. Behaviour is driven by our emotional habits, which add up to our attitude.

The researcher finds the value of emotions also in this opinion. Emotions do not only form the base of higher intellectual processes, but also of our decisions, attitudes and behaviour. It influences and controls the physical state of the human being as it greatly influences the immune system and many other reactions on environmental influences. (Compare Goleman, 1996; Pert, 1999; Vermeulen, 1999.) Emotions thus influence the human being's state of health. "Neuropeptides and their receptors are the substrates of the emotions, and they are in constant communication with the immune system, the mechanism through which health and disease are created" (Pert, 1999:189).

It is important to the researcher to differentiate the definition of emotions from that of mood and temperament. Emotion is momentary, its cause is clearly identifiable and it does not last very long. Mood lasts for hours or days and is less easily traced. Temperament is genetically based and thus lasts for a lifetime. (Pert, 1999:132)
According to the researcher emotion thus has a specific cause and does not last very long. This cause starts on a molecular level as stated in the research of Pert (1999).

The researcher formulated the following operational definition of emotions for the current research study:
Emotions are the carriers of information, which connect and influence all the different systems and levels of being and is equally connected and influenced by all the other systems.

## 2.2 The operation of emotions

"Ordinarily the prefrontal areas govern our emotional reactions from the start. The largest projection of sensory information from the thalamus, … goes not to the amygdala, but to the neo cortex and its many centres for taking in and making sense of what is being

perceived; that information and our response to it is coordinated by the prefrontal lobes, the seat of planning and organising actions toward a goal, including emotional ones. In the neo cortex a cascading series of circuits registers and analyses that information, comprehends it, and, through the prefrontal lobes, orchestrates a reaction" (Goleman, 1996:25). Goldberg (2001:23-26) agrees with this comparison of Goleman.

The neuroscientist, Pert (1999), established and explained the bio-molecular basis for emotions. This research on how the chemicals inside us form a dynamic information network, linking mind and body, will be used to further describe the operation of emotions.

The operation of emotions on molecular level will be explained with terms used by Pert (1999) namely, amino acid, peptide, neuro-peptide, ligands and receptors. The researcher will give a short and simple explanation of each one of these terms to clarify its meaning and operation in the emotional network on molecular level.

**Amino acids** are the building blocks of peptides and proteins. According to its name, it is derived from ammonia. It has one carboxyl group (COOH), which joins together with the amino group of another amino acid when it forms a chain. (Pert, 1999:346)

A **peptide** is a natural or synthetic compound with two or more amino acids. A **polypeptide** is a larger peptide with 100 or more amino acids. They are smaller than **proteins**, which consist of 200 or more amino acids – in one or more chains - in combination with other molecules, such as sugars, lipids (fat), enzymes, hormones and anti-bodies. (Pert, 1999:352)

A **neuro-peptide** is an informational substance secreted by neurons. It is a small peptide with about 100 amino acids. (Pert, 1999:351)

A **molecule** is the smallest part into which an element can be divided without changing its chemical and physical properties. Molecules consist out of atoms. (Pert, 1999:351)

A **cell** is the smallest independent functioning unit of any organism. It consists out of "one or more nuclei, cytoplasm, and various organelles, all surrounded by semipermeable cell membrane" (Pert, 1999:348). There are cell **receptors** on this membrane, which are

accessible to the outside environment where **ligands** – informational substances – bind to the cell. The cell can only receive information from the informational substances when a receptor is occupied by a ligand. (Pert, 1999:350,352)

The following is a diagram to visually clarify the definition of a cell, receptor, and ligand. According to the researcher the receptor is like a keyhole in the cell and the ligand is the key that fits in that specific hole to open it for information carrying substances like hormones.

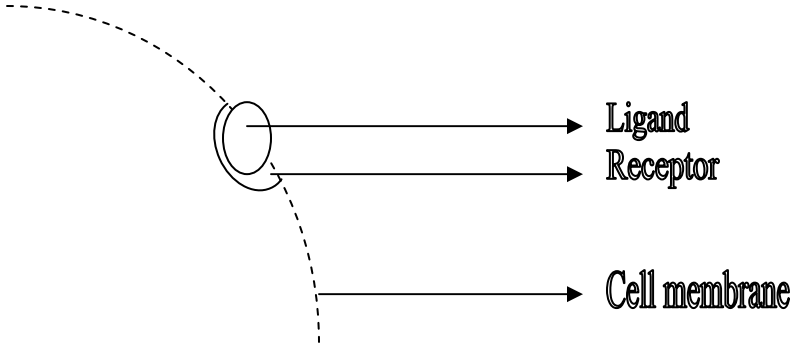


**Figure 2.1: Receptor with ligand on cell membrane**

The body-mind working of emotions on molecular level is an important concept in the current study. Emotions are not only confined to the brain centres like the amygdala, hippocampus and hypothalamus. According to Pert (1999:141) the body is the unconscious mind. A powerful emotion associated with a traumatic experience can be stored in a body part. This can cause this body part to loose all feeling or even to stop moving. (Pert, 1999:140-141) The fact that emotions has such a big influence in the functioning of the physical body and vice versa, supports the method used in this study to increase emotional intelligence, namely play. Gestalt play therapy is an active, experiential method. Bodily sensations are used to get in touch with emotions. Children need to be in touch with their senses before the actual play therapy starts. Play is a physical action. (Schoeman, 1996b:41-57)

The body-mind was thus used in this study to increase the skills of primary school children to understand, control and positively use their emotions. The importance of

using play to get in touch with emotions is also evident in the research of Pert (1999:277). She states: “When we are playing, we are stretching our emotional expressive ranges, loosening up our biochemical flow of information, getting unstuck, and healing our feelings” (Pert, 1999:277). Emotions are closely connected to our physical being, which is much more concrete and tangible than the abstract experience of an emotion. The researcher thus experiences the physical body as the embodiment of emotions – emotions made visual. In this research the physical body was a tool to touch emotions, which are invisible. The latter were applied in the sensory awareness exercises, which are an integral part of this programme and also of Gestalt play therapy. (Compare Fourie, 1998:76; Schoeman, 1996b:42.) The researcher as therapist will apply sensory awareness techniques as a gateway to get the children to be aware of themselves as a whole.

## 2.3 Conclusion

Emotions and the physical body is one, as can be seen in the following expression of an experience of Pert (1999:277): “I laughed, which Norman Cousins calls internal jogging, an exercise to keep us in emotional shape, I played, I let the emotions – and the peptides – flow”.

For the need of the current research study the comprehension of emotions is that it is interactive messengers connecting and influencing all systems, including itself. The researcher reasons that the control over emotions is executed form the pre-frontal cortex. The latter is based on the theories of Le Doux (1998) and Goldberg (2001). Goldberg (2001:36) furthermore states: “experiments have shown that the concept of ‘self’, which is deemed to be a critical attribute of the conscious mind, appears only in the great apes. And it is only in the great apes that the prefrontal cortex acquires a major place in the brain”. The researcher therefore reasons that awareness of the self functions in the same area (the frontal lobes) as the executive functions of emotional intelligence. According to the researcher there is a positive correlation between increased awareness of self and increased emotional intelligence.

The next section relates this knowledge of emotions to growth. This section therefore focuses on emotional intelligence – to be intelligent about the knowledge, use, value and control of emotions.

# 3. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

## 3.1 Definition and value of emotional intelligence

"It is with the heart that one sees rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye" (De Saint-Exupery, 1997:68).

According to an article by Chapman (2002:2) Howard Gardner, Peter Salovey and John Mayer originally developed the concept, emotional intelligence, during the 1970's and 1980's. Daniel Goleman brought the concept of "emotional intelligence" to public awareness in his book, "Emotional Intelligence" (Goleman, 1996). Goleman (1996:44-45) reasons that conventional intelligence is too narrow. There are wider areas of emotional intelligence that enable humans to be successful or not.

The essential premise of emotional intelligence is that it requires the effective awareness, control and management of a person's own emotions and those of other people. It embraces two aspects, namely:

- Understanding your self, your goals, intentions, responses, and behaviour
- Understanding others, and their feelings (Goleman, 1996:55)

According to Maree (2004:67) emotional intelligence skills like self-motivation, endurance despite of failure, control of impulse, empathy, hopefulness, and positive behaviour are better indications of performance and success than cognitive intelligence only. Mayer and Salovey (in Maree, 2004:68) defined emotional intelligence as a type of social intelligence where a person can regulate and control his own thoughts and

behaviour. Emotional intelligence incorporates both inter- and intra personal intelligences. (Mayer and Salovey in Maree, 2004:68) Howard Gardner (in Goldberg, 2001:105 & in Schmidt, 2001:4) proposes the theory of multiple intelligences. There are thus “a whole bunch of intelligences that people use to succeed” (Schmidt, 2001:4). These intelligences are interconnected and cannot work independently and according to Schmidt (2001:4) they are also not predetermined at birth being a static- or given number. They can grow throughout a person’s life if they are nurtured and strengthened. According to the researcher this underlies the value of a programme that enhances emotional intelligence. A child is thus not born with a certain potential of intelligence, which cannot develop further than the born ceiling. Emotional intelligence is also part of what constitutes a person’s intelligence level. As these intelligences are all interconnected as stated above, raising emotional intelligence will also have an impact on the other intelligences. This contributes to the value of emotional intelligence – having a good emotional intelligence will contribute to better levels of all the other intelligences. As stated above by Mayer and Salovey (in Maree, 2004:68), emotional intelligence incorporates both inter- and intra personal intelligences. Gardner (compare in Goldberg, 2001:105; in Schmidt, 2001:8-9) states inter- and intra personal intelligences as two of the seven identified intelligences.

Schmidt (2001:8-9) emphasises the focus of latter two intelligences in children. Intra personal intelligence focuses on the development of self-knowledge, which includes the children’s own values, purposes and feelings. Insight in the latter makes them independent, confident, goal-oriented and self-disciplined. Children who have a good level of intra personal intelligence can work happily and confidently alone as well as in a group. They are usually curious about their ancestors and where they come from, they are interested in their own lives and may even keep journals of their lives and dreams from very young.

Children who are interpersonally smart can see things from another’s point of view. They have the ability to understand others, to work and communicate with others and to maintain relationships effectively. These children are people smart. They make and keep a wide variety of friends. They are peacemakers, are invited to all birthday parties and are

good observers, although they might not always be the centres of attention. They usually like to find out what makes other people tick. (Schmidt, 2001: 8-9)

The researcher thus reasons that emotional intelligence is incorporated by these two intelligences of Gardner (in Schmidt, 2001:8-9) – being smart about your self and being smart about other people. Goldberg (2001:105) also relates being smart to the multiple intelligences of Gardner and Goleman. He defines being smart "as a global, central, defining personal attribute" (Goldberg, 2001:105). Smart is seen as the executive talent that shapes the perception of a human being as a person. It shapes interpersonal understanding or empathy – it is thus required for success in the interactive social environment. The ability of being smart is executed by the frontal lobes. The frontal lobes are also linked to the human being's ability to develop a sense of self – the skill of self-awareness. (Goldberg, 2001:106, 108)

According to Lynn (in Maree, 2004:69) emotional intelligence is based on the following skills: self-awareness and self-control, empathy, positive social skills, personal and social inspiration and personal vision based on specific principles. These are the same as the skills executed by the frontal lobes (Goldberg, 2001:24,105-108). The researcher compares these skills to Gestalt theory in the following: In Gestalt theory self-awareness is one of the most basic principles (compare Aware Relations, 1997; Jarosewitch, 1995:1; Yontef, 1993:10), together with growth through interpersonal relationships and responsibility for one's own life (compare Jarosewitsch, 1997:1; Schoeman, 2004b:79; Schoeman, 1996:29). Lynn (in Maree, 2004:69) has an important opinion to consider in the current study, namely that emotional skills can be developed. According to the researcher this shows the value of an emotional intelligence programme for primary school children. Their emotional intelligence can be developed.

Bar On (in Maree, 2004:69) defines emotional intelligence as the emotional, personal, social and survival dimensions of intelligence. These aspects of intelligence are crucial for efficient daily functioning (Maree, 2004:69).

The researcher relates emotional intelligence skills to the functions of the frontal lobes and prefrontal cortex. Although, according to Goldberg (2001:24) efforts to define and

understand these functions are still “very much a work in progress”, the prefrontal cortex plays a central role in the following: forming goals and objectives and devising plans of action to reach these goals. It coordinates these skills and apply them in the correct order to implement the plans made. Human cognition is driven by goals, plans, aspirations, ambitions and dreams focused on the future. All these are executed by the frontal lobes.

The researcher found emotional intelligence to be an important area to develop in primary school children. A child may not be able to use his cognitive potential without well-developed emotional intelligence. “Intelligence can come to nothing when the emotions hold sway” (Goleman, 1996:4). The importance of the development of emotional intelligence is also evident from recent research in the United States (Vermeulen, 1999:47), which indicates that levels of emotional intelligence are declining with each new generation. This is thus an important reason for developing a Gestalt play therapy programme specifically to improve emotional intelligence. During the primary school years children are in the developmental phase where inter- and intra personal relationships are very important, together with success in their schoolwork. (Compare Kiura, Gitau & Kiura, 1999:35-36; Mwamwenda, 1996:353,359; Newman & Newman, 1987:313.) The latter (success in schoolwork) shows the importance of a well-developed cognitive dimension of intelligence, which can be very positively influenced by increased emotional intelligence (compare Levine, 2002:89; Maree, 2004:76-77). It thus seems that children can benefit greatly from a programme, which nurture and develop their emotional intelligence, as this involves and influences the greatest part of their developmental tasks in this phase.

The road of emotional intelligence starts in childhood. A child can live an emotional intelligent life during each developmental stage. Adults can assist children in this growth process. Vermeulen (1999:184) states that it is vital to give children the freedom to find out whom they fundamentally are. Adults can teach emotional intelligence to children by teaching them to value who they are and helping them to learn from their own experiences. Adults can further assist children by building their self-esteems. Adults can encourage them in what they are good at and help them to accept the areas in which they

don't excel. Adults should encourage children to explore their imagination and give them positive reinforcement. Adults should look at themselves, if they tend to be negative about life, they will carry it over to the children they have contact with. Adults should give their children the security of being loved and valued for who they are. They should give their children a healthy accepting environment to live in and encourage them to question everything and learn from it. If they are grown up they will be free to be in touch with themselves and become whom they really are. Adults can thus give children the independence to explore and mature their own potential. (Vermeulen, 1999:185)
According to the researcher these obligations of adults were those of the researcher as therapist in the intervention programme of this research study.

As stated in the paragraphs above emotional intelligence represents several aspects. It is important in this study to identify some of these aspects to be enhanced. The intervention programme did not focus on emotional intelligence as a wide and vague concept, but aimed to enhance specific skills or concepts. These aspects are discussed in the following paragraphs.

### 3.2 Aspects of emotional intelligence

According to Le Roux and De Klerk (2001:10) emotional intelligence is a type of personal and social intelligence, existing of:

- The ability to be aware of your own feelings and that of others – emotional awareness
- The ability to distinguish between and identify different feelings - emotional literacy
- The ability to express and control your emotions effectively - emotional control
- The ability to listen to others and to communication on emotional level – empathy
- The ability to use emotional information to oriented your thoughts towards a motivated, goal oriented lifestyle

Le Roux and De Klerk (2003:11) also apply the above list of skills to children, stating that children need the following skills to enhance their emotional intelligence:

- Awareness of their feelings and the physical signs thereof
- Knowing that they are in control of their feelings and that they can choose what will be the best way of behaving in a certain situation
- The ability to know and evaluate the consequences of their behaviour
- Knowing what others feel by understanding certain social signs
- Understanding what others feel and think (empathy)
- Expressing feelings using the right vocabulary
- Knowing that they can have better relationships with others through better communication
- Having a balance between thoughts and feelings and knowing how these two parts of themselves influence each other
- Being aware of situations where people don't express their feelings in a true manner – people are not always honest about their feelings
- Understanding why people do certain things
- Being creative in understanding different opinions and finding alternative ways to do things (flexibility)
- Self-knowledge and non-aggressive assertiveness
- The ability to handle difficult emotional situations in the correct way (being realistic)
- Positive and constructive self-talk
- Having constructive and positive goals and being motivated to reach those
- Having enough courage to be what they want to be
- Being vibrant enough and having enough sense of endurance not to give up if they fail and
- Making a choice for happiness

The following is an overview and short discussion of essential emotional intelligence skills, discussed as aspects of emotional intelligence. These are general skills, thus not only applicable to primary school children. These are meant to gain a broad view of

emotional intelligence skills. The list was compiled from the work of Vermeulen (1999) with attributes from Goleman (1996), Le Roux and De Klerk (2003) and Van Jaarsveld (2003).

### 3.2.1 Increased awareness and self-knowledge, a good self-image

According to the researcher awareness is a starting point. Vermeulen (1999:181) states that emotional intelligence is a journey. It starts with awareness and grows along the way of gaining a deeper level of awareness – it is a growth process that only stops with the end of your life on earth. Alongside self-awareness comes self-acceptance. A good self-esteem is the basis of success in emotional intelligence. You also need to acknowledge that your wants and needs make you unique and interesting. Start to be aware of these and really like yourself for it and you are on your way to greater emotional intelligence. According to Vermeulen (1999:182) all people do things of which they are ashamed, but if you learn from this rather than to carry the load of guilt and shame, you will feel much lighter and will increase your self-esteem and emotional intelligence.

"A high level of personal power is the fuel of the future, so make sure you've retrieved energy trapped in past experiences… Life passes quickly: ensure that each moment counts for something. Make the most of the things you do and know that you're already making a difference" (Vermeulen, 1999:182).

Le Roux and De Klerk (2003:25) lists the following important insights to carry over to children concerning self-knowledge and a good self-esteem:

- If you know yourself you also know your strengths and weaknesses
- You know that you have both similar characteristics than other children as well as characteristics completely unique to you as a person
- It is easier to accept yourself and work towards reaching your true potential
- You don't compare yourself with other children, but concentrate on your own unique and valuable characteristics
- It is easier to accept others if you understand, accept, and like yourself
- You can have realistic expectations of yourself

- You don’t need to be perfect all the time
- You develop self-confidence by doing things and not by worrying, thinking or talking about it

According to Vermeulen (1999:62) if a person believes in himself it does not equal vanity nor does it lead to arrogant behaviour. It is insecurity that breads vanity and arrogance. These people have the need to convince themselves and others about their own importance. Self-esteem is about believing in who you are and accepting yourself no matter what. It is important for children to work on their self-esteem. Vermeulen (1999:64) states that whatever a person thinks about himself will shine through his actions and achievements.

People with a good self-esteem have or are the following:

- Respect for themselves and others
- Good-quality relationships
- Outspoken independent thinkers
- Hopeful, positive and optimistic attitude
- Command co-operation

People with a good self-esteem don’t take all things personally, they take it matter-of-fact and believe in what they are doing without doubting in themselves. (Vermeulen, 1999:65)
It is important to remember that a person’s self-esteem is his own creation. A good self-esteem starts with having an appropriate picture of the self. This means to understand what he has been in the past and knowing how to use the present to create what he wants to become in the future. (Vermeulen, 1999:70-71)
Improving the self-esteem was a continuous process in the current intervention programme.

### 3.2.2 Taking responsibility for your own life - controlling your feelings, thoughts and behaviour

Self-control means that a person understands the power of feelings and uses them to get accurate information about his life. These are more mature habits than those learnt when people are still very young. The techniques of learning self-control are not that difficult, but needs work throughout the lifespan. (Vermeulen, 1999:31) The following are steps on the road to better self-control:

- A person needs to learn to deal with his feelings. It is a powerful source of information. This means the way he uses his energy. It is to use feelings to interpret experiences and influence his perception of reality.
- A person needs to use feelings as messages. Vermeulen indicates two types of feelings namely, love and fear. Love is about loving life, having light feelings like joy, happiness and passion. The latter feelings are messages of love. Anger and frustration are messages of fear. (Vermeulen, 1999:31-32)

Self-control is a person's ability to manage himself. The quality of his relationships with other people also depends on his level of self-control. He learns who he really is by experiencing himself in relation to others. This is also a very important aspect of Gestalt theory. (Compare Vermeulen, 1999:158; Yontef, 1993:3,9.)

The researcher sees self-control and relationships as interdependent. If a person searches himself for who he really is and start to act upon his true self, being honest with himself about what and how he does things, he is on the road to self-control. He can start to control his own being and way of living life if he truly understands himself. His relationship with other people is another way in which he can learn to know himself. It is also a playground on which he can practice his self-control. The latter is important to make a success of his relationship with other people. He needs to manage himself to fulfil the needs of the people with whom he has a relationship. In fulfilling their needs, he will build on his relationship with them. This latter management can only be done with self-control.

According to Le Roux and De Klerk (2003:60) a person will be able to handle most situations with self-confidence if he has control over his feelings. They listed the following insights related to good emotional control to carry over to children:

- You are in control of your feelings
- It is not always possible to remain in control of your feelings
- You need to be aware of the physical signs of an emotion to control it
- You need to control feelings, not ignore or repress them
- You have a choice on how you handle your feelings
- Feelings are not the same than behaviour
- You can be in control if you first stop and think and then act.

In this study controlling thinking and behaviour is also part of self-control. “Keep defying your harmful thinking by harnessing the power of your mind” (Vermeulen, 1999:71). Vermeulen (1999:71) and Van Jaarsveld (2003:34-37,49-55) state two techniques to use in order to get control over thoughts. These are:

- Positive affirmations

If a person repeats positive affirmations in his mind, these constructive thoughts will firm up and imprint a more favourable impression. The following are two examples of such affirmations according to Vermeulen (1999:72):

“I am energetic”

“I am creative”.

A person should choose only one or two affirmations to work with at a time and repeat these wherever he is.

- Visualisation

Visualisation is also known as mental rehearsal. “Pictures have the most profound effect on our subconscious mind; and when we see ourselves acting or reacting differently we can start reprogramming our lives” (Vermeulen, 1999:73). This is like making a movie in your mind about the positive outcomes of a certain event. Here repetition is the key

again. Do this every day for a few weeks and you will start to see the results. (Compare Van Jaarsveld, 2003:53-54; Vermeulen, 1999:73.)

Emotional intelligence is about changing learnt behaviour that does not serve you positively anymore. A person does not have to change his fundamental self. He needs to build on his existing paradigm, start where he is now, listen to the messages inside himself and respond to these. Nobody can blame anyone or anything for his unhappiness. A person can only start now and develop new habits and happier patterns. According to Vermeulen (1999:60) it is "not about self-improvement. It's about being able to maximise the reactions that work for you and minimise the ones that don't".

People with a high level of emotional intelligence are in control of their own lives. This provides the possibility to create the type of life they want. If a person is committed to create this life, he needs to involve his thoughts, feelings and actions. If he has his goals in place to be able to reach the life he wants, he needs to feel stimulated to achieve those, be excited about it and take action. (Vermeulen, 1999:140) People with a high level of emotional intelligence also control their choices and rather work on those that work for them than those which don't (Vermeulen, 1999:141).

According to the researcher this entails a person being in control of his own goals and choices, setting the path for his own life. Then he will be able to take responsibility for his own life, not needing to blame anything or anyone else. A focus on responsibility for their own lives and forming a goal for life were thus applied in the research groups of this study. This could give the children the courage to develop towards their limitless potential.

### 3.2.3 Empathy, effective communication and good interpersonal relationships

One of the important dimensions of emotional intelligence is the ability to have effective and positive interpersonal relationships. (Van Jaarsveld, 2003:203) Sullivan in Van Jaarsveld (2003:203) notes the importance of interpersonal relationships in the primary school child's life. A child moves away from the main influence of his parents from

seven or eight years already. He starts to look at his peers, schoolmates and friends for recognition and support. According to Carnegie in Van Jaarsveld (2003:203) a person can gain more friendships in two months if he shows interest in other people than he can in one year by trying to let others show interest in him.

Empathy involves sensitivity and understanding of the emotions of others. According to Goleman (1996:96) empathy is the capacity to know how another feels. It builds on self-awareness. The more open and aware people are of their own emotions, the more able they are to read the feelings of others more accurately. Empathy is rather read through non-verbal messages because people rarely openly express what they are really feeling. "Just as the mode of the rational mind is words, the mode of the emotions is nonverbal" (Goleman, 1996:97). The emotional truth is usually in how somebody says something rather than in what the person says. Salovey in Goleman (1996:43) notes that empathic people are more attuned to the subtle signs of how people are truly feeling or what they really need.

The researcher notes in this the interconnectedness of all the systems of the human being. Here emotions are expressed physically truer than cognitively. The physical and emotional self is thus in close interaction here.

Forming good interpersonal relationships greatly rely on the skill of managing other's emotions. (Goleman, 1996:43) Social competence also relies on how well or not people express their own feelings (Goleman, 1996:113). Hatch and Gardner (in Goleman, 1996:118) identified the following four components of interpersonal intelligence:

- The skill of initiating and coordinating the efforts of a network or group of people – this is called leadership skills
- The skill of mediating, thus preventing and / or resolving conflicts effectively
- A sense of personal connection – that is empathy. This is to recognise and response congenially to people's feelings and concerns. The latter is the art of building an interpersonal relationship
- The ability to have insight in other people's feelings, motives and concerns

According to Goleman (1996:118) these are “the necessary ingredients for charm, social success, even charisma”.

It is important to note that an emotional intelligent person will not use these skills only for self-gain. Such a person will balance being true to oneself with social skills, thus using these skills with integrity. (Goleman, 1996:119)

Le Roux and De Klerk (2003:77) listed the following social insights for children:

- They should learn to understand social signs or body language correctly
- They should know how to be positively assertive – they need to know how to say “no” in certain situations
- They need to know how to react in unknown and potentially dangerous social situations
- They should be open to the good characteristics of others, trying to say good things about people
- They need to know how to be a good friend
- They need to know how to make new friends

The researcher can thus conclude here that good interpersonal relationships depend on knowledge and insight of others as well as of oneself. It is self-knowledge as well as people or social knowledge. The current intervention programme incorporated these skills in the sessions on self-awareness and on friendship.

### 3.2.4 Motivation

Being motivated means using emotions to guide decisions to stay happy and to keep doing what is right for yourself. Emotions release energy. “’e-motion’ is simply energy in motion” (Vermeulen, 1999:33).

Motivation is when a person uses emotional energy that comes from within. According to Vermeulen (1999:33) people are motivated for two reasons, namely: to create the life you want and to move away from situations that don’t suit them.

Van Jaarsveld (2003:188) states that self-motivation is built on a person’s level of optimism. According to Van Jaarsveld (2003:188) research proofed that optimism, which

is built on a child's ability to be resilient, is very important for academic success. One of the sessions of the intervention programme of the research study primarily focussed on being resilient and flexible. The latter is also an important part setting goals for one's life, as stated below in the list of insights concerning being motivated and reaching one's goals (Le Roux and De Klerk, 2003:90).

According to the researcher a person will not be able to make choices about his future if he doesn't know where he is going. Goals are energy providers, giving people a reason to go on even though the road is tough. Goals are thus also motivators.
According to Vermeulen (1999:135) setting goals puts a person in control of his life. If you do not decide about your destiny, somebody else might and then somebody else will control you. Goals focus people's attention on what should be done and help them to find purpose in what they are doing.

The researcher is of the opinion that goals are more and more important in this ever-changing world. As reality change so fast, it is important that people have their goals intact. If not, they might be distracted and let the years go by without achieving what they want. This also relates to the discussion on responsibility above (3.2.2 Taking responsibility for your own life - controlling your feelings, thoughts and behaviour)

Le Roux and De Klerk (2003:90) state that children should be helped to identify goals and to stay motivated to reach these. They also compiled the following list of insights concerning being motivated and reaching one's goals:

- It is better to use your energy for things you can control
- It takes flexibility and courage to change
- Motivation to change and reach your goals takes self-confidence, self-trust and goal orientation
- If you are motivated in school you will be more productive, creative and successful
- Visualising your goal will help you to reach it
- Mistakes are opportunities for growth
- You are your own best motivation – think positive

- Friends and family can also motivate you
- Get yourself an emotionally intelligent mentor to help you to stay motivated
- Decorate your environment with inspiring messages
- Step out of your comfort zone – if you keep on only doing things you know, you will never learn to do new things

People feel better when they attempt to make their world a better place (Sheehy in Vermeulen, 1999:108). If a person is living his purpose in life, it is motivating. It generates more energy to make a greater success. “So no matter what stage you’re currently at, understanding this need and preparing yourself for it will ease the challenge when it arrives” (Vermeulen, 1999:109).

The need stated by Vermeulen (1999:109) above is the need for self-actualisation (Maree, 2004:85) – to be the best you can. This was a continuous theme in the intervention programme of this study and was emphasised more in sessions focused on self-awareness, resilience and a goal-oriented life.

### 3.2.5 Being resourceful

“Resourceful individuals get on with the business of living” (Vermeulen, 1999:84). This is a certain attitude that drives behaviour to rather take part in the game of life rather than to sit on the side. As Vermeulen (1999:85) states, people either sink because of the weight of negativity or learn to swim. Being resourceful thus means to eliminate the unnecessary weight of negative thinking. The resources people need to use are the skills to do this elimination. They need to use laughter, as humour dissolves negativity and not let worry and guilt take a place in their minds, as they will drive them to negativity. Another resourceful technique is to eliminate pessimism – wage a war against negativity. Start the day with something pleasant. (Compare Van Jaarsveld, 2003:84-110,188,202; Vermeulen, 1999:89) This is about taking control of your own life. Vermeulen (1999:90) quots the following Chinese proverb:

“We can’t help the birds of sadness flying over our heads, but we need not let them build nests in our hair.” People, who apply this to their lives, will soon be in control again.

Resourcefulness was built into the intervention programme of this study as part of the session focused on choosing happiness.

### 3.2.6 Tolerating personal failure

According to Vermeulen (1999:91) the road to success has many failures along the way. Bill Gates hired people who had been bankrupted at least once when he started Microsoft. He reasoned that people who made a comeback from failure are strengthened by the experience. They will not fear failure again and they will be able to take risks because they know they have the resources to rely on.

People get emotionally hardy through bouncing back from failure as they then stretch their resources and failure shows them more about whom they are. They suddenly need to explore and use their commitment, their creative spirit, determination, and inner strength. These are all important tools needed for success. (Vermeulen, 1999:91)

Failure in itself does not make the difference, but how you handle it does. If inadequacy is seen as the cause of personal failure, then a person would be blocked for the possibilities of growth hidden in the process. A person can learn to act more intelligently in a following situation if he uses failure as a source of valuable information. This means to learn and grow from experience. (Vermeulen, 1999:92) People with a healthy emotional intelligence address life's teachings and move through the stages of emotional development, becoming emotionally fit. (Vermeulen, 1999:92)

The children in the research groups of this study also handled this topic in the sessions focusing on flexibility and resilience and self-awareness.

### 3.2.7 Being pro-active

To be pro-active means to take responsibility for your own life. It is the opposite of reacting on what life gives. It means to act to get what you want. (Covey, 1998:5,48-49)

Vermeulen (1999:115) states that having a clear idea of what you want is the first step to being pro-active. If a person knows what he wants he is put in control of his own life. She (Vermeulen, 1999:115) notes that a life-purpose is not unknown to the mind, it is not something you need to create, but something you need to discover.

The researcher thus understands from this that the process of discovering your life-purpose is the process of being pro-active. Pro-activity is a way of life, not something you do and finish. According to Vermeulen (1999:115), being pro-active also includes a developing a mission statement for your own life. It takes some self-analysis and will require from a person to draw on his unlimited resources. This mission statement should be broad enough to include all events along your life path. If a person's mission statement includes elements about which he can really be enthusiastic – he can live his passion. Feeling this natural passion shows that you are close to your purpose. "If you live your passion, your vitality will naturally motivate you" (Vermeulen, 1999:120). Vermeulen (1999:120) also states that a person will be guided along this road by his values. Values are deeply rooted beliefs that powerfully influence us.

According to the researcher values go hand-in-hand with culture. A person's culture captures some of his most important values. The values, which are guidelines for somebody's mission in life, might differ from some of his cultural values though. The values guiding him towards his mission in life are more individual than the cultural values. A person's values might be guided though by the broad values of his culture.

### 3.2.8 Delaying gratification

It was proofed (Vermeulen, 1999:130-133) that children who could delay gratification were more likely to succeed in adult life than the ones who preferred instant gratification. Levine (2003:83) states that children in the second grade can already learn to delay gratification. This goes closely together with impulse control. If a person has a lack of impulse control, it interferes with his goals. Many people want their immediate needs fulfilled right away. Fulfilling needs immediately might cause problems in the long run. People with a high emotional intelligence's well being is not dependent on requiring instant gratification. It does not mean that a person cannot have what he wants. It just means that it is not always healthy for him, the people around him and/or his environment to have something immediately. If a person's desires cause difficulties in his personal functioning, his relationships, his job, and/or interfere with his goals and achievements, then it might be time not to use instant gratification any longer.

This skill was not directly incorporated in the current intervention programme, but is implicated in sessions covering control over emotions and reaching goals.

### 3.2.9 Will-power

According to Vermeulen (1999:155) our energy is contained by willpower. A person with willpower will fire his intentions with the energy of want and desire. Real commitment is to think that something is a good idea, to want to achieve it / get excited about it and then to act upon it. Commitment is thus the combination of all the elements necessary for applying will-power. Thus, if a person commits himself to something, he will have the will-power to do it. Then he does not need to battle with himself and place more stress on his system.

Will-power is necessary to break unhealthy habits. Habits are learned behaviour and if a person wants to change it, he can use his will-power to do so. It means to consciously getting into a new or different way of living. (Vermeulen, 1999:155-156) Using your will-power to change habits is a choice you make. This connects with the next component of emotional intelligence, namely controlling bad stress. Different choices might make the world's difference on someone's stress level, energy level and life satisfaction.

This skill was also not the focus of a specific session in the current study's intervention programme. It is related to the next skill though, which was incorporated in the sessions about controlling emotions and choosing happiness.

### 3.2.10 Good stress / a sense of happiness

Vermeulen (1999:143-144) differentiates between bad and good stress in the following way:

A person experiences good stress when he is motivated to achieve the things he wants. Good stress is stored energy used productively to achieve what he wants. It moves him to take action – to do what he wants.

Bad stress is the draining experience of only fighting off the things we don't want.

This is energy stored in the mental and emotional components. It drains into the areas causing the stress and prevents action.

According to Vermeulen (1999:144) stress also goes along with the choices people make. It takes self-control and willpower to manage stress (Vermeulen, 1999:157). A person thus chooses how he deals with stress and chooses to manage stress in a positive way.

It seems to the researcher that the different components of emotional intelligence are not really loose entities. They influence each other and are dependent on one another – a mission statement, goals, choices, responsibility, and stress management skills are all interrelated. The following section covers these interrelated emotional intelligence skills in primary school children.

## 3.3 Emotional intelligence in primary school

The middle school age phase during primary school is a time of finding out about the development of a positive self-image and about the meaning of work success in a very early stage. According to the researcher the latter relate to emotional intelligence. If a child in the primary school can be helped to improve the skills mentioned in the above list of aspects of emotional intelligence, it is the researcher's opinion that he will be able to complete his current developmental phase much more successful and satisfactory than without it. This will surely have an influence later in his life, when the skills needed for adulthood are properly rooted in his earlier years of growth.

### 3.3.1 The current generation and the need for emotional intelligence

Vermeulen (1999:184) also discusses the importance of improving emotional intelligence already during the primary school years. According to Vermeulen (1999:184) our current generation's children have a radically different childhood than their previous generations. It is therefore very important to give our children the freedom to become who they really are. Emotionally intelligent children value who they are and learn from their own experiences. This goes along with Gestalt theory's paradoxical theory of change. (Compare Beisser, 1970; Ivens, [sa]:4; Jarosewitsch, 1995:1; Yontef, 1993.) Through

awareness of unfinished business, children will grow to reach their full potential, to be who they really are.

### 3.3.2 Academic success

The researcher previously stated that academic success is one of the important developmental milestones in the primary school and emotionally intelligent children tend to have more success with schoolwork. Vermeulen's (1999:184) opinion is a little different from this statement. According to her, emotionally intelligent children don't value academic success so high that it can have a negative influence on their self-images. Their self-esteems are more valuable than good grades. "Sure they'll need a certain level of education as an entry into business; but with self-employment on the increase your assistance will be more useful if you help them find their passion. Encourage them in what they're good at and assist them in accepting the areas where they don't excel" (Vermeulen, 1999:84-85).

Higher emotional intelligence is thus not really about better grades in school, but wider than this. Better grades might be an additional bonus, but reaching one's true potential is of much higher value. Van Jaarsveld (2003:182) relates with this by saying that a fine line exists between motivating a child and destroying his self-image. Le Roux and De Klerk (2003:11) also states that children would find it much easier to reach their full potential if they are emotionally intelligent. It also goes along with the notion that the child (a human being) should be seen as a holistic whole such as explained by Pert's (1999) concept of the body-mind. In the Gestalt theory this is called "organismic self-regulation", which means "choosing and learning happen holistically, with a natural integration of mind and body, thought and feeling, spontaneity and deliberateness" (Yontef, 1993:10). The higher cognitive functions are very negatively influenced by anxiety and tension so that children cannot properly concentrate and reason. Children who learned to overcome the barrier of negative and unconstructive thoughts experience much more positive feelings. This leads to more energy and enthusiasm to study. Learning and memory are influenced by emotions and emotions are the fuel (energy) to learn or not to be able to learn at all. (Compare Dobson, 2002:38; Fourie, 1998:11-15; Le Roux & De Klerk, 2003:11.)

### 3.3.3 Hierarchy of needs and emotional intelligence

The latter also fulfil in the hierarchy of needs theory of Maslow (compare Maree, 2004:85; Newman & Newman, 1987:349). If a child's physiological and psychological needs are fulfilled, he can also reach higher levels of self-actualisation. Emotional intelligence skills involve the fulfilment of love, belonging and self-esteem needs. These are pre-requisites for the fulfilment of self-actualisation needs, such as cognitive and aesthetic growth (see 2.1.6 Needs). Emotional intelligence in middle-school age will thus incorporate the important developmental needs like self-esteem, interpersonal relationships (group play) and task performance (including academic success). It will also go higher than these skills to a level where the child can be at peace with himself, other people and his environment and can thus fulfil his self-actualisation needs by being aware of his dreams and already starting to live it. "Encourage your children to explore their refreshing innocent imaginations" (Vermeulen, 1999:185). In Gestalt theory fulfilment of needs through the resolving of unfinished business leads to reaching one's full potential and thus growth (Ivens, [sa]:4).

### 3.3.4 Emotional intelligence, the expression of feelings and behaviour

Le Roux and De Klerk (2003:11) add the fact that effective control and expression of emotions by children lead to less behaviour trouble and greater acceptance of other people and their differences. If children express their feelings in negative ways like slamming doors, swearing or wining, they create negative attitudes in other people. Other people might thus treat such children negatively and this might lead to a poor self-image in the children. It will then come back to the influence of negative feelings on learning and living. Such children might then experience feelings of anxiety and tension and this will again have a negative influence on their schoolwork. (Le Roux & De Klerk, 2003:11)

According to the researcher such children will thus fail to reach their developmental milestones effectively. They will experience problems with fulfilling tasks successfully, having a positive self-image and creating meaningful relationships. The latter are all important milestones in the developmental phase of the primary school child. If a child

does not reach the important milestones for his developmental phase, there is still some unfinished business to complete. The child will not be what he really is.

### 3.3.5 Equilibrium and holism

According the Gestalt theory people continuously strive towards equilibrium or balance. According to Ivens ([sa]:1) the person or gestalt is a whole and complete shape. It is made up of parts, but the whole is always more than the sum of its parts. One cannot understand a person if you only look at certain parts, ignoring the dynamics of the person as a whole.

If a child is unhappy and unsatisfied as a result of poor emotional skills he might experience a sense of disequilibrium. According to Ivens ([sa]:2) all parts of a person and his environment are interrelated – the environment is the context in which a person (a child in this study) functions. If all the parts of the child as a whole are not healthy, the child might experience fragmentation. Gestalt theory proclaims that the human being strives towards wholeness. If a specific need is not fulfilled, the person is aware that balance has been disturbed. Ivens ([sa]:2) states that this process of healing or restoring balance then continues towards the person evaluating possibilities to fulfil this need. The person maintains a sense of uniqueness. Ivens ([sa]:2) The child should thus be aware of himself and develop a unique and positive sense of self – a good self-image and self-confidence to meet a certain need. According to Ivens ([sa]:3) growth takes place at this point where a need has been met and balance is restored.

This is a continuous process. Growth towards wholeness incorporates, according to the researcher, the process of increasing emotional intelligence. The researcher is of the opinion that continuous striving to a better level of emotional intelligence is the process of restating equilibrium and continuously growing towards wholeness. According to the Gestalt theory, people tend to experience fragmentation, then needs to grow towards wholeness again to gain balance. (Ivens, [sa]:1-4) A child might experience some unfinished business, which is disturbing the balance and completes the unfinished business. Ivens ([sa]:4) states also that this can only happen if the child is aware of the problems. In Gestalt theory change or growth takes place when the person becomes what he already is – he is fulfilling his potential. (Ivens, [sa]:4)This is a process of growth.

### 3.3.6 Conclusion

In this study the children were led towards better emotional intelligence as a tool to create wholeness and to grow more effectively. The children were made aware of unfinished business so that they can restore their balance and grow through awareness. The children were thus led to heal their selves through a process of awareness and reaching their true potential.

Emotional intelligence needs to be assessed in the current study to determine whether growth has taken place, because this is a research project. The assessment process is covered in the next section.

## 3.4 Assessment of emotional intelligence

Assessment of emotional intelligence of children in this culturally sensitive study, will be done considering the child's cultural context and developmental phase (the middle school age phase).

In the current study the child is seen as a whole, using the body-mind theory of Pert (1999) and holism of Gestalt theory (compare Ivens[sa]; Jarosewitsch, 1995; Yontef, 1993). The PASS theory of intelligence of Naglieri and Das (1997b) was used to assess emotional intelligence in the current study. The Das-Naglieri Cognitive Assessment System is a non-traditional approach to intelligence "because it is based on recent findings about intelligence as a group of cognitive processes" (Naglieri & Das, 1997b:1). The researcher prefers to use this assessment model as it is based on a well-researched theoretical construct (Naglieri & Das, 1997b:1). It assesses the child's emotional intelligence as part of four processes underlying intelligence. Emotional intelligence will thus not be assessed as only part of emotional and/or behavioural processes, but also as part of cognition. The researcher reasons that emotional intelligence incorporates cognitive insight in and control over emotions. The previously listed skills that are

assessed in planning processes indicate cognitive, emotional and behavioural components (2.1.5 Cognitive development – Planning processes).

Furthermore the Das-Naglieri Cognitive Assessment System is a very well researched model, which is internationally applicable to a variety of cultures. Case studies have been done in a variety of cultures world wide to proof the effectiveness of this system as well as its related intervention techniques. These case studies involve children from different cultures like those in the United States, Europe and South Africa. (Das, 2001:113-129)

According to Naglieri and Das (1997b:30) the standardisation sample was stratified according to the variables of age, gender, race, Hispanic origin, geographic region, parental educational attainment, and community setting. The standardisation sample includes 2 200 children ranging from the age of five years, zero months, zero days to 17 years, 11 months, 30 days. A variety of races were included like White, Black, American Indian, Eskimo, Aleut, Asian or Pacific Islander, and other. The standardisation sample is composed of children from both urban and rural communities. (Naglieri & Das, 1997b:30-34)

This assessment system complies with the requirements of the current study using a population, which include primary school children, different cultures and different cognitive, emotional and behavioural processes. The Das-Naglieri Cognitive Assessment System is therefore based on a theory and application that goes along with Gestalt theory's holism. It also includes the opportunity to assess emotional intelligence skills as part of planning processes, which are influenced by all the other cognitive processes.

Salovey and Sluyter (in Maree, 2004:77) discussed the influence of emotional intelligence on cognitive development and found a positive relation. They discussed the strengthening of the frontal lobes as of critical importance to enhance emotional intelligence as well as cognition.

Planning processes (processes in the frontal lobes) are part of the PASS theory of intelligence, which has already been discussed in 2.1.5 Cognitive development in the current study. Planning processes involve the skills underlying emotional intelligence in this research. Children will thus be assessed with the Das-Naglieri Cognitive Assessment System. The scores of the Planning processes will specifically be used as an indication of

the child's current level of emotional intelligence. The scores of the other processes namely attention, successive and simultaneous processes will be used for a better understanding of the child as a whole. The latter is part of knowing the child's process in Gestalt theory.

### 3.5 Improving emotional intelligence

Improving emotional intelligence is focused on children in the primary school and the influence of culture is considered. The emotional intelligence themes in 2.3.2 are covered. Applicable Gestalt play therapy techniques are used in the description of the intervention to improve emotional intelligence.

In this study emotional intelligence will be improved by a holistic or body-mind approach as indicated by the following quote: "Aim for emotional wholeness. When you're upset or feeling sick, try to get to the bottom of your feelings. Figure out what's really eating you. Always tell the truth to yourself. Find appropriate, satisfying ways to express your emotions… Don't programme your body-mind with images of death, destruction, and the bizarre before retiring… health is much more than the absence of illness. Live in an unselfish way that promotes a feeling of belonging, loving kindness, and forgiveness. Living like this promotes a state of spiritual bliss that truly helps to prevent illness. Wellness is trusting in the ability and desire or your body mind to heal and improve itself given half a chance. Take responsibility for your own health – and illness. Delete phrases like, 'My doctor won't let me…' " (Pert, 1999:140).

The latter part of this quote especially supports the theory of Gestalt therapy to take control of one's own life and also the ability of the human being to heal itself if made aware of its own state (compare Beisser, 1970; Yontef, 1993:9).

Naglieri and Das (1997b:120-121) investigated the facilitation of better planning processes. Planning processes are closely related to emotional intelligence skills. They found that verbalisation facilitates the utilisation of planning processes. They also reasoned that a child's use of planning processes should be facilitated rather than directly

instructed. This is called discovery learning. The children "(a) discover the value of strategies that are appropriate for them, (b) do this without being specifically told to, and (c) sometimes cannot articulate the strategies used" (Naglieri & Das, 1997b:120-121). Discovery learning goes along with Gestalt theory where the therapy process of learning is seen as an experiment and where it is very important that the child as client takes responsibility for his own life (Yarosewitsch, 1995:1). Through dialogue, children can continuously be positively reinforced to build their self-images so they will have the courage to change, grow and increase their planning processes. According to Vermeulen (1999:185) the security of feeling loved and a healthy self-esteem are the most valuable gifts adults can give to children.

Children's mental skills are now developed to such an extent that they enjoy researching and finding out information on themes of interest (Stages of development, 2004:1). Activities to improve planning processes (emotional intelligence) thus included compiling of information from internet or CD-ROMs and during the group therapy sessions from magazines.

The following guidelines or themes focused on improving emotional intelligence with Gestalt play therapy were used in this programme. These guidelines are based on a combination of Gestalt theory principles (compare; Ivens[sa]; Jarosewitsch, 1995; Mackewn, 2004; Yontef, 1993; Zinker, 1977), emotional intelligence theory (compare Goleman, 1996; Le Roux & De Klerk, 2001; Le Roux & De Klerk, 2003; Maree, 2004; Vermeulen, 1999), a holistic approach (Pert, 1999) and emotional intelligence skills applicable to children as listed by Le Roux and De Klerk (2003:11):

- Increased awareness – in Gestalt therapy this is the goal of therapy (Yontef, 1993:13) – and self-knowledge
- Being aware of feelings – identifying feelings, expressing feelings using the right vocabulary
- Understanding themselves as a whole – knowing the balance between thoughts and feelings, organismic self-regulation

- Responsibility for their own lives – being in control of their own feelings, choosing the best way of behaving in a certain situation, and being in control of what they think, creating the life they want
- Heeling through relationships with others – empathy, good communication and dialogue (Yontef in Schoeman, 1996b:29)
- Being flexible – understanding different opinions and finding alternative ways to do things and self-organising principles in Gestalt theory (Jarosewitch, 1995)
- Being goal oriented – having a purpose in life, self-actualisation in Gestalt theory (Jarosewitch, 1995)
- Having enough courage to be what they want, being vibrant enough and having enough energy and endurance not to give up when they fail
- Being motivated, enthusiastic and positive
- Making a choice for happiness

## 4. CONCLUSION

This chapter covered the characteristics of primary school children who formed the research groups of the current study as well as the important concepts of emotions and emotional intelligence.

The following chapter will focus on the influence of culture on the intervention programme to increase emotional intelligence in primary school children. The skills identified above were compiled in a programme using Gestalt play therapy techniques applicable to primary school children from different cultures. A good comprehension of culture is, to the researcher's opinion, critical for the development of a cultural sensitive intervention programme.

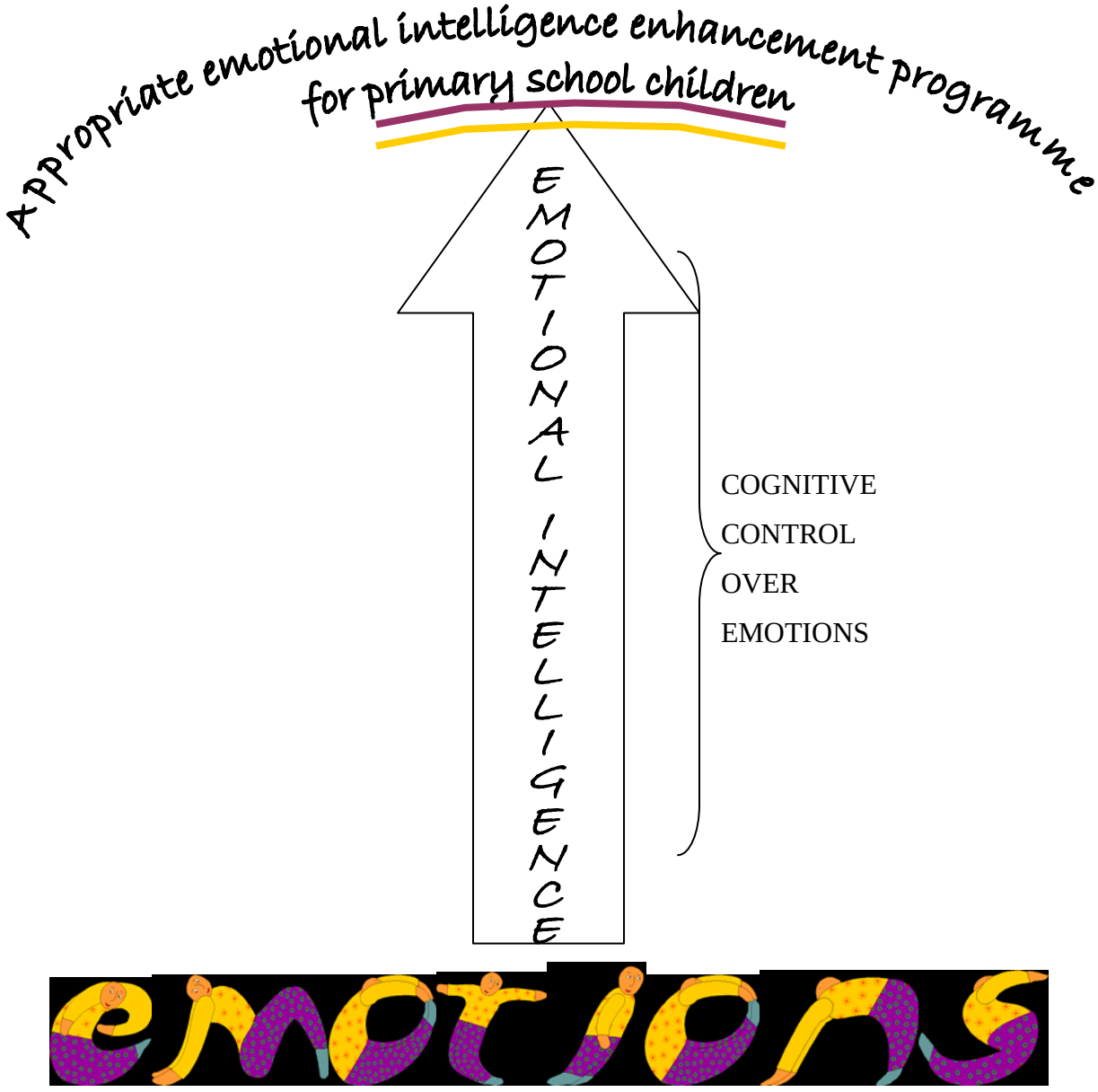


**Figure 2.2: Chapter summary: emotions and emotional intelligence applied to the primary school child using an intervention programme**