Parental Guidelines to enhance Emotional Intelligence among Children in Middle Childhood: A Gestalt Perspective

by

Tessa Anne Eadie

Submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Diaconology

In the subject of
Play Therapy

at the
University of South Africa

Supervisor: Mrs Issie Jacobs

July 2009

Declaration

I declare that *Parental Guidelines to enhance Emotional Intelligence among Children in Middle Childhood: A Gestalt Perspective*, is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

1st July 2009

Signed **Date**

Tessa Anne Eadie • Student number: 3640-904-9

Proof Reading Certification

Hereby I declare that I have language edited and proof read the thesis *Parental Guidelines to enhance Emotional Intelligence among Children in Middle Childhood: A Gestalt Perspective* by Tessa Eadie for the degree MDiac. I am a freelance language practitioner after a career as editor-in-chief at a leading publishing house.

Lambert Daniel Jacobs (MA, MDiv)
30 June 2009

For Dad and Mom,

who have given me both the inspiration and the privilege

to explore both my head and my heart in what I do.

Acknowledgements

Sincerest thanks are due to the following people who have contributed to the completion of this thesis:

My supervisor, Mrs Issie Jacobs, for professional guidance and countless dedicated hours of invaluable input.

The participants, for sharing so generously of their parental experience.

Extended family, friends and colleagues, who have each played a part in creating the collective wave of support which has accompanied me through this project.

My four siblings: DJ, George, Gary and Grets for the constant flow of positivity, thoughtfulness and abundant love which has seen me through this process.

My partner, Roger, for endless encouragement, gentle support and certain, quiet faith in me.

Thank you, thank you.

Abstract

This study takes the form of intervention research in which parental guidelines to enhance emotional intelligence among children in middle childhood are developed from a Gestalt perspective. The researcher makes use of Rothman and Thomas' (1994) Design and Development model and therefore follows phases of problem analysis and project planning, information gathering and synthesis, design, and early development in order to facilitate the research process. Guidelines deal with needs highlighted by parents (with children in middle childhood) who participated in the empirical enquiry. The researcher draws upon literature relating to emotional intelligence and parenting, Gestalt philosophy, and functional elements of relevant, existing programmes in the pursuit of addressing identified concerns. Phases of evaluation and advanced development, and dissemination are not addressed within the limited scope of this project. The possibility of exploring these final two phases of the design and development model therefore provides opportunity for future work.

Key Terms

Emotional Intelligence, Middle Childhood, Gestalt Philosophy, Gestalt Theory, Parenting, Emotional development, Child development.

Contents

Chapter 5 – Functional Elements of Existing Programmes

Chapter 6 – Design and Early Development

Chapter 1
Problem Analysis and Project Planning

1.1 Introduction

Emotional intelligence has been described by Sparrow and Knight (2006:29) as an ability that integrates feeling, thinking and doing. These authors define the concept as "… the habitual practice of thinking about feeling and feeling about thinking when choosing what to do." Connecting with the environment on all three these levels requires a sense of congruency among these aspects of functioning. Emotional intelligence hereby acknowledges the importance of utilising not only the rational mind, but also an emotional capacity in choices made.

Weiten (2001:352) confirms that cognitive ability – traditionally measured by the intelligence quotient (IQ), that is, mental age over chronological age – is too narrow a gauge of a person's overall capability. Diener (in Weiten, 2001:423) further argues that despite the highly valued trait of cognitive intelligence in society, no relationship between intelligence quotient (IQ) scores and happiness has been found. IQ is thus often mistakably generalised to be an indicator of a person's overall capacity for success.

Gardner (in De Klerk & Le Roux, 2003:8) was the first to confirm in his 1983 book *Frames of the Mind* that a broader view of intelligence was imperative, and to this end he developed the spectrum model of intelligence that acknowledges a wider variety of abilities. Gardner (in Goleman, 1995:37) is quoted as once saying,

> We should spend less time ranking children and more time helping them to identify their natural competencies and gifts, and cultivate those. There are hundreds and hundreds of ways to succeed, and many, many different abilities that will help you get there.

Emotional intelligence is a critical component of this expanded view. Emotional intelligence (EI), also referred to as EQ – emotional quotient – is seen here as the ability to attune to

emotions within a context of self awareness and responsibility so that feelings, thoughts and actions align (Cf. Sparrow & Knight, 2006:29). Goleman (1995:43) explains how Salovey includes in his basic definition of emotional intelligence five domains, each categorised by a set of abilities, namely: knowing a person's emotions (that is, self awareness); managing emotions (emotional control); motivating oneself (emotional mobilisation), recognising emotions in others (empathy); and handling relationships (managing emotions in self and others).

With this in mind, the aim of *Parental Guidelines to enhance Emotional Intelligence among Children: A Gestalt Perspective* is to develop guidelines for parents that are geared toward facilitating the growth of EQ among their children in middle childhood (ages 6 - 12). The researcher drew largely on Gestalt philosophy, and the guidelines are therefore placed within such a context. The researcher approached this process by means of the Intervention Design and Development model, a facet of intervention research outlined by Rothman and Thomas (1994).

1.2 Motivation

This section presents key aspects of the study and motivates the relevance of each element. For instance, the significance of addressing emotional intelligence will be discussed, as well as the argument which highlights parents as the most effective agents of change in an intervention which focuses on this aspect of development. The proposed urgency to concentrate on EQ in the period of middle childhood is also considered. Lastly, the suitability of Gestalt philosophy to be used as a framework in designing the guidelines is discussed.

It is the experience of the researcher that whatever it is that brings a child to the playroom, it appears to be their emotional capacity pertaining to abilities such as awareness, empathy, emotional control, motivation and handling of relationships (all characterised by emotional intelligence), that ultimately determines the extent to which the child is able to progress through a troublesome time and emerge enriched and empowered. This view is supported by Salovey, Bedell, Detweiler and Mayer (1999:141) who argue that "... emotional intelligence influences responses to emotional arousal and, as a result, plays a significant role in the coping

process." De Klerk and Le Roux (2003:11) further echo this idea in their assurance that the enhancement of EQ is indeed a necessary pursuit to ensure that children are in a position to optimally embrace challenges presented by their environment in order for them to reach their potential. Increased emotional intelligence and consequent freedom in which children can grow to accept themselves hereby mobilises energy in a way that will assist children in all other areas of life where they are able to operate more positively in educational, cognitive, social, and physical endeavours. These extensive advantages highlight emotional intelligence to be a crucial part of child development. Indeed, Salovey *et al*. (1999:156) "envision [emotional intelligence] as a tool that can help us understand ourselves better, those around us, and the challenges we face."

The researcher has also experienced that the emphasis parents place on their children's emotional development through emotionally challenging periods (for example, coping with a divorce, or social difficulties on the playground) furthermore has a marked impact on their coping. It appears that parents influence the child's ability to cope by playing a supportive role, but mostly by being an example of emotionally intelligent behaviour themselves. Vermeulen (2000:2) argues that modelling of the EQ abilities forms a large component of what children learn of EQ. Parents are thus highlighted as key role players in the development of children's emotional development. However, it is confirmed that there is a growing need for parental education regarding emotional guidance of children so that parents may be in a position to make this kind of impact positively (Wood, 2008). The development of guidelines which aim to aid parents in their approach of the emotional intelligence of their children offers one way in which this need can be met.

The middle childhood phase is characterised by especially formative years. Children in this age group enter into a new kind of questioning of themselves as they spend more and more time among peers, and appreciating other's points of view (Cole & Cole, 2001:580). Erikson (in Weiten, 2001:446) defines the stage of middle childhood in terms of the psychosocial crisis of industry versus inferiority. In this stage the child's "task" is to struggle with the conflicting dialogue of on the one hand having a sense of achievement resulting from mastering activities of industry (for example, excelling at division sums) and on the other hand feeling inadequate

on this level (for example, experiencing difficulty with comprehension). This psychosocial conflict coincides with the start of primary school where the utmost importance is placed on industry (that is, in the form of academic performance). This is of course necessary to prepare children cognitively for future tasks, however, in line with highlighting the emotional aspect of intelligence, it is important to also accommodate the feelings of inferiority that will occur when industry is not mastered, and to appreciate this strong link between mastery and self worth (Weiten, 2001:446).

The psychosocial theory of development suggests that successful resolution of this dichotomy is dependent on sound resolve of earlier psychosocial conflicts (of trust versus mistrust, autonomy versus shame and initiative versus guilt) (Weiten, 2001:446). These previous dichotomies are aimed toward developing a strong sense of self, and from this stage onward this sense of competency and associated feelings of fulfilment that go along with being a contributing individual, determine the successful resolution of psychosocial conflicts which follow. The conflicts which characterise subsequent stages of life, that is, adolescence, early, middle, and late adulthood include: identity versus confusion, intimacy versus isolation, generativity versus self-absorption and integrity versus despair (Weiten, 2001:446).

Looking at development across the lifespan from Erikson's perspective then, it can be seen how middle childhood is a fundamental stage of consolidation, particularly in terms of emotional development. Consequently, it is argued that middle childhood is an especially suitable stage of development in which an intervention aimed toward the enhancement of emotional intelligence could be targeted. Cole and Cole (2001:593) further add that across cultural groups, adults assign 6- and 7- year olds to "a new social category" and compel them to behave accordingly. It seems that there is a graduation to this stage for both children and parents: Children want to be treated more independently and "not like a baby", and parents stop seeing their children as cute, and expect them to take on more autonomous tasks (Cole & Cole, 2001:585). In this way, it is noted that children in middle childhood make the transition from a reactive approach (characteristic of the earlier, more dependable years) to a more active way of relating to the environment. In resonation with Erikson's understanding of middle childhood,

this perspective further strengthens the view that this is an especially receptive stage in which children could benefit from enhanced EQ abilities.

The suitability of the Gestalt philosophy as a framework around which guidelines are built is motivated in terms of the many common principles the subjects (of emotional intelligence and Gestalt philosophy) share. The emphasis on awareness as well as responsibility as characteristics of Gestalt philosophy, for example, echo the very objectives emotional intelligence aims to nurture. Goleman (1995:43) states that "self awareness – recognising a feeling as it happens – is the keystone of emotional intelligence." Jarosewitsch (1995:1) mirrors this viewpoint by saying that "awareness is the key term in Gestalt Therapy … [it] provides an opportunity for change." Perls (in Prendergast, 2006:20) further argues that awareness is in itself "curative" and views it as the only basis of knowledge and communication, and indeed the only way in which it is possible for a person to take responsibility and ownership for their life.

It is noted that Goleman's (1995:43) statement regarding awareness reflects Gestalt theory's emphasis on the present experience of the here-and-now. This opportunity for a consciously phenomenological understanding of life characterised as "… a discipline that helps people stand aside from their usual way of thinking so that they can tell the difference between what is actually being perceived and felt in the current situation and what is residue from the past" allows the perspective awareness affords (Idhe in Yontef, 1981:1). This balance between self and other that creative adjustment calls upon further supports the organism's ability to engage optimally with the environment such that healthy growth may take place.

Illustrating in this way how empowerment, responsibility, change and growth are intertwined with awareness draws the parallel between the objectives of emotional intelligence and Gestalt philosophy and shows how placing guidelines for enhancing the development of emotional intelligence within a Gestalt framework is appropriate and has the potential to be effective.

Another important factor in the discussion of the proposed effectiveness of this intervention is the question of whether emotional intelligence is something that can be improved upon.

Goleman (1995:44) makes the case for plasticity of the brain, arguing that "[l]apses in emotional skills can be remedied; to a great extent each of these domains represents a body of habit and response that with the right effort can be improved on." Therefore, emotional intelligence is something which can be learned, and the guidelines which will be developed through this research process would thus have the potential to indeed enhance EQ levels, and ultimately help children to cope better.

In summary then, placing emphasis on EQ would offer children the self-sustainable support necessary to optimise growth in emotionally challenging situations. It has been argued that where this intervention can be directed at children in the middle childhood, it would reach them at a stage of development when this input is especially beneficial. Identifying parents as the most effective agents of change not only provides the potential for continuity with arguably the greatest stake holders of children's wellbeing, it also converges with parent's expressed needs for more input in this regard (Cf. Wood, 2008). Gestalt philosophy provides a suitable framework in which these guidelines can be developed as it shares many of the fundamental principles on which EQ is based. An intervention that addresses such a positive topic has the potential to bring very meaningful benefits to a large audience given its universal nature, confirming this to be relevant research.

Literature searches of Masters and Doctoral theses from the University of the Free State, University of Stellenbosch, University of Cape Town and University of South Africa confirm that there has been no research on emotional intelligence as seen from a gestalt perspective as it pertains to parents and the potential benefits of their input. This study will not only play a role in filling this research gap but may also offer great value to parents of children in middle childhood.

1.3 Problem formulation

The idea that: firstly, children are exposed to an increased number of stressors and are under increasing pressure to perform; and secondly, parents (who are also exposed to these environmental pressures) are in need of assistance to help support their children as they strive to meet these increasing demands, represents the problem this study aims to address.

According to Schomer (2007) the pace of life has over the past few years increased to a point where this almost frenzied existence has translated into a goal-directed mode of operating. Naidoo (2008:4) states that children are also "… pushing themselves to the limit because of the increased pressure to perform." The South African Depression and Anxiety Group have reported that they are inundated with calls from concerned parents who say their children are falling apart and are in need of support to cope (Naidoo, 2008:4). Furthermore, parents themselves are fighting to cope and they too are in need of support. In this regard, Wood (2008) argues that most parents meet their children in their most exhausted hours and they are in great need of guidance regarding the extent to which they are able to offer emotional support to their children within these stressful conditions. If emphasis is not placed on empowering children on an emotional level, it is possible that an increasing number of children will be seen "falling apart".

There are a number of programmes in place that promote EQ in an attempt to address this problem. Examples of these programmes include: The Six Seconds programme which is based on Stone and Harold's Self Science theory (in Goleman, 1995:303); and Le Roux and De Klerk's (2003) practical guide for parents and teachers. While these guidelines seem to be useful, the researcher has noted there are no guidelines aimed for parents which offer a Gestalt perspective. Where there has been a Gestalt focus, as in the thesis of Calitz (2005) the focus differed. Calitz (2005) aims her research toward working with children in the form of twelve group sessions in which emotional intelligence is developed in a therapeutic context with specific emphasis on cultural sensitivity. While this research is certainly valuable, the researcher argues that guidelines which focus on parents as the agents for change could offer something different. In particular, parents hold the potential for a lasting dedication to developing abilities associated with emotional intelligence among their children.

The links between Gestalt philosophy and emotional intelligence have been made, and the proposed effectiveness of an EQ intervention which draws on Gestalt philosophy has been explained. Emotional intelligence can essentially be viewed as the bridge between the child as an organism and his/her environment in the sense that emotional intelligence abilities as

outlined above will enable the child to engage with the environment optimally. Enhancement of these abilities would facilitate strength of self, and through this clarification of boundaries, allow interactions between the child and his/her surroundings to take place within a healthy permeability. As the relationship between person and environment becomes more comfortable, confidence may be established, aiding the development of self esteem. This would enable children to mobilise themselves to utilise their environment favourably and in turn address the problem here outlined.

By providing parents and children (in turn) with the tools to help them "… identify their natural competencies and gifts, and cultivate those", it is argued that the "… hundreds and hundreds of ways to succeed" may become clearer as the "… many, many different abilities that will help get [a person] there" are made accessible (refer to 1.1). (Cf. Gardner in Goleman, 1995:37.) Broadening children's perspectives of their abilities and various understandings of success in this way may inspire a course for unconventional goals to be chartered. As children become more attuned to their emotions, they will surely gain insight into their unique abilities and chose rather to follow activities which reflect these. Then, even if children subscribe to goal-directed societal values, they will at least be doing that which feeds them energetically rather than that which saps them. Vermeulen (1999b:1) defines stress as the absence of energy and argues that it arises as a consequence of choices made. Vermeulen's (1999b:2) research shows that "[f]eelings are powerful messages and their language talks directly about the choices we're making." Therefore, if children are guided in engaging with their emotions as helpful indicators of the choices they are making, they will be empowered to make choices that will not leave them stressed and without energy but rather fuelled by taking on activities that present a balance between being challenging but also within reach of their skills and abilities.

1.4 Research methodology

This section addresses the rationale behind identifying this research project as a qualitative endeavour, seen within an "applied" perspective, and most appropriately applicable to the Intervention Design and Development process as outlined by Rothman and Thomas (1994).

This study falls within the qualitative research paradigm. In line with Lincoln and Denzin's (in Kelly, 1999b:429) argument that the common denominator of all qualitative research is "… the commitment to study human experience from the ground up", the researcher sought an understanding of the very real human experience of parenting in which expressed needs with regard to children's emotional intelligence are sought on an in-depth level. Described as research that deals with "non-numerical data" (for example, verbal reports), the qualitative approach lends itself to an extensive capturing of data that numbers would not be able to offer. (Oxford Dictionary of Psychology, 2003, s.v "qualitative research"). It was envisaged that such an enquiry would ensure an applicable intervention that may be useful not only on a cognitive level among parents and children, but rather be one that can become a part of their day to day lives. Henning (2004:3) agrees that a qualitative enquiry offers the freedom to explore data richly, in contrast to quantitative research where this process may be limited to capture only what predetermined instruments are able to measure. Also, Le Roux (2008) points out that EQ is an ability that is very difficult to quantify, which further confirms the appropriateness of adopting rather a qualitative approach.

Characteristic of the qualitative research design are various strategies of inquiry which echo the above-mentioned qualities that support the gathering of rich data. One such method is that of the case study. In this instance, the case being studied will be a set of individuals (that is, parents) although according to Fouché (2005:273) cases could also refer to an activity, event, process, or programme. According to Stake (in Fouché & De Vos, 2005:273), the sole criterion for selecting cases for a case study should be "the opportunity to learn", which is the very motivation behind this study; an understanding of the parental experience is sought. De Vos (2005:273) explains that the outcome of this research is an in-depth description of a case and confirms that the researcher is likely to place this information in a larger context. Fouché (2005:273) presents three types of case studies of which the instrumental case study is the most applicable for this research project since it is used to assist the researcher in gaining knowledge about a social issue. The instrumental case study assists the researcher in the gaining of knowledge about the social issue. The researcher made use of case studies as an opportunity to gain information relating to the needs and concerns of parents in the management of their

children's emotional intelligence development. Guidelines were then geared accordingly to facilitate parents in this pursuit.

This research project was approached from an "applied research" perspective. Durrheim (1999:40-41) distinguishes this from "basic research". He explains that "basic research" contributes to knowledge expansion on a certain focus area, whereas "applied research" has a practical application in aiming to contribute toward practical issues. Since this research project is aimed at a practical level where the outcome is aimed at an intervention (in the form of guidelines) rather than on expanding knowledge in the field of EQ, this research is more appropriately viewed from an "applied research" perspective.

De Vos (2005:394) defines "intervention research" as "… studies carried out for the purpose of conceiving, creating and testing innovative human services approaches to preventing or ameliorating problems or to maintaining the quality of life." In line with this perspective, Rothman and Thomas (1994:4) view intervention research to fall within this applied research genre since it is directed at shedding light on, or providing possible solution to problems of a practical nature. These collaborators present intervention research as being comprised of three facets, namely: *Intervention Knowledge Development* (that is, empirical research to extend knowledge of human behaviour relating to human service intervention), *Intervention Knowledge Utilisation* (that is, the means by which the findings from Intervention Knowledge Development research may be linked to, and utilised in practical application, and *Intervention Design and Development* (that is, research which is directed toward interventions) (Rothman & Thomas, 1994:3). The Intervention Design and Development model that can hereby be seen as a facet of Intervention Research, is what was followed for the purposes of this study since the intention is to develop a guideline for parents that is of a practical nature.

1.5 Research process

The Design and Development process is typically a six-phase model. Each phase is constituted by activities that need to be carried out for that phase to be completed in order for the next one to follow (Rothman & Thomas, 1994:9). These phases include: problem analysis and planning; information gathering and synthesis; design; early development; evaluation; and dissemination.

For the purposes of this study of limited scope, however, the process is carried out up until the first step of phase four (that is, including only problem analysis and planning, information gathering and synthesis, design, and early development).

Echoing the discussion which places this study within an applied research context, Fawcett, Suarez-Balcazar, Balcazar, White, Paine, Blanchard and Embree (1994:25) verify that intervention research is an approach that attempts "… as much as possible to fuse the dual purposes of applied science, … promoting understanding of individual and community conditions and contributing to their improvement." With this in mind, the researcher set about seeking to appreciate the concerns of parents with regard to the enhancement of emotional intelligence among their children in middle childhood, with the view to then make some contribution toward meeting these needs in the form of Gestalt guidelines which would address such matters. In order for this to have been achieved, the above-mentioned phases were followed. This section introduces each of these four phases of the research process by outlining the steps applicable to each.

1.5.1. Phase 1: Problem analysis and project planning

An imperative starting point for the research process is to identify clients, and then collaboratively identify their needs such that the goals for the intervention may be focused appropriately. Fawcett *et al*. (1994:27) echo this viewpoint, confirming that goals and targets should be identified together with the project's subjects such that an environment of support will be created among the target population, professional community, and general public. Critical to this first phase, "problem analysis and projection planning", therefore includes consideration of: identifying and involving clients; gaining entry and co-operation from settings; identifying concerns of the population; analysing these concerns or problems identified; and setting goals and objectives that will guide the research process (Fawcett *et al* ., 1994:27).

1.5.1.1. Identifying and involving clients

Strydom (2005a:192) argues the concept of sampling to be of the most important in the research process. The sample group must be considered to be representative of the greater

population or universe from which it is selected in order for the information gleaned to be generalisable. Gravetter and Forzan (in Strydom, 2005a:193) confer that the "simultaneous existence" of a population and universe must be appreciated in order for the sampling process to take place fittingly. With respect to terminology, Arkava and Lane (in Strydom, 2005a:193) define the "universe" as the group of people who possess qualities of interest to the research, and the "population", as a smaller portion of this universe, with specific constraints.

In this study, the universe consisted of parents in the Western Cape with children in middle childhood. The population included the constraint that these were parents of children in middle childhood at a specific school in the Western Cape. The sample then included those parents who agreed to participate in the study.

The researcher made use of a non-probability sampling technique, namely: "purposive sampling". This is described by Singleton (in Strydom, 2005a:203) as a sampling method "… based entirely on the judgement of the researcher, in that a sample is composed of elements that contain the most characteristic, representative or typical attributes of the population." The requirements of participants in the sample were that parents are willing, had submitted their informed consent in writing, and were available for an interview. The criteria were such that parents who could not attend the interview as a couple were not excluded. Also, there were no criteria relating to language spoken. It is noted that limitations would naturally accompany this seemingly narrow selection of participants since they were only sampled from one school, however, the researcher interpreted the results within this context.

The sample size was to be determined by data acquired; once patterns of information started to repeat themselves, this would indicate the close of the sampling process. This is known as "sampling to redundancy" and involves not defining one's sample size at the outset, but rather interviewing more and more participants until no new information is found, and increasing the sample size no longer serves a purpose (Kelly, 1999a:381). At the outset of the study it could therefore not be determined how big the sample size would be. However, at the 11th interview, no new information was gathered and the sampling process was brought to a close.

Durrheim (1999:41) explains how sampling is influenced by the type of research perspective adopted, that is, applied research in this case. Where basic research would require a highly generalisable population group to make the conclusions gleaned meet the requirements of being transferable to a wider population and hereby contribute to the knowledge base, "[a]pplied research aims only to generalise the findings of a study to the specific context under study in order to assist decision-makers in drawing conclusions about the particular problems with which they are dealing" (Durheim, 1999:41).

1.5.1.2. Gaining entry and cooperation from settings

Through assignment as an intern Play Therapist at a Primary School in Cape Town, the researcher was known to staff and parents, aiding access to participants. The principal of the school was supportive of the work and became a valuable contributor in the research process through her ability to play a "gatekeeping" role in involving parents in the study. De Vos (2005:396) places value on this collaborative possibility by stating that it gives informants a sense of ownership in the project and its potential outcomes, incentivising them to make worthwhile contributions.

This collaborative relationship that ensures participants are seen as co-researchers brings with it an egalitarian spirit which also offers advantages in terms of ethical considerations. Strydom (2005b:57) cautions against relating to participants from a position of superior expertise, disregarding participants' need to be fully informed about the research goals, process or outcomes. Holding participants in high regard is a sound basis for ethical decision making. This attitude is supported by literature which emphasises the importance of ethical principles being internalised in the personality of the researcher such that all ethically guided decision making is an integral part of the researcher's lifestyle (Strydom, 2005b:57).

This broad ethical attitude is translated into a number of ethical principles which Strydom (2005b:58) identifies. It is emphasised that consideration is given to issues pertaining to: avoidance of harm; informed consent; deception of subjects and/or participants; violation of privacy/ anonymity/ confidentiality; actions and competence of researcher; cooperation with contributors; release of publications of the findings; and the debriefing of subjects or

participants. The researcher considers each of these ethical principles as they apply to this project:

- Avoidance of harm and informed consent

Strydom (2005b:58) warns the researcher against physical and emotional discomfort that he/ she might cause the participant in the investigative process. This is linked to informed consent in that participants who are informed and prepared for the content of interviews would be less vulnerable to discomfort. It is suggested that participants be thoroughly informed beforehand about the potential impact of the investigation. In this study, participants were fully informed of the research process, goals, and outcomes. This information was provided at the outset of the research in the form of a written letter (see Addendum 1.1) as well as via telephone conversation. Participants then signed this letter voluntarily indicating their informed consent.

That participants be fully informed about the process is also in line with the recommended collaborative relationship based on respect. (Cf. Strydom, 2005b:57.) Not only does this serve to meet an ethical responsibility, it also "… resolves, or at least relieves any possible tensions, aggression, resistance, or insecurity of the subjects" (Strydom, 2005b:60). Indirectly, this would ensure increased participation and potentially richer data. The Health Professions Council of South Africa (2007:10) specify in their code of ethics that information on a form is not sufficient and that facts need to be verbally communicated as well to ensure participants have a full understanding of the research process and what their involvement will be. The researcher confirms that this ethical code is adhered to; the informative letter is supplemented by telephone and face-to-face conversation preceding the interview.

- Deception of subjects and/ or participants

Deception "… involves withholding information or offering incorrect information in order to ensure participation of subjects when they would otherwise possibly have refused it" (Corey *et al*. in Strydom, 2005b:60). There was no need for deception in the case of this study. On the contrary, the more the participants appreciated of the goal of

the study, the more valuable their contribution. All information about the study was provided upfront and there was thus no deception in this study.

- Violation of privacy/ anonymity/ confidentiality

Terms applying to each of confidentiality, privacy and anonymity are introduced in the afore-mentioned letter to potential participants. Participants will know that all identifying factors (for example, names, ages) will not be made public in order to ensure anonymity. Publication of data will be in terms of a letter only, that is, "participant A". The information is stored on a password-protected computer which only the researcher uses in order to maintain confidentiality. Interviews will be held in a private room at the school which would further ensure the privacy of participants.

Information given anonymously ensures the privacy of subjects. Also, the right to privacy may be protected by means of confidentiality. In these ways, the interrelated concepts of privacy, anonymity and confidentiality are respected in this study (Strydom, 2005b:61).

- Actions and competence of researchers

Strydom (2005b:64) emphasises that part of the ethical obligation researchers hold is to ensure their competence in the research carried out. Sensitive aspects of the research are especially important in this context. The researcher feels self-assured in her approachable, non-judgemental way of reaching people and is certain that this, in combination with her background qualifications and experience, and the supervision of a study leader ensured the success of the research tasks which constituted the process.

- Release or publication of the findings

Strydom (2005b:65) urges researchers to represent findings in the report as accurately and objectively as possible. The researcher is committed to this objective. Babbie (in Strydom, 2005b:66) suggests that even where research has had unexpected results, these too should be included. The reason for this suggestion is that after all, the utilisation of information gained is the very essence of research. The researcher is

committed to honouring this; every effort will be made to capture data as richly as possible. The objectivity of the researcher's study leader will further ensure the data is interpreted in a way that is unbiased.

- Debriefing

Dane (in Strydom, 2005b:67) sees "… debriefing sessions as the ideal time to complete the learning experience that began with agreeing to participate". Furthermore, debriefing sessions offer the opportunity to clear up any misconceptions, and minimise any harm experienced in the study. This study had an uplifting nature to it in that emotional intelligence focuses on the enhancement of the child and so the researcher anticipated the interviews would echo this positive standpoint. However, the researcher included extra time after every interview, allowing opportunity for debriefing should the need for this arise. Furthermore, if the participant is in need of more guidance and containment the researcher will offer them three sessions and then refer as applicable, if necessary.

In the above ways, the researcher feels confident in that all ethical considerations have been sufficiently taken into account.

1.5.1.3. Identifying concerns of the population

In the pursuit of identifying the concerns of the population, researchers are warned against bringing their own ideas pertaining to the problem and its associated needs (De Vos, 2003:397). Bracketing a person's own perceptions which might be based on literature and previous experience in exchange for observing as objectively as possible the problems as defined by participants themselves is acknowledged as an important factor to be mindful of in this part of the research process.

The ways in which this study is suited to a qualitative rather than quantitative approach have been outlined (refer to 1.4). The implication for data collection prescribed by a qualitative paradigm is the existence of a rich environment in which concerns may be identified. Greeff (2005:292) outlines the various interviews employed by qualitative research. One such

interviewing strategy which was most applicable to this study is the *semi-structured interview*, since it is typically "… organised around areas of particular interest, while still allowing considerable flexibility in scope and depth" (May in Greeff, 2005:292). An interview schedule is prepared with the idea that questions provide direction for the interview as opposed to an agenda. Creswell (1998:124) calls this the "interview protocol" and suggests it consist of five open-ended questions. In this way, data will be collected in a focused way, but also within an environment in which information not apparently applicable to the topic will also have the opportunity to emerge. Greeff (2005:296) states that within this relationship between interviewer and participant where the participant is given such scope to direct the process, the researcher is encouraged to view the participant (in this case the different parents) as the expert of their experience and thus allow them maximum opportunity to tell their story.

Coertze (in Strydom, 2005c:281) emphasises the value of in-depth interviewing. Interviews are recorded by means of a dictaphone to ensure data is represented accurately. Furthermore, the researcher makes use of observation and field notes as a means of collecting data to ensure the interviewing is in fact thorough. Judd *et al*. (in Strydom 2005c:281) argue that field notes should consist of "… everything the researcher sees and hears". Once the data collection process comes to an end, the researcher may then have a very rich compilation of information from which to draw.

1.5.1.4 Analysing concerns or problems identified

Once the data is collected and the needs and concerns of the population have been established it will be necessary to analyse this material in such a way that information can be transformed into concrete suggestions that may guide the intervention process. Fawcett *et al*. (1994:30-31) propose a list of questions that are useful in guiding the analysis of problems. These are:

- What is the nature of the discrepancy between "ideal" and "actual" conditions that defines the problem?
- For whom is the situation a problem?
- What are the negative consequences of the problem for affected individuals?
- Who (if anyone) benefits from conditions as they are now?
- How do they benefit?

- Who should share the responsibility of solving the problem?
- What behaviours and of whom, need to change for clients to consider the problem solved?
- What conditions need to change to establish or support the necessary change?
- At what level should the problem be addressed?

It was anticipated that problems and concerns identified within the interviews were to be analysed in terms of these questions so that intervention would be guided. Furthermore, it was planned that the transcribed interviews were to be explored by means of Creswell's (1998:142) data analysis spiral. This method encourages the researcher to engage in "… the process of moving in analytic circles rather than using a fixed linear approach" (Creswell, 1998:142). The researcher started with the data from the interview and through systematic revisiting of this information emerged with an account of the data presented. This method ensures rich data analysis, echoing Kelly's (1999a:47) recommendation that data analysis should match the research paradigm. Figure 1.1 below illustrates the concept of Creswell's (1998:142) data analysis spiral. Once the collection of data had taken place (Refer to Figure 1.1), it was organised into various themes and units. Data was then managed according to these themes and provided foundation for reflection, note writing and cross questioning. Literature was consulted in order to place reported experiences of the participants as well as reflections of the researcher in the context of other responses as well as the broader field of emotional intelligence, facilitating comparisons and the refinement of categories. This process of further classification and interpretation facilitated a structured understanding of data collected and allowed the representation of parental needs relating to EQ into an account here presented (Creswell, 1998:142).

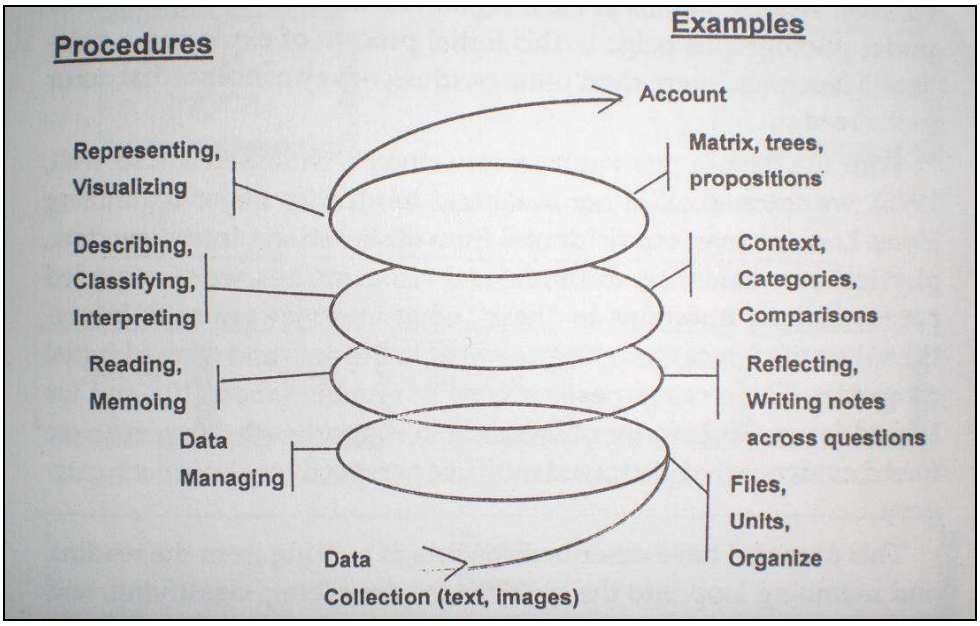

Figure 1.1 Data Analysis Spiral (Creswell, 1998:143).

1.5.1.5 Setting goals and objectives

De Vos (2005:398) advises that "[s]tating broad goals and specific objectives clarifies the proposed ends and means of the intervention research project." To this end, the goal for this study is to develop a set of parental guidelines which offer a Gestalt perspective in enhancing the emotional intelligence of children in middle childhood. The objectives that need to be achieved in order to reach such a goal are listed below. The researcher is required to:

- Identify and involve participants.
- Identify and analyse the concerns of the identified population.
- Conduct a literature review which forms part of phase two of the Design and Development model and which explores the concepts and principles surrounding EQ, child development theories in middle childhood, parenting and Gestalt theory and how these all relate to EQ. Existing sources, natural samples, and functional elements of existing programmes are to be drawn on for this purpose.
- Design an observational system and specify procedural elements of the intervention as phase 3 of the research.
- Develop a prototype.
- Draw conclusions and recommendations for parents and for further research.

1.5.2 Phase 2: Information gathering and synthesis

This phase of Intervention Design and Development ensures that research does not "reinvent the wheel" (Fawcett *et al*., 1994:31-32). To this end, the phase addresses the need to consult: existing information sources, natural examples, and functional elements of successful models.

1.5.2.1 Using existing information sources

De Vos (2005:399) emphasises the importance of a literature review that considers related empirical research, reported practice, and identified innovations relevant to the particular concern being studied. Existing information sources that address EQ, middle childhood development, and specific Gestalt concepts which mirror the main aspects of EQ were studied. Fawcett *et al*. (1994:32) further encourage intervention researchers to adopt a broad point of reference whereby their topic is considered across a range of fields.

Literature by key players in the field of Gestalt theory has been consulted for the purposes of this research project. Works by Yontef (1992, 1993), Oaklander (1988), Latner (1992), and Schoeman (1996) are considered here to be sources that will form an integral part of the literature review as these are considered to be classical work. Influential authors in the field of emotional intelligence are Salovey, Mayer, Goleman, Vermeulen, De Klerk and Le Roux, Bar-On. The researcher has noted the difference between popularised versus academic perspectives on the topic of emotional intelligence and is mindful of this in the literature enquiry. The child development aspect of emotional intelligence has also been represented by acknowledgement of Erikson's contribution. Also, the subject of intervention, with a particular focus on guidelines compilation will be consulted so that pitfalls in this type of work may be avoided. Engaging this topic from these broad angles holds promise for valuable research and will in this way follow the recommendations hereby outlined. (Cf. De Vos, 2005:399; Fawcett *et al*., 1994:32.)

1.5.2.2 Studying natural examples

De Vos (2005:399) states that a "… particularly useful source of information is observing how community members are faced with the problem being studied, or a similar problem, have attempted to address it." Derek Wood for one, an educational psychologist with many years of

experience with young people and an appreciation for the broader view of intelligence, was consulted for this reason. This promises to guide the research process in identifying what has been successful in previous management of this matter. The researcher confirms these sources will serve to supplement the literature study, rather than form part of a sample group.

1.5.2.3 Identifying functional elements of successful models

De Vos (2005:400) discusses how, by studying successful and unsuccessful models or programmes that have attempted to deal with the targeted issue, researchers are able to identify useful elements of an intervention. Building upon the work of others in this way is argued to be constructive in guiding activities of the design and development process.

Fawcett *et al*. (1994:33) suggest a number of aspects to be considered during this process. Researchers are urged to look at successful and unsuccessful models and assess what it was that made a particular program effective or caused it to fail. The importance of looking at events and conditions (for example, organisational features or client characteristics) that were critical to this success or failure is noted. It is also suggested that the researcher determines what information users of these programmes were provided with. Fawcett *et al*. (1994:33) also suggest looking at whether training procedures were used (for example, modelling and role playing, practice, or feedback) and to ascertain if any positive or negative consequences helped establish and maintain desired changes. Also, where barriers, policies, or regulations have been removed to make it easier for the changes to occur, these factors need to be assessed as well. It is argued that consideration of these important functions of both successful and failed programs will certainly guide this vital activity in the intervention process. To this end, the researcher considers: De Klerk and Le Roux's (2003) *Emotional Intelligence for Teens,* Elias, Tobias and Friedlander's (1999) *Emotionally Intelligent Parenting,* Phelan's (2003) *1-2-3 Magic,* and Gurney and Gurney's (1960s) *Filial Therapy.*

1.5.3 Phase 4: Design

The "design" and "early development" phases are notably interrelated (Fawcett *et al*., 1994:33). This phase of research concerns the two very important tasks of designing an observational system, and specifying procedural elements of the intervention.

1.5.3.1 Observational system design

De Vos (2005: 400) explains that "[o]nce the focus of change is identified, it is necessary to define these behavioural events in ways that can be observed." This feedback system is crucial in the development process. Outcomes of the intervention may be measured by means of direct observation, independent observers, or self-monitoring for events that may be difficult to observe directly. In order for this to be an effective process, there are three working parts, namely:

- Definitions of the behaviour or products associated with the problem are defined in operational terms
- Examples and non-examples of the behaviours or products are provided to help discern occurrences of the behaviour product
- Scoring instructions are prepared to guide the recording of desired behaviours or products (De Vos, 2005:400).

Once the needs of the participants have been identified, a literature study has been undertaken and functional elements of other models have been investigated, an observational system is developed. Emotional intelligence will be broken down into clearly defined, measurable behaviours so that the guidelines may be evaluated. Parents will then be able to use this observational system as a tool to not only assess whether enhancement of their child's EQ have been established, but also to become aware of EQ among their children as well as themselves.

1.5.3.2 Specifying procedural elements of the intervention

Procedural elements are those environmental aspects of the intervention that allow change to take place. These need to be noted so that future change agents may be able to replicate this change. Among some examples of these procedural elements are: the use of information, skills and training for their acquisition; environmental change strategies; policy change or enforcement strategies; and reinforcement or punishment procedures (De Vos, 2005:401). Procedural elements anticipated to be applicable to implementing parental guidelines to enhance the EQ of children were only specified once the data had been collected and the observational system developed. Examples include parental compliance (for parents), and competence in Gestalt therapy (for the facilitator).

1.5.4 Phase 3: Early development

Thomas (in De Vos, 2005:401) explains development as the process whereby a new intervention is put in place on a "trial basis". Improvements and recommendations observed along the way then guide the refinement of this intervention product.

1.5.4.1 Development of a prototype or preliminary intervention

This stage concerns the preliminary steps relating to implementation of an intervention and the proposal of a prototype. As outlined above, this can then be improved upon as it is executed (De Vos, 2005:402). Although recommendations are made before concluding the study, this is the final stage of the research process given the limited scope of this dissertation as explained at the outset (refer to 1.5).

1.6 Key concepts

The main concepts addressed in this research are: emotional intelligence, middle childhood, and Gestalt theory. This section outlines each of these.

1.6.1 Emotional intelligence

Salovey and Mayer (in Bar-On & Parker, 2000:45) define this term as "[t]he ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions." Seen in this way, EQ is understood to be an overall capacity to appreciate emotions and the associated ability to take control of them so that interaction with the environment is mutually beneficial. Sparrow and Knight (2006:29) echo this viewpoint in defining emotional intelligence as that which integrates feeling, thinking and doing (refer to 1.1). This understanding is valuable in its suggestion of a sense of integration.

1.6.2 Enhance

"Enhance" is defined as that which intensifies or improves (that is, something already good) (The Pocket Oxford Dictionary of Current English, 1996, s.v. "enhance"). From this perspective it can be understood that "enhance", as it pertains to this study, refers to the improvement and expansion of emotional intelligence. This implies that a level of emotional

intelligence exists in the majority of children. The guidelines developed in this project set out to work with these levels and "enhance" them.

1.6.3 Middle childhood

Berk (2006:6) defines middle childhood as the phase of development applying to age groups 6 -11 years. In this definition it is highlighted that socialisation, and advances in self understanding are characteristic of growth in this period of childhood development.

Cole and Cole (2001:465) describe middle childhood rather in terms of the life challenges that characterise this stage of development. The social dynamic of increased responsibilities is emphasised; as children spend more and more time away from the home, they are increasingly influenced by peers and social institutions such as school. They are expected to take more responsibility for their own tasks, and are often expected to start making a contribution around the house during this age group.

In this study, "children in middle childhood" therefore refers to children between the ages of 6 and 12 years old, and may be male or female.

1.6.4 Gestalt theory

Gestalt theory is associated with the work of Fritz Perls (The Penguin of Psychology, 2001, s.v "Gestalt therapy"). Based on the concepts of wholeness and unity, the approach urges therapists and clients to look at their experiences in their entirety such that awareness may be broadened. This is the most characteristic element of the approach. Clarkson (1999:1) echoes this understanding and describes Gestalt as:

> … the shape, pattern, the whole form, the configuration. Gestalt connotes the structural entity that is both different from and much more than the sum of its parts. The aim of the Gestalt approach is for a person to discover, explore and experience his or her own shape, pattern and wholeness.

According to Oaklander (2006:46), this theory influences a therapy that is "process-orientated" rather than "content-focused", emphasising that the approach is not centred on changing

behaviour, but rather allowing children to become aware of their own processes that facilitate certain types of behaviour and coming from this angle, allowing change to take place in a paradoxical way.

The guidelines this study aims to develop will have such a focus, enabling parents to raise awareness of their children's behaviour rather than specifying a set of attributes that they are encouraged to adhere to.

1.7 Chapter outline

Delport and Fouché (2005:352) state that qualitative research reports rarely follow a strict format with standard sections. In this study, however, the research process is quite linear in its proceedings and does provide opportunity for a structured approach. The research report will present each aspect of the research process in the following respective chapters:

Chapter 1 (entitled, Problem Analysis and Project Planning) takes the form of an introduction in which the research problem as well as ways in which the researcher plans to address this problem will be outlined. Some background on EI is presented, as well as key concepts that relate to the research are defined.

Chapter 2 (entitled, Empirical Findings) presents findings from the empirical part of the research process. In other words, data gathered through interviews is presented. Some literature is included here, however, the main focus of the literature control will be in the three chapters which follow.

Chapter 3 (entitled, Emotional Intelligence and Parenting) gives attention to what literature says about EI and how this may be related to the empirical findings which raise issues pertaining to parenting in middle childhood.

Chapter 4 (entitled, Emotional Intelligence and Gestalt Philosophy) addresses the topic of emotional intelligence from a Gestalt perspective, and as such highlights appropriate principles that are seen as holding relevance to the subject, and value in the development of guidelines.

Chapter 5 (entitled, Functional Elements of Existing Programmes) explores the elements of existing programmes that address the enhancement of EI. Particularly successful

aspects of these programmes are looked at, and used to direct the following stages of design and early development in which an intervention will be proposed.

Chapter 6 (entitled, Design and Early Development) fulfils the final tasks of the research as guidelines are proposed along with an appropriate observational system.

Lastly, Chapter 7 (entitled, Recommendations and Conclusions) consists of a discussion that evaluates the research process and proposes suggestions for future work on this topic.

An illustration of the chapter outline can be found as Addendum 1.3 and be referred back to, thus serving to orientate the reader. This table provides a clear picture regarding ways in which the phases of the Design and Development model of intervention research have been integrated into the chapters.

1.8 Summary

This chapter outlines the research topic by providing a context in which *Gestalt Guidelines to enhance Emotional Intelligence among Children* can be seen as relevant research. The research problem is presented in a way that indicates scientific merit. A discussion of research methodology proposes a research process based on the widely acknowledged Design and Development model of "intervention research" outlined by Rothman and Thomas (1994) which signifies feasible implementation of the project. Key concepts, including; emotional intelligence, middle childhood development, and Gestalt theory were also introduced and explored.

Chapter 2
Empirical Findings

2.1 Introduction

The information in this chapter is presented within the context of the Design and Development model of intervention research as outlined in 1.5 as it fulfils stages 2, 3 and 4 of phase 1, namely: identifying concerns of the population, analysing these concerns or problems identified, and setting goals and objectives that will guide the research process further (refer to 1.7). In highlighting concerns that relate to participants' experience of the emotional development of their children, it is ensured that guidelines developed will be done so in a way that meets these expressed needs.

The data has been classified according to various common issues which arose in the interviews. Themes that came up were both in direct response to questions posed, as well as through more general conversation accommodated by the semi-structured nature of the interviews (Refer to Addendum 2.1). These themes are used to facilitate the presentation of data in this chapter. Identified parental needs and concerns informed the focus of the literature chapters which follow. Although some literature is used here to facilitate the discussion of empirical data, the literary emphasis is rather in the following chapters. (Refer to chapters 3 and 4.)

Table 2.1 overleaf provides a summary of the main and sub themes that were identified from the empirical data. Theme 1, which is "Knowledge of EQ and appreciation of its importance", addresses participants' existing "Understanding of emotional intelligence" and "Appreciation of the importance of emotional intelligence". These discussions provide a valuable starting point where needs around basic education of the topic are determined, and levels of appreciation surrounding the advantages offered by emotional intelligence were gauged. Theme 2, "Raising an emotionally intelligent child", explores the five domains of emotional intelligence which have been established for the purposes of this study. These are discussed with respect to the ways in which participants manage these areas of emotional development, hereby assessing their needs in the respective spheres. Theme 3 acknowledges various

identified challenges to this area of development. School system principles, insufficient resources among teachers, external influences and participants' own level of emotional intelligence were cited as key factors which posed threats to healthy development of EQ among their children.

Theme 1: Knowledge of EQ and appreciation of its importance

Sub themes:

- Understanding of emotional intelligence
- Appreciation of the importance of emotional intelligence

Theme 2: Raising an emotionally intelligent child

Sub themes:

- 2.1 Knowing one's emotions (self awareness)
- 2.2 Managing one's emotions (emotional control)
  - *2.2.1 Ways in which participants encouraged emotional awareness*
  - *2.2.2 Awareness and field factors*
- 2.3 Motivating oneself (emotional mobilisation)
  - *2.3.1 Delayed gratification*
  - *2.3.2 Painful or uncomfortable emotions*
  - *2.3.3 Appropriate action (not acting out)*
- 2.4 Emotions in others (empathy), and
- 2.5 Handling relationships (managing emotions in self and others)
  - *2.5.1 Conflict*
  - *2.5.2 Parent-child dynamic*

Theme 3: Challenges to raising an emotionally intelligent child

Sub themes:

- 3.1 Principles on which schooling system is based clash with those of EQ
- 3.2 Teachers lack resources to deal with emotional development
- 3.3 External influences (peer pressure, drugs, alcohol)
- 3.4 Participants' level of emotional intelligence

Table 2.1 Table presenting main- and subthemes, and *categories* as identified by the empirical data.

2.2 Theme 1: Knowledge of EQ and appreciation of its importance

It was important for the researcher to get a sense for the extent to which the concept of EQ is both understood as well as appreciated by the participants. It is argued that this information would assist in building the case for how valuable an intervention in the area of emotional development would in fact be. Furthermore, this information would be helpful in establishing the level at which guidelines be pitched.

2.2.1 Subtheme 1.1: Understanding of emotional intelligence

Participants varied in their knowledge of emotional intelligence from those who had not heard of the term before receiving the letter for the interview, to those who had done a fair amount of reading up, or even attended a course on the topic. However, all participants had at least a basic understanding of emotional intelligence as well as some appreciation for the fact that it was a necessary part of development. Also common to all participants (regardless of their existing knowledge) was a request for more information on the topic of emotional intelligence.

On the end of the spectrum where participants exhibited limited understanding of EQ, responses were a) vague, for example, “Not sure… well it is separate from academic intelligence” and b) basic, for example, describing the concept as “…an ability to be in touch with one’s emotions and in a position to communicate these feelings.” There were some other rudimentary responses defining emotional intelligence as “the ability to cope” and describing an emotionally intelligent child as “well rounded”. At the other end of the spectrum, certain participants conveyed a more in depth understanding of the concept, defining it as “… intelligence which includes skills that influence how we react to people, for example, listening skills, self awareness, confidence and behavioural competencies influencing how we react to people.”

While none of these responses were incorrect as such, the researcher felt they were incomplete and on the whole quite limited. It is acknowledged that the notion of emotional intelligence is a broad concept and participants could have found it difficult to define for this reason. Nevertheless, the evidence is conclusive in supporting the argument that participants would

benefit from receiving more information regarding the constituents of the concept. A need for more education around the topic is hereby established.

2.2.2 Subtheme 1.2: Appreciation of the importance of emotional intelligence

Following knowledge of emotional intelligence was participants' level of appreciation for its importance. Every one of the participants acknowledged that emotional intelligence was important to the development of their children. Examples of statements which support this notion are: "… emotional intelligence *is* so important to me and my children" and "… things are different to when we were growing up and we need to strengthen our support systems to compensate for these threats; emotional intelligence is part of this strengthening."

One participant commented that once she had attended a course on emotional intelligence, she immediately became more aware of just how much this aspect of functioning influences a person's success. This participant describes her experience of increased awareness as "an empowering revelation" and argues that "[b]ecause we place such a lot of emphasis on the academic side you forget, not that you forget, but you're not made aware that there is another side to things." This supports the view that a deeper understanding of EQ would serve to increase a parent's sense of its importance. By knowing more about the intricacies of emotional intelligence and just how important these are, it is argued that more parents could be empowered similarly, and interactions with their children could be positively influenced.

The researcher, however, acknowledges that it is one thing to appreciate the importance of a topic such as emotional intelligence, but quite another to build an understanding of it, to realise that there are things parents can actively do to encourage its development, and furthermore to actually do these things. In other words, simply having knowledge on the topic and an appreciation for its importance does not necessarily mean that parents will be empowered. Nevertheless, building sufficient awareness of EQ is still a significant first step in encouraging parents to realise its importance so that they are ultimately motivated to implement its principles in their daily parenting interactions.

It must be said however, that while this appears to be a crucial step in the process, the researcher feels that perhaps even more important than knowledge and intellectual appreciation for the importance of EQ could be participants' own level of emotional intelligence. There seemed to be a ceiling on how much could be conveyed from parent to child on a sustainable level where participants themselves displayed gaps in their emotional intelligence. Vermeulen (2000:1) concurs that while

> … many parents express great interest in wishing to learn more about raising emotionally intelligent children, [and] there are some helpful books on the subject, [it is] only people with a healthy level of EQ [who] can hope to raise children with a high degree of this vital intelligence.

Ultimately what is needed is an increase in levels of EQ among parents. Notwithstanding, knowledge and appreciation are still, as argued, an important step in the process and are included as important features in the guidelines. These two aspects will, however, be motivated in such a way that highlights the importance of parents being committed not only to encouraging development of EQ skills among their children, but also amongst parents themselves.

It is acknowledged, that investing time and energy into the emotional development of a child (not least of all themselves as well) is not always possible when parents are occupied with fulfilling more basic needs such as food, shelter and financial security (Bar-On in *Emotional Intelligence*, 2004). It is noted that the majority of participants who volunteered for interviewing were either unemployed out of choice, or if they did work did so only part time, implying that these most basic needs had been met in the majority of the sample. One participant actually commented on financial security and the luxury of time as key aspects that give her the opportunity to spend time on EQ development with her children. It is concluded that the participants' view on EQ development is that it is featured high up on the hierarchy of needs, and that those interviewed have the opportunity to give EQ development attention, but are in need of guidance and encouragement on how to do so more effectively.

Therefore, although in general participants had a basic understanding of emotional intelligence as well as a fair appreciation for its importance, the researcher felt all parents could benefit, in varying degrees and on different levels, from gaining more information regarding aspects of emotional intelligence. Literature confirms that emotional intelligence is indeed something that can be learned at any stage of one's life (Salovey, 2008).

2.3 Theme 2: Raising an emotionally intelligent child

When the concept of emotional intelligence was introduced in 1.1, it was mentioned that Salovey (in Goleman, 1995:43) includes in his basic definition of emotional intelligence five domains, each categorised by a set of abilities, namely: knowing one's emotions (that is, self awareness); managing one's emotions (emotional control); motivating oneself (emotional mobilisation), recognising emotions in others (empathy); and handling relationships (managing emotions in self and others).

Although this definition has been developed over the years and is now constituted rather by a more refined four branch model outlined by Salovey and Mayer (1997:11), the researcher felt the former five domain model conveys the "building block" nature of the skills involved in emotional intelligence. In the way that this model concerns firstly the perceiving and understanding of emotions (self awareness), and then the managing of emotions (managing emotions and motivation) and finally extends to using emotions to relate to others (empathy and relationships), it aligns with the spirit of development particularly pertinent to this study. It also echoes the updated four domain model, that is; perceiving, understanding, managing and using emotions. (Cf. Salovey, 2008.) For the purposes of this study, the five domain model of emotional intelligence offered the most valuable framework for a systematic understanding of the concept.

This model was used to guide the enquiry into participants' experiences of the emotional development of their child(ren) (refer to Addendum 2.1). The researcher feels this model focused the interviews appropriately by lending structure to the otherwise broad concept of emotional intelligence. Participants' experiences are thus accounted here with respect to these five domains. Salovey (2008) points out the limitations of self reporting when it comes to

emotional intelligence, and the data yielded from this nature of interviewing is seen within the restrictions of this context.

While the focus of the empirical data was to ascertain how *children* fared with respect to these domains of emotional intelligence, it is noted that the parents were the subjects of enquiry as well as the target for the guidelines. Therefore, participants' management of these areas of EQ among themselves is also incorporated into the discussion. According to Vermeulen (2000:2), modelling of these abilities is a large aspect of what children learn of EQ. The findings are presented with respect to each domain:

2.3.1 Subtheme 2.1: Knowing one's emotions (self awareness)

According to Goleman (1995:43), one of the ways in which self awareness can be described, is as the ability to identify and monitor one's feelings as they happen. Awareness is the domain referred to as the "keystone" of emotional intelligence because of the fact that this ability holds power in terms of its potential for self discovery and "psychological insight" (Goleman, 1995:43).

Responses regarding awareness suggested varying levels of competency in this domain of emotional intelligence. For example, one participant reported an undeveloped sense of emotional awareness in her daughter by saying her child doesn't really understand her emotions and will sometimes look at her and say "Why am I feeling like this?" Another participant offered a response indicating mediocre levels of awareness commenting that she and her child are "quite aware". There were also responses which indicated a very high level of sensitivity and awareness where children were in tune with physical sensations associated with various feelings. For example, a participant said of her child "She can identify emotions, and it's not only her emotional side, she also identifies like in her body, like if she is worried she may say her tummy is sore from worrying." Even though this child is reported to be highly aware, the participant expressed a need for guidance on how to contain this level of sensitivity. In general, however, participants expressed a need for ways in which this subtheme of awareness could be fostered among their children.

2.3.1.1 Category 2.1.1: Ways in which participants encouraged emotional awareness

There seemed to be some effective practices among participants in terms of the ways in which they attempted to develop emotional awareness amongst their children:

- Four participants, for example, emphasised the importance of *discussions regarding positive and negative aspects of the day* at school to be crucial in the development of awareness regarding emotions in their children.
- One participant commented on the fact that her child had developed a good level of awareness because of her *struggles* with friends and also through her experience of ADD. This participant said, "I think she is very much in tune with how she is feeling. She has to be because… with the ADD and having to struggle at school a bit, having to deal with ridicule from the other kids she's learnt the ability to label her feelings." Awareness in this child forms a crucial part of her coping mechanism and this awareness in other words developed out of necessity.
- Another participant commented on how much can be learned from talking openly about negative experiences. For example, her child came home and said she had been laughed at. This lead to a discussion on behaviour and expression of emotions, and how laughter can come about from a number of things (for example, embarrassment or fear of the unknown). This enabled the child to reframe her interaction and she no longer needed to feel put down by the experience.
- Two participants commented on the importance of communicating about their experience of emotions in order to encourage emotional awareness in their children. For example, the participant would say "I am raising my voice now because I am angry. I have been cleaning all morning and now somebody has left their things all over the lounge." In this way, not only is awareness of emotions being encouraged, but also the behaviours that are sometimes used to express these are also being communicated.

From the above discussion, it appears that negative experiences that were contained in a supportive environment were used as valuable opportunities for developing awareness. In general, it also appeared that participants had fostered a certain basic level of awareness among themselves and their children. Given its fundamental nature to emotional intelligence as a

whole, the researcher is of the opinion that there is much room for growth regarding this complex ability of self awareness. (Cf. Salovey & Mayer, 1990:191.)

2.3.1.2 Category 2.1.2: Awareness and field factors

Beyond the ability to identify feelings and emotions, is a more sophisticated level of awareness, which extends to the ability to integrate certain feelings once they have been identified (Yontef & Fairman, 2005:3). In particular, this relates to experiences of challenging emotions which could include disappointment, fear, or anger (for example). In cases where these emotions have not been integrated fully and hereby addressed, they may constitute "unfinished business" and can interrupt the experience of subsequent emotions which are similar or related (Blom, 2006:145). This then influences the experience of awareness and affects people of all ages. The empirical data suggests that this occurrence influences the participants the most, so this will be the focus of the category.

It was highlighted in the empirical data that issues regarding past experiences, situational factors and belief systems strongly influenced participants in the parenting of emotional development. For example, one participant who had shared a negative experience she had with a man in a previous experience mentioned later in the interview, "I don't have a problem with boys at all but I have a feeling the boys of today are kind of different … children, I don't believe they should be distracted like that. They need to focus on the life ahead of them and get as far as they can get." This example suggests that the participant has been influenced by her past experience and her consequent belief systems. What she might convey to her child about intimate relationships include messages such as, "boys are only a distraction".

Experience of own childhood was also mentioned by many participants. For example, one participant who had an "easy" relationship with her mother struggles to understand her difficulty to appreciate her child's invidualiaty. She says, "I look back at my childhood, I'm sure I wasn't an easy child … but I admire everything my mom did, like the way she dressed me, I liked it … and think, why can't you just do what your mom did?" This participant's experience of childhood has influenced her belief that a child should like and accept the things her mother does and sometimes interferes with her relationship with her own child. In this way,

the participant, although aware of her field which relates to her parental relationship (with her own mother), has perhaps not integrated this fully in order to allow for a different type of parental relationship (between herself and her child). This dynamic then flows into what the participant teaches her child about EQ. In particular, awareness of individual traits may be interrupted due to this participant's need for her child to be more like her, as she was more like her mother.

Participants hereby portrayed the complexity and variety of "field factors" (relating to past experiences, and belief systems) that influence their ability to foster an enhanced level of EQ among their children. Consequently, it appears necessary to create a highly developed level of awareness around these interactions and experiences in order to minimise their potentially negative effects.

Yontef and Fairman (2005:3) state that "… Gestalt therapy theorists rely on field theory paradigm that understands phenomena as emergent from complex webs of interrelated and mutually influencing conditions," and hereby explain the importance of field factors as central to Gestalt theory (refer to 4.2). These theorists argue that it is part of human nature to want to organise and integrate all experience. Feelings and sensations signal that these experiences are having an effect on a person's current reality and are thus calling for integration. This vital process of integration, however, relies on awareness of these feelings and sensations. Awareness is hereby linked to the ability to allow experiences to form part of who a person is such that it is possible to operate as an integrated whole (Yontef & Fairman, 2005:3). (This viewpoint will be looked at in more detail in the literature chapter that follows.)

The argument, therefore, is that if participants could increase levels of awareness around unresolved or unintegrated past experiences, situational factors and beliefs, particularly with respect to the ways in which they impact current parenting practices, then this would positively impact their interactions with their children. Not only would their general level of EQ be hereby raised, but the associated improved ability to pass this on to their children would also be a valuable benefit.

Furthermore, if children can learn the ability of self awareness from middle childhood this is surely one way in which they could be guarded against carrying emotional residue from powerful experiences, but rather emerge as children who have learned how to own these experiences. In contrast, "… an *inability* to notice our true feelings leaves us at their mercy", hereby implying that if awareness is not raised around feelings and sensations caused by these experiences, they will continue to govern parents hereby limiting their interactions with their children (Goleman, 1995:43).

2.3.2 Subtheme 2.2: Managing one's emotions (emotional control)

Following the ability to identify emotions (that is, self awareness) is the ability to handle these emotions appropriately (Goleman, 1995:43.) Emotional control was therefore discussed with the participants by exploring the various ways in which this aspect of EQ applies to, for example; delayed gratification, painful emotions, and acceptable reaction to strong emotions.

2.3.2.1 Category 2.2.1: Delayed gratification

In general, participants were aware that teaching delayed gratification was beneficial. Most participants related the concept to the way in which delayed gratification pertains to material goods. For example, a participant reported he might say to his child, "If you improve your handwriting you may get that pair of shoes." However, teaching delayed gratification was also related to less defined rewards such as working hard in order to do well in a test. Yet, even though it appeared that the concept of delayed gratification was being taught, it was not clear that participants necessarily linked these lessons of discipline to emotional control. One participant said she "… wouldn't have placed delayed gratification in the category of emotional control, but it does make a lot of sense."

The researcher is of the opinion that if parents could appreciate the extent to which supporting a child in the management of his/ her desires could set the stage for lessons of emotional control in general, dealing with this aspect of emotional control could be even more emphasised and therefore beneficial. Furthermore, the fact that emotional control is a domain of emotional intelligence which forms the basis of motivation means that mastery of this domain would hold value for the development of emotional mobilisation too.

2.3.2.2 Category 2.2.2: Painful or uncomfortable emotions

Painful or uncomfortable emotions are considered here to be those that are difficult to contain. Anger and anxiety in particular were cited by participants as the most challenging painful or uncomfortable emotions for them to help their children manage. One participant commented, "I think that's one thing I do find hard is to get my son to control his temper, his anger." Also to this effect, it was said of managing emotional anxiety, "I try my best to give him the coping skills by talking about it but I'd like him to feel less anxious and I don't know how to go about it." A lot of the participants commented on their tendency to "want to sort it out" for their children in instances where strong emotions were experienced by the child. For example, a participant commented, "If I see something is really bothering her, I don't want it to bother, I want to sort it out, it's like your maternal instincts."

The tantrums which children experience in the earlier years which are characteristic of their first attempt at expressing of such emotions, indicate that these emotions can indeed be overwhelming. Somewhere between toddlerhood and middle childhood, children are tasked with learning to control these reactions (Charlesworth, Wood & Viggiani, 2003:193). In this regard the neurological circuitry that underlies the EQ abilities which play a big part in such skills of emotional control is explored in chapter 3. (Refer to 3.2.2.) This discussion provides insight regarding the management of emotions. The emotions of anger and anxiety were focused on in particular since they have been identified by the participants as especially trying.

The fact that anger and anxiety should be the emotions that were set apart from all others is a finding worth considering. The researcher notes that participants who expressed concern about these emotions (of anxiety and anger) in their children mentioned that they too had trouble with these feelings. It may therefore be the case that it is not anger and anxiety that are necessarily particularly challenging emotions, but rather that parents may find it more difficult to manage emotions in their children that they themselves struggle with. This apparent pattern echoes Vermeulen's (2000) argument that parents can only hope to raise emotionally intelligent children if they are emotionally intelligent themselves. More specifically, parents can only hope to positively facilitate feelings of anger in their children if they have been able to understand and manage their own experience of this emotion. Furthermore, this finding

strengthens the argument for an emphasis on self awareness which advocates a healthier contribution of previous experiences. It was noted that where participants were able to master their own management of these intense emotions, they were better placed in guiding their children similarly.

This point which highlights awareness in the process of managing emotions is further supported by Goleman (1995:238). Goleman (1995:239) presents a case study which advocates awareness as the focus of an intervention designed to help children manage their anger. The children in the study for instance had to learn how to attune to their bodily sensations (for example, tightening of fists) and then learn how to respond to these cues.

One of the participants in this study who conveyed awareness of her own experience in dealing with anger demonstrated a developed way of dealing with this emotion in her child. Her experience is that after having an angry stepfather as well as an angry husband she now has an angry son. She reports, "As far as anger is concerned, I am very aware of controlling my emotions because I grew up with a stepfather and he had no control over his anger and I know the fear it creates." This participant therefore does not display anger outbursts herself. However, the pattern evident in her life makes dealing with her son's anger "a real challenge" for her. Nevertheless her increased awareness surrounding this emotion as it has played out in various capacities in her life has placed her in a better position to deal with it when it arises in her son. She spoke of a conversation she had with him where they "… were talking one morning and my son said to me, he knows he's got a temper, but he also knows that his anger is his power – he knows what he can do with it." According to this participant she is now helping her child to see this intense emotion as a source of energy and work on alternative ways to use it productively. This example illustrates the freeing nature of pursuing raised awareness of intense emotions.

Relevant also to managing uncomfortable emotions was participants' preparedness to share with their children regarding their negative experiences (that is, those involving sadness, anger, anxiety). Even though participants mostly expressed a wish to include their children in their painful or uncomfortable emotions, an element of holding a strong front was also evident. One

participant commented that she particularly finds sadness difficult to express because she doesn't want her children to be concerned. Although it is argued that parents do have some responsibility to fulfil regarding their children's need for strength and security, it can also be seen how this dynamic can sometimes hinder the expression of painful emotions perhaps unnecessarily, and potentially inhibit children's preparedness to share these feelings with their parents in turn (Mayer & Salovey, 1997:19).

The researcher is of the opinion that parents might find guidelines useful which encouraged sharing of such emotions within appropriate boundaries. Furthermore, parents may need to be encouraged to address their own challenges that relate to emotional control in order to relay skills relevant to this domain of emotional intelligence onto their children. To this end, Mayer and Salovey (1997:19) place much importance on dealing with uncomfortable emotions effectively. They argue that where parents are not able to work with their children through painful feelings (such as anger) and these are denied altogether, the child may receive incorrect messages about emotions and disorders may develop where children are distanced from any emotion at all. For example, one participant said "sadness is a touchy one … because I tend to often not want to express it – I don't want the kids to be concerned." In this way it is paradoxical that participants' tendency to avoid these emotions is for children's own "protection" when in fact this could have a negative impact. This is a perspective that needs to be made clear to parents. According to one of the participants, this skill of emotional control is difficult to learn in the adult years, strengthening further the motivation to address such skills in middle childhood. (Cf. Erikson, in Weiten 2001:446.)

2.3.2.3 Category 2.2.3: Appropriate action (not acting out)

The majority of participants encouraged quiet time as an appropriate action to emotional outbursts. According to the participants their children were encouraged to think about their outbursts in this quiet time which promotes awareness around these experiences of being overcome by powerful emotions. One participant makes a point of being clear about the unacceptable nature of the behaviour without allowing the child to feel unacceptable as a whole by saying to her child, "I love you, but I don't like that behaviour." Another parent cited this as having been very helpful advice she was given at some point. The quiet time is seen by

participants as a debriefing process which offers an opportunity for conflict to be resolved. Through this discussion the child may be shown how they could handle a similar situation in the future. In this way participants demonstrated a competency in encouraging awareness and highlighting responsibility in instances where emotional control was not achieved.

In the case that participants themselves had had an emotional outburst, each one commented on how important it is to them to apologise to their children afterward. This was also an example of communicating the need for taking responsibility of strong emotions (Beland, 2007:72). The reality that emotional outbursts affect the whole family unit is something that some of the participants appreciated. It seems as if parents could benefit from explaining the importance of taking responsibility of emotions to their children in light of this "ripple effect" dynamic.

With regards to the above discussion it is clear that participants on the whole indicated constructive ways of dealing with emotional outbursts. The researcher does, however, feel that developing preliminary skills of EQ such as self awareness and managing emotions is perhaps a more empowering way to encourage children in choosing appropriate action and not to act out. Emotional outbursts can still be used as learning opportunities when they do happen, however, discussions after they occur may be seen as supplementary to the more preventative approach of focusing on awareness. If emphasis is placed on skills of self awareness and managing emotions, perhaps instances of emotional outbursts would be less.

Instances in which emotional control was difficult to manage were also discussed. Participants mentioned fatigue as one of the biggest factors that impacted their ability to manage impulses appropriately. One participant said it very much depends on how tired she is that affects the way in which she handles an emotional outburst. Other participants echoed this experience and communicated a need for guidance on ways in which they could deal with the exhaustion that accompanies the relentless commitment of parenting. In this way, the more "preventative" approach of empowering children with the necessary skills rather than a "pick up the pieces" approach could relieve participants in such cases.

2.3.3 Subtheme 2.3: Motivating oneself (emotional mobilisation)

From the perspective of emotional intelligence, motivation is explained as the ability to "… marshal emotions in the service of a goal." This ability has its roots firmly in the mastery of the previous domain of EQ, namely emotional control since "… emotional self control – delaying gratification and stifling impulsiveness – underlies accomplishment of every sort" (Goleman, 1995:43.) Salovey and Mayer (1990:200) further point out that emotions and moods can be channelled in the direction of goals. For example; anxiety before an exam can be directed towards preparing more thoroughly, and good moods can be used for facilitating confidence which would encourage persistence in the face of potential obstacles (Salovey & Mayer, 1990:200).

Participants had varying takes on motivation as well as diverse methods of encouraging this ability. Two participants linked this concept strongly with discipline, suggesting that motivation comes from knowing what a person *has* to do, for example, go to school. These participants further mentioned that the reward system was effective in motivating their children. Three other participants commented on a more empowering understanding of motivation by talking about the importance of encouraging their children to connect with that which energises them when pulling themselves out of a slump. Cited examples of what this might be, include: the role of faith or religion, activities such as exercise, talking to friends, and engaging in mental stimulation. Only one participant conveyed a message of encouraging her children to connect with their inner desires and goals and use these in motivating themselves. This participant encouraged her children to "… go inside themselves and trust in that which they see there."

Another participant emphasised the need to teach her children to take responsibility in times of emotional downs and engage in behaviour that will mean progressing through it. One participant however mentioned that she experienced trouble in connecting with her child's negative emotions and as a result feels a gap in her ability to help her child motivate herself. This participant said, "Every now and again she'll tell me if she is not feeling very happy. I try and explain to her that no-one can make you feel happy, no-one can make you feel good about yourself, only you. I've never been like that. As a child I've never been sad." This participant

comments that when she was growing up, she had to arrange the activities she did, and said, “I don’t get it when I say to her, can you not join the netball team? It’s like I have to go to the teacher for her.” The researcher notes that perhaps the experiences of these participants highlight the parent-child relationship as central to conveying lessons of motivation.

The neurological circuitry that underpins emotional intelligence has particular relevance for motivation (Goleman, 2007.) As such this offers an interesting perspective which may be helpful for parents who struggle with encouraging this ability in their children. A discussion regarding this aspect follows in 3.3.3 in the next chapter.

2.3.4 Subtheme 2.4: Emotions in others (empathy)

Salovey and Mayer (1990:194) highlight empathy as a “… central characteristic of emotionally intelligent behaviour”. Empathy is the basis of being able to relate to others, and is a prerequisite for understanding others as well as helping each other to grow. Salovey and Mayer (1990:194) further state that greater life satisfaction and lower stress have been cited as positive outcomes of being able to develop this skill. This makes sense when a person considers the rich social support network that can be formed out of empathy, confirming this to be a valuable EQ ability.

Many participants talked about teaching their children about empathy through stories of other people. One participant particularly teaches her children about caring for others by example. Having come from an underprivileged background herself she finds herself giving to charity a lot and offers this opportunity to her children as well (without obliging them). She experiences this way of going about teaching empathy positively. Apart from being an example of acts of empathy, this participant furthermore talks to her children about the differences among people and challenges the tendency to focus on these differences. She teaches her children to ask themselves, “How would I like to feel?” when thinking about others’ situations and what they might be feeling. She explains they will always find their answer from this question.

Further to teaching children verbally about empathy, nurturing behaviour is highlighted. In the way that nurturing (both of the self and of others) is an expression of empathy, it can be seen as

playing a big part in this aspect of EQ according to Lagerström (2008). The researcher notes that nurturing reflects the ability to not only be aware of emotions in the self and others but also to respond to these adaptively. If the level of awareness can attune and respond effectively to a person's own emotional needs, this is a crucial part of the integration between the thinking and feeling. In this way, empathy builds upon the ability of awareness.

Most participants mentioned that they do engage in some form of self nurturing and cited examples of having a bath, reading a book, or setting aside quiet time. However, a significant number of these participants stated that this happens very rarely as there is not very much time for it. As far as their children are concerned, only one of the participants actively encouraged this with her children. Other participants noted that their children displayed the ability to self nurture and would, for example, take themselves to their room for quiet time if this is what they needed.

In light of the above mentioned, the researcher is of the opinion that the benefits of focusing on self nurturing as an important part of EQ can be made clearer to parents. Lagerström (2008) advocates that nurturing one another facilitates levels of empathy and fosters relationships and self esteem because the way in which families nurture one another can be viewed as expressions of love. Communicating messages of love and nurturance in these ways and encouraging children to do the same for themselves therefore has promise of fostering a healthy self esteem as well as warm relationships among family members. Vermeulen (2000:2) concurs by emphasising in particular the knowledge that a person is deeply loved as crucial to a child's emotional development.

With regards to self esteem, this was an aspect of concern identified by almost all of the participants, and is therefore seen as especially important. In particular, participants expressed worry that a low self esteem would inhibit their children's ability to resist negative peer influences. As outlined in 1.2, self esteem is of particular relevance to middle childhood, further confirming that this aspect should be addressed in the guidelines. (Cf. Erikson in Weiten, 2001:446.)

2.3.5 Subtheme 2.5: Handling relationships (managing emotions in self and others)

Handling of relationships can be viewed as the culmination of all other aspects of emotional intelligence. It therefore makes sense that it is at this level that participants experience the greatest challenge regarding the emotional development of their children. For example, more participants than not commented on difficulties and challenges their children experienced in the realm of developing friendships at school. Factors that seem to play a role in this regard involve aspects such as conflict, and the parent-child dynamic.

2.3.5.1 Category 2.5.1: Conflict

In terms of managing conflict with their children, a number of participants mentioned giving concerned parties (that is, those involved in the conflict) space before coming back to sort things out in a less emotionally charged atmosphere (in much the same way as participants managed emotional outbursts).

It was the perception of some participants that children learn these types of coping mechanisms and then can take this on board for themselves. In this regard, one participant mentioned her child asking her “Mommy, can we go out for a bit?” which demonstrated a need for space from the situation as well as an ability to self regulate according to how she had been shown to deal with similar situations previously.

As far as conflict within friendships is concerned, one participant mentioned that she will discuss the situation with her child and offer alternatives of how to deal with this. Once this discussion is over she leaves things up to her child to sort out. This participant is of the opinion that the fact that she knows her child really well (including her faults), gives her the opportunity to offer perspectives on the part her child may have played in the conflict. She feels this is usually very valuable.

However, although participants seemed to have some constructive tools in place to deal with relationship challenges, they also identified this to be an area in which they felt constantly challenged and limited. Participants thus requested advice on managing conflict, commenting that this to be “one of the most difficult aspects of emotional intelligence.”

2.3.5.2 Category 2.5.2: Parent-child dynamic

The empirical data provides evidence indicating that the relationship between parent and child is central to the emotional development of children. Participants mentioned traps such as being quite controlling or overprotective towards their children. Both of these can be seen as examples of a compromised boundary between the parent and child (Robertson, 2006:1). It is argued that in order to re-establish the boundary, a respect for the individuality of children is encouraged. Also, communication over how this boundary can be explored is also considered. These aspects of *individuality* and *communication* were highlighted by participants as being two fundamental factors to the parent-child dynamic.

In terms of respecting the individuality of the child, it is the experience of participants that crucial to the parent-child relationship is, first and foremost an appreciation for the fact that all children are different. The importance of putting effort into getting to know each child is certainly emphasised. One participant commented that her ability to respect each of her children's individuality is the best thing she gives her children. She says that, apart from "… being a hundred percent there for them, I just know them really well." This same participant further commented that her children differed so much in the challenges they experience at various stages of development. She has learnt to guard against any expectations she may have and has found this valuable in assisting her to appreciate each child in their individuality.

Two participants further commented on having difficulty in accepting the fact that their children were so different from themselves, and suggested a need for guidance in this aspect of their relationship with their child. Ironically, one participant who experienced this difficulty also mentioned that she is concerned for the teenage years which lie ahead; that her child is going to emerge this "whole new person". She also feared that the child will be a pleaser and therefore be susceptible to external influences such as peer pressure. It is the researcher's opinion that if this participant could be guided in accepting the individuality of her child then teenage turmoil may not be inevitable as feared.

Many of the participants reported the importance of open and honest communication with their children. Participants argued that this enabled a collaborative approach in sorting out problems

in their homes, and fostered positive dynamics in the parent-child relationship, hereby offering a constructive base for the development of emotional intelligence. For example, a participant commented, “We are compassionate as a team, and if someone is not happy, like if my husband is stressed at work, then I do tell the children that daddy is irritable because he’s having a tough time at work.”

While communication and respect for individuality were the most important areas of need, participants also cited some other aspects that they felt were crucial to their parent-child relationship, such as time, boundaries, and discipline. The issue of *time* came up for a number of participants. Those participants who had a lot of time with their children all commented on how precious this was in allowing them to connect on an emotional level. One participant commented in this regard that “[i]n the morning when it’s quiet and at night just before bedtime when everything is done, I lie together with my children and it is very relaxing and a brilliant time for discussion.”

The *boundary* between parent and child is continuously evolving and participants mentioned that children would push one parent further than another in some areas as ways of testing these boundaries. The boundaries within the relationship as well as boundaries regarding rules and discipline were cited by participants as very important aspects of emotional security. It was important for participants to *discipline* their children, but almost more important to be able to explain their decisions to their children advocating a more authoritative than authoritarian approach. Gottman and DeClaire (1997:32) concur that this move away from authoritarian parenting is more in line with emotional intelligence principles.

Participants hereby highlighted, most importantly, a need for input regarding the acceptance of individuality among their children and open communication. Also important to the relationship was time, boundaries and discipline; however participants did not identify concern as such relating to these aspects.

2.4 Theme 3: Challenges to raising an emotionally intelligent child

Participants identified various factors as being influential in posing challenges to the development of emotional intelligence. These concerns related to: the schooling system, a lack of resources among teachers to deal with emotional intelligence, and external influences (for example, peer pressure, drugs, sex, and alcohol), and parents' levels of EQ.

2.4.1 Subtheme 3.1: Principles on which the schooling system is based clash with those of EQ

A significant number of participants felt that the schooling system did not support principles of emotional intelligence. For example, one participant felt that the emphasis on results and academic achievement created an unnecessarily competitive atmosphere among the classmates, compromising friendship formation and support system. Another participant argued that the authoritarian nature of school contradicted the aims of emotional intelligence. For example, she said that going to school with such a home environment supposes to be nurturing but it is authoritarian and "based on fear". "I want to teach *** to say to the teacher, 'Please don't shout at me. You are making me fearful' but it won't work. Yet this is not the way to speak to one another." The researcher recognises the balance between authoritarian principles and EQ values to be a challenging one to perfect, since efficient management of a mass of children requires a noteworthy level of conformation as well as insistence on measures of inhibition. Vermeulen (2000:2) believes that only parents can be the ones to nurture the special talents and skills that are unique to children. She says that "… unless you're really lucky, school won't encourage these… mostly, it gives children the impression that it's important to all be the same." The responsibility therefore sits with parents to nurture EQ qualities. Parents are hereby urged to manage their expectations of getting these things from the school.

The researcher however feels a balance needs to be reached in terms of encouraging participants in the way of aligning their expectations of the school with realistic goals, and also encouraging the school towards more "emotionally intelligent" practices. If lines of communication between schools and parents can open up such that respective limitations in both parties are appreciated, then parents will know where they need to step in more, and the same will apply to schools.

The “emotional intelligence” of schools is somewhat beyond the scope of this project, however, the ways in which they fit into the development of emotional intelligence and skills of social and emotional “survival” are addressed more in the following chapters as it plays a valuable role.

2.4.2 Subtheme 3.2: Teachers lack resources to deal with emotional development

A number of participants felt that teachers were lacking in expertise regarding their ability to deal with the emotional development of the children. The researcher is of the opinion that limited resources of time and energy are also major shortcomings that result from the overwhelming responsibilities teachers are assigned nowadays. They are simply not always available to make space for the emotional development of children. Elias (2008) argues social and emotional learning to be “absolutely essential to academic success, and success in life.” It is noted that if schools incorporate this important element of learning into the curriculum, these areas of importance would fall within the job descriptions of teachers, as opposed to being seen as an added extra as seems to generally be the case in South Africa (Salovey, 2008). The communication between teachers and parents regarding the emotional aspect to the children’s work hereby become part of teachers’ interest and duty.

One participant reported that, for a period of time, her child experienced public speaking to be stressful. It was only a long while after this experience that she found out it had been a problem. The participant states “… it is difficult as a parent to keep one’s finger on the pulse,” suggesting that teachers’ input is so needed in this regard. Where teachers focus is on the academics solely (for example, in this case on the orals themself), while key emotional information may be missed and hereby neglected.

Furthermore, not only would it be beneficial for the teacher to engage with the emotional development of children, they also have a responsibility as key role models. To highlight this fact one participant reported that her child is forever telling her, “But mommy the teacher says…” As this comes with tremendous responsibility the participant was not sure whether teachers were aware of the extent to which this is experienced.

One participant reported a negative experience her child had had with a teacher regarding emotional validation which is an illustrative example of the fact that teachers can lack time and expertise to deal with emotional aspects of the child's day. The scenario was that the child had received an injection in the arm and came to the teacher to tell her it was very sore. In response, the teacher said "oh shame" and walked away. The fact that the teacher did not actually have time or energy to hear about a sore arm is one aspect of this situation. Another concerning aspect is the fact that the teacher did not have the wisdom to know that she needed to listen to the feelings behind the fact when rating the emotional validity of the situation. Also, the fact that after this experience, this child will not approach the teacher again as she knows there is the possibility of being met with a sense of invalidation.

Participants hereby expressed some concern with the fact that the school system does not always have the capacity to give attention to EQ elements of development. They considered this to be a barrier to enhancing EQ among their children. However, parents are to be made aware that their expectations need to be managed, and also be made aware that difficult experiences of relationships at school could perhaps provide valuable learning experience in order to enhance abilities of EQ.

2.4.3 Subtheme 3.3: External influences (peer pressure, drugs, sex, alcohol)

Almost all participants mentioned a concern about how their children would cope in the face of external influences such as peer pressure, drugs, sex and alcohol. Participants were unclear as to how this would be managed. Even though these "threats" are more typically relevant to adolescence as opposed to middle childhood, some guidelines as to how children may prepare for this in the middle childhood phase of development already may be valuable.

By definition, developing children in the areas of emotional intelligence will go a long way in buffering them from these influences (Fariselli, Freedman, Ghini & Valentini, 2008:11). Learning to identify emotional needs appropriately (self awareness), and being able to respond to these needs (through positive nurturing), as well as managing emotions and maintaining

motivation are all things that may prevent a child from filling their needs by exploring avenues of mal-adaptation. For this reason, these aspects receive attention in the guidelines.

2.4.4 Subtheme 3.4: Participants' levels of emotional intelligence

Findings evidenced the influence that participants have in their children's emotional development as considerable in the way that they represent the child's primary example of emotionally intelligent functioning. The majority of participants in the sample group conveyed an appreciation for the fact that they indeed hold a responsibility to this in their approach to each aspect of EQ in their daily lives. However, even though participants did seem to be implicitly aware of this obligation, only three participants verbalised as much. For example, one participant said the biggest challenge to raising an emotionally intelligent child is that "… you continuously have to answer for your own emotional reactions. I've really had to learn to curb my emotions. It's been a steep learning curve." Perhaps more information surrounding the importance of this dynamic would be valuable in nudging more participants to commit to this responsibility whole-heartedly.

One participant felt that the most challenging aspect of raising emotionally intelligent children would be to break the pattern of anger outbursts which were so much a part of her father as well as her ex-husband, and now a challenge for her son as well. Another participant who has struggled with anxiety in a similar way finds this the most challenging thing for her as she addresses this common insecurity which affects both herself and her son. The researcher feels that these concerns would be best addressed through participants investing in their own emotional intelligence, particularly raised levels of awareness. The two examples of repeated patterns of anger and anxiety respectively may be broken by heightened levels of awareness regarding what these emotions are communicating.

One participant commented that one of the toughest aspects about parenting is being called up on various things by her children that trigger insecurities within her. This participant has committed herself to being open to this as she recognises it forms part of her own emotional growth and self acceptance. Her capacity to offer children as much as she possibly can in this

area of development has undoubtedly been positively affected by taking this stance. How did this fit in with the development of the guidelines?

2.5 Setting the goal and objectives of the study

As discussed in 1.5.1.5, the goal for this study is to develop a set of parental guidelines which offer a Gestalt perspective in enhancing the emotional intelligence of children in middle childhood. The identified objectives which need be achieved in order to reach such a goal are listed include:

- An empirical study that has taken the form of semi-structured interviews with parents at a Primary School in Cape Town. The data obtained was analysed qualitatively as outlined above to determine the needs and concerns of parents regarding the emotional intelligence of their children.
- A literature review which forms part of phase two of the Design and Development model and which explores the concepts and principles surrounding EQ, child development theories in middle childhood, parenting and Gestalt theory and how these all relate to EQ. Existing sources, natural samples, and functional elements of existing programmes are to be drawn on for this purpose.
- The design of an observational system and the specification of procedural elements of the intervention as phase 3 of the research.
- The development of a prototype intervention. And lastly,
- Consideration of conclusions and recommendations for parents and for further research.

2.6 Summary

This chapter presented empirical findings of this study which surround the experiences of participants regarding their approach to the emotional development of their children in middle childhood. Various needs and concerns regarding this area of development were voiced, particularly with regard to conflict management, individuality, awareness, boundaries, anxiety/ anger management, and self esteem. This information directed the literature chapters which follow as well as the guidelines in turn.

Chapter 3
Emotional Intelligence and Parenting in Middle Childhood

3.1 Introduction

Thus far, this study has fulfilled phase one of the Design and Development model of intervention research by having identified and involved clients, identified their concerns, and identified the goal and objectives for the remainder of the research process. Among these objectives is a literature review. This concerns phase 2 of the model (that is, "information gathering and synthesis"). The study of existing information sources as well as the exploration of natural examples will guide this literary enquiry which focuses on emotional intelligence as it pertains to parenting in middle childhood, as well as how EQ can be understood from a Gestalt perspective. These areas will be explored over the span of chapters 3 and 4 respectively.

The focus of this chapter is thus emotional intelligence and parenting in middle childhood. Emotional intelligence will be presented as a broad topic where aspects such as its various definitions and the neuroscience behind the concept are addressed. EQ pertaining to parenting in middle childhood in particular will then be incorporated in the discussion.

3.2 Emotional intelligence

Although "emotional intelligence" only became known in the last 10-15 years, its principles are not necessarily new. One of the participants who had not heard of the term before the interview said she feels as if she has been focusing on aspects of emotional intelligence without knowing that this is what it is called. Su (2004:1) defines emotional intelligence as "old wine with a new label" and argues it was not "… 'invented' when it was first introduced to the public a decade ago." Bradberry, Greaves and Su (2005:1) concur that "[d]escriptions of emotional intelligence are as old as any accounts of human behaviour." These authors point out that many of the competencies that characterise EQ are also those of ancient Chinese philosophy for example, awareness and empathy. The emphasis on collectivism is also highlighted as something which is an age old focus that EQ emphasises (Su, 2004:2). It is

further said that principles of emotional intelligence were voiced by Darwin two hundred years ago – Darwinian theory advocates that emotions are derived from the most primitive part of the brain and as such are a key element in a person's ability to survive and thrive (Barry in *Emotional Intelligence*, 2004). Freedman (2002:1) cites Plato as having contributed to this way of thinking when he wrote that "all learning has an emotional base". So it seems that an appreciation for the emotional dimension of intelligence came about many years ago and emotional intelligence in fact refers to old wisdoms. Nonetheless, the reframing of ancient principles within the context of advanced science and philosophy which now supports its concepts is certainly making the lessons accessible and, according to Su (2004:2), offers a reminder of priorities which seem to have been forgotten.

3.2.1 Definitions of emotional intelligence

Despite the varied and evolving nature of descriptions of this relatively newly defined concept, the researcher notes that the common factor among these definitions is not so much a list of desirable skills encapsulating what it means to be emotionally intelligent nor the argument that emotions are necessarily more important than cognitive development, but central to the concept is an idea of integration. Caruso (in Freedman, 2002:1) writes that "[i]t is very important to understand that emotional intelligence is not the opposite of intelligence, it is not the triumph of heart over head – it is the unique intersection of both." This echoes the definition cited in the opening chapter (1.1) where EQ is described as an ability that integrates feeling, thinking and doing; "… it is the habitual practice of thinking about feeling and feeling about thinking when choosing what to do" (Sparrow & Knight, 2006:29). It was argued that connecting with one's environment on all three these levels requires a sense of congruency among these aspects of functioning. In the way that emotional intelligence hereby acknowledges the importance of utilising not only one's rational mind, but also one's emotional capacity in the choices one makes and the things one does, it advocates an integrated way of functioning.

To this end, Vermeulen (2000) uses the analogy of a motorcar to illustrate how emotions have the potential to provide the link between thoughts, feelings and behaviour. In her view,

> … emotions are like warning lights and if our oil light goes on in the car, we really have to stop and do something about it. The same applies to our emotions, but we've never

> learnt that they have a deep intelligence in them. And it's that intelligence that actually guides us to what will give our lives meaning, what our lifework is, and how we can make a difference in this lifetime.

In this way, Vermeulen (2000) supports the idea that emotional intelligence is more than anything else, about being in tune with the emotions experienced as well as that which they communicate. Salovey and Mayer (1990:186) explain that "[e]motions typically arise in response to an event, either internal or external, that has a positively or negatively valenced meaning for the individual." This proposed causal relationship that exists between positive and negative events and emotions suggests that by focusing on emotions they become a person's most valuable and reliable feedback system between the self and the environment. Yang (2007) further adds that the very "… purpose of emotions is to read the state of your body, the state of the environment, and to shift your thoughts and behaviours so that you will prosper and do well." Vermeulen (2000) argues that where awareness around the intelligence of emotions exists in this way, there is potential for integration. The specifics of the sets of competencies or skills that various authors put forward can be seen as a means to accessing this intelligence such that integration will be supported.

3.2.2 The neuroscience of EQ

Emotions are an (apparently) intangible aspect of a person's life, yet there is a strong case for the neurological underpinnings of emotions and emotional intelligence. Heller (2004:398) highlights the role emotions have played in evolution, explaining that "… at least some brain regions strongly involved in emotion are presumed to be older in evolutionary terms." MacLean (in Heller, 2004:399) argued that the limbic system (that is, brain circuitry involved in emotion) is first of the three brain layers (that is, the triune brain) which developed as a result of evolution (refer to Figure 3.1).

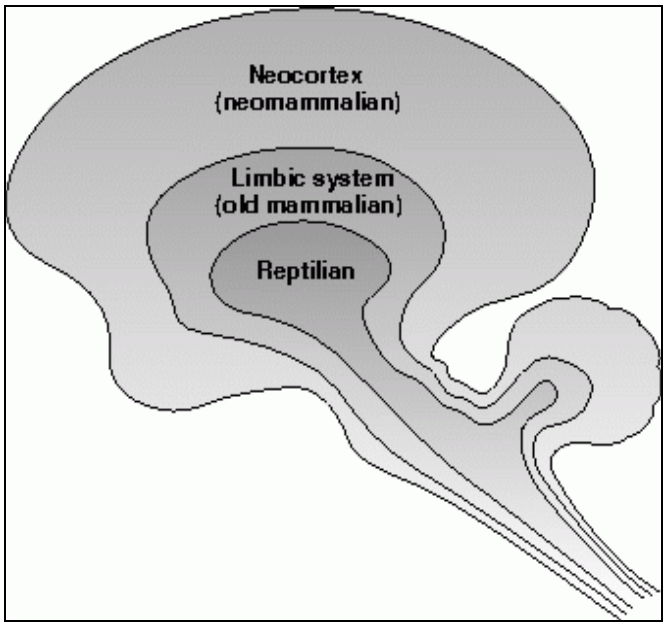

Figure 3.1 Paul MacLean's conception of the evolution of neural structures (Heller, 2004:399).

The organ first existed as merely a survival brain. The emotional brain then developed from this, and only later did the thinking brain evolve. This Darwinian view indicates the very fundamental role emotions play as the primary survival function. (MacLean in Heller, 2004:399).

The structure in the brain called the amygdala which resides in the midbrain (emotional brain), scans all information perceived for potential threats (Heller, 2004:399). The amygdala has a conservative approach to this process in that any match found will trigger activity along what is called the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, a term that refers to a network of interactions among the hypothalamus and the pituitary and adrenal glands, which resembles the neuron-endocrine response to stress (Pariante, 2003:1). This rush of stress hormones changes the way the brain prioritises information in that it focuses attention on to that which is causing fear, resulting in the classic fight/ fright/ flee response. (Refer to addendum 3.1 for illustration.)

Goleman (2007) argues that in the world today threats to survival have been replaced rather by complex symbolic ones. Yang (2007) supports this viewpoint and argues that "… reinterpreted survival as a sociocultural construct" has reframed what it means to survive today. Yet, Goleman (2007) explains, the amygdala still functions according to its previously defined survival role, and the experience of being absorbed by a distressing emotion still causes attention to fixate, creating a state in which functioning is less than optimal. The emotional brain has the ability to override the thinking brain in such cases and can sometimes cause a somewhat primitive response, such as lashing out inappropriately (Goleman, 2007). This neurological term for "losing it" is "an amygdala hijack" and it is characterised by a strong emotional response that is sudden and intense, and causes a person to do or say something that, when the dust settles, is usually regretted. When the amygdala detects a threat, it sends an impulse to the prefrontal cortex (our executive brain) which scans for crucial facts needed for the situation, for example, "I can't explode now I'm in the classroom." The difference between cortical abilities and EQ abilities is that EQ abilities integrate the executive and emotional centres. In this way, "EQ at the neural level therefore is the prefrontal/ subcortical integration of abilities" (Goleman, 2007). Yang (2007) identifies the need to increase the ability to "… recognise the complexities of situations, and to develop increasingly nuanced and sophisticated strategies for acting and responding" as part of a person's task for survival as it is defined today.

Goleman (2007) states that activity along the HPA axis narrows activity to the right side of the brain. It is argued that this side is typically the side which houses depressive and anxious moods. Heller (2004:394) cites that clinical depression can often be the result of damage to parts of the left hemisphere. This left side is responsible for the happier mood states. Goleman (2007) explains that every person has a resting ratio of left-right activity which can quite accurately predict one's mood range. There is a bell curve for this phenomenon and most people sit in the middle but those who lean toward more activity in the right experience depressive moods and anxiety disorders whereas those who lean toward more activity in the left experience more good days than bad. This is interesting because what the left has that the right does not is an inhibitory circuitry for the amygdala. Therefore, when the amygdala sends

impulses to the prefrontal cortex the left side might be able to calm it, whereas the right will react (Goleman, 2007).

3.2.3 Prioritising EQ

The neurological perspective presented above offers hope in making tangible the notion that emotional intelligence is indeed something that can be developed and enhanced. The identification of specific neural pathways that hold relevance for functions of emotional intelligence not only provides evidence for the possibility of EQ development but also offers some direction in terms of methods of implementation. Salovey (2008) concurs that emotional intelligence is indeed an area where improvement is possible as he states that the set of skills outlined by EQ are "[t]eachable, learnable, and if you learn them you can perform adaptably in all of those domains." Salovey (2008) acknowledges that a genetic component may offer a starting point, but that skills involved can be acquired.

However, even though there is the strong argument for the enhancement of EQ, the problem of inadequately developed EQ abilities continues to rise (Vermeulen, 2000:2). Literature however offers convincing evidence regarding the benefits of developing EQ. For example, Fariselli, Freedman, Moassimiliano, and Federica (2008:11) argue that emotional intelligence has the ability to mitigate the effects of stress that reduce performance. Yet despite this evidence to suggest that the prospect of emotional intelligence holds valuable benefits, there appears to be a dichotomy between intellectual knowledge of the benefits of EQ and the gap that exists between actually developing the skills it promotes. According to Freedman (2007:2) this may be related to a person's difficulty in approaching change. The empirical findings cited limited time, and a clash with more primary needs (refer to 2.2.2) as key hurdles that stood in the way of change.

As discussed, it has been acknowledged that emotional intelligence may not fit into the realm of priorities in cases where more basic needs require attention. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that, where in the past it may have been possible for people to go through life without developing their emotional side too much, life *is* more stressful today, demanding that more creativity is incorporated in a person's adaptability. (Cf. Gottman & DeClaire, 1997: 28.)

From the above discussion, it can be seen how a focus on EQ is one way in which creative adjustment can be developed. On the other hand, if a move to focus on emotional intelligence is not achieved, people will be left compromised in their ability to adjust optimally.

However, after having argued in terms of the high stakes of a development in emotional intelligence, Freedman (2007:2) points out that even while it may be thought that a life or death situation will bring about change, this may not be so. In a study which explored what happens to cardiac patients when they were told to "change or die", it was discovered that while change is possible, this approach doesn't always work (Freedman, 2007:2). So if people even in real "change or die" situations aren't prepared to make changes to their lives, this calls for some creative consideration before it is possible to be hopeful regarding bringing about change in people when it comes to encouraging a focus on EQ.

Freedman (2007:2) argues in favour of a more relationship-driven approach where change is desired, echoing the ideals promoted by both EQ and Gestalt philosophy (as will be discussed in the following chapter). Freedman (2007:8) also makes the assertion that a key element of change is the presence of what can be referred to as "short-term wins"; people need to see results of change fairly quickly to reinforce motivation. This is achieved by proving the value of a concept to people through their own experience. Furthermore, Freedman (2007:8) also draws upon the biological perspective in understanding the mechanisms of change and argues that the "[c]hallenges of change are rooted in neurobiology." It is explained that the brain is wired to form patterns around frequently used pathways in order to make its usage efficient (Freedman, 2007:8). The ability to recognise these patterns (particularly where they concern frequently used pathways that do not lead to desirable results) of course relates to self awareness, the "keystone" of emotional intelligence. Freedman (2007:11) further proposes that "[u]nderstanding this link between thoughts, feelings, and actions, seeing these unconscious filters and response mechanisms, is a key first step to responding intentionally than reacting on autopilot."

The idea of brain plasticity has been presented, arguing that pathways of the brain can be redirected and changed. Freedman (2007:11) notes that "[f]irst-hand experience over a period

of time is a powerful way to rewire the synapses" which supports the importance of encouraging experiential "wins" in motivating change. According to the above arguments, change in other words requires: relationship, short term wins experienced on a personal level, and alterations on a neurobiological level. Because of what is known of emotional intelligence, this all implies positive news for guidelines in emotional intelligence; the researcher feels that this information could be useful for parents who make use of such guideline. While change may not be straight forward, it is certainly feasible.

Furthermore, the Gestalt philosophy of change is based on the paradoxical idea that if one can focus on being one's most authentic self and make this the focus, change will happen (Yontef, 1993:23). In terms of emotional intelligence this would involve being attuned to emotions and the intelligence they hold. The belief then is that change will follow. It is important to note that the guidelines which are developed do not prescribe specific attributes to people, such as "be more confident". Rather, the guidelines are to encourage parents and children to be better at being themselves. This may paradoxically bring about confidence in individuals, but this is not the focus of the change itself.

3.3 Emotional intelligence as it pertains to middle childhood and parenting

It has been discussed (refer to 2.1) that for the purposes of this study EQ will be viewed as that which motivates a level of integration between the emotional and the thinking brains; a process that is made possible by attuning to the intelligence of emotions. The five domains as set out by Salovey (in Goleman, 1995:43) characterise the competencies of EQ that serve to facilitate this development of integration. As discussed in 2.1, they are namely: knowing one's own emotions (self awareness); managing one's emotions (emotional control); motivating oneself (emotional mobilisation), recognising emotions in others (empathy); and handling relationships (managing emotions in self and others). (Cf. Goleman, 1990:43.) The discussion which follows will explore each of these domains in as far as they pertain to the middle childhood phase. This information will then provide the basis for addressing the subject of emotionally intelligent parenting of children in this stage of development. Points of focus are cued to an extent by matters raised in the empirical findings.

3.3.1 Knowing one's emotions (emotional awareness)

Emotional awareness is about knowing what a person is feeling as well as why this is being felt. Goleman (2007) argues that this is particularly important for decision making. He explains that the emotional centre valences thoughts and prioritises decisions. Decision ability therefore depends on a person's capacity to draw on the wisdom of emotion. Stored in the basal ganglia is a record of a person's emotional history. This part of the brain is very primitive and can only communicate to the cortex via feelings and sensations, and mostly gut feelings. The ability to be in tune with this dimension of thoughts therefore guides a person's ability to make better decisions. It is in this way that this is so strongly linked to awareness (Goleman, 2007).

Having identified middle childhood as an especially crucial stage of development (refer to 1.2), it is particularly important that the EQ ability of awareness is fostered during this phase. Erikson (in Weiten, 2001:446) offers a stage theory of development where phases from infancy to late adulthood are marked by respective psychosocial crises in which an individual negotiates certain polarities. Erikson's belief was that the development of an adult's self esteem is closely linked to experiences in childhood (in Slee, 2002:360). Specifically, the resolution of the three psychosocial crises in the early years of life, that is, trust versus mistrust, shame versus doubt and autonomy versus guilt is central to development of self esteem. Slee (2002:360) states that successful resolution of these internal debates allows for good grounding, that is, a suitable place from where the next crisis can be approached. It is required of children to draw on emotional resources in order to resolve these crises and therefore argued that if they are equipped with high levels of awareness, they will be in a privileged position to do so. Since awareness provides access to authentic feelings they will be able to resolve these conflicts genuinely and in terms of the self (Slee, 2002:360). Greenwald (in Warehime, 1981:43) concurs as he notes "… increased awareness is intended to confront the person with the full responsibility for all his behaviours, to increase authentic self-expression and relating."

It has been established that up until the stage of middle childhood, all previous psychosocial crises are aimed toward developing the sense of self (Slee, 2002:360). Also, from this stage onward the sense of competency and associated feelings of fulfilment that go along with being a contributing individual, determine the successful resolution of psychosocial conflicts which

follow into all subsequent stages of life, that is, adolescence, early, middle-, and late adulthood (Slee, 2002:360). Middle childhood is therefore proposed by Erikson as a crucial stage of emotional development in that it sets the stage for self concept. In this regard Slee (2002:361) states that "[i]n middle childhood, self concept is influenced by the appraisal of significant others and by comparison with peers." Parents thus have a great deal of responsibility in fostering this in their children. Vermeulen (2000:1) further stresses the importance of a healthy self esteem arguing that "[o]nly by knowing how special we are can our particular talents be released."

The empirical findings show that participants indicated varying levels of self awareness among themselves and their children. Participants cited a few activities they experienced as helpful in developing awareness in their children. These were namely; discussing positive and negatives of the school day, working through an emotionally challenging struggle (for example, coping with ADD), and communicating their experiences of emotion and its link to their behaviour (refer to 2.3.1.1). All of these ways of connecting on an emotional level refer in some way to moments where decisions were informed by emotions.

There seemed to be two inhibiting factors that prevented participants from fully connecting with their children with regard to their emotional experiences. Firstly, the tendency to want to "rescue" children from negative experiences and emotions was highlighted (refer to 2.3.2.2). Secondly, preconceptions and expectations of what children "should" be doing/ experiencing interfered at times with participants' ability to simply allow that which emerged (refer to 2.3.1.2). Charlesworth *et al*. (2003:177) emphasise the fact that "[v]alues and beliefs regarding childhood in general, and middle childhood specifically, are shaped by historical and sociocultural context" and are thus complex in impacting various preconceptions experienced by the participants. These two factors which include the tendency to rescue, and the preconceived expectations will be explored further.

Freedman (2004:1) talks about a person's inclination to want to "fix it" (or "rescue") when someone is experiencing a negative emotion and argues that despite the best intentions that motivate this tendency, such action undermines the effort to help since the person/ child is

often left feeling invalidated. Vermeulen (1999:169) explains that "[p]eople learn most from their own experiences and every time you jump in to solve their problems, you're robbing them of their own learning." What would be helpful is if parents could acknowledge and validate their children in the emotions they are experiencing. Where this awareness is encouraged, they may be buoyed to tackle the situation independently. Freedman (2004:2) points out, however, that "facts are not relevant to the emotional brain" and simply rationalising a child out of a fear may not work. Part of the reaction that accompanies a strong emotion is the shutting down of the left side of the brain which is responsible for logical thinking (refer to 3.2.2). It is important to realise that feelings are real, even when the causes do not make sense to another person.

Some of the participants seemed to remember themselves as not having needed much emotional attention as children (refer to 2.3.3). Empirical findings (refer to 2.3.1.2) indicate that this may be a factor that could interfere with allowing children various emotions that do not perhaps align with parental expectations. The researcher therefore highlights that parents are encouraged to consider their respective preconceptions and the ways in which these may inhibit their full acceptance of the emotions displayed by their children (refer to 2.3.1.2).

Middle childhood is a phase of development where change occurs across many domains. Children experience changes on physical, cognitive and emotional levels. (Cf. Charlesworth *et al*., 2003:183.) Although the focus for this study is the emotional dimension, this area of development cannot be looked at in isolation since each aspect influences one another. Furthermore, the phase of middle childhood cannot be looked at in isolation of other phases of child development, that is; infancy, early childhood and adolescence. Middle childhood is strongly influenced by development in the earlier years, and according to Erikson (in Weiten, 2001:446) also sets the stage for development in subsequent phases.

3.3.2 Managing one's emotions (emotional control)

Managing the emotions that tend to get in the way of optimal functioning is an important aspect of EQ. Firth (2006) highlights the well known Stanford "Marshmallow Study" carried out by Michael Mischel which offers an interesting view on the impact this skill of emotional control may have. Mischel created a situation whereby 4-year olds were offered a

marshmallow but were told that if they waited to eat the marshmallow until he came back from an errand they could have two marshmallows. Firth (2006) explains that when these children were followed up years later there seemed to be a marked difference between the group of children who grabbed the marshmallow straight away versus the group who could manage their desire in the interest of getting two marshmallows. According to Firth (2006), it appeared that "… children better able to develop strategies for delaying gratification spontaneously at ages 4 and 5 became more educationally successful and emotionally intelligent." Goleman (2007) qualifies that these children were compared with respect to their SAT scores (which is an achievement test that measures how much a child has learned). Those who chose to wait for the researcher to return had scores as much as two standard deviations above those children who grabbed the marshmallows straight away. This result was considered dramatic.

Goleman (2007) explains that impulsivity and agitation are signs that the amygdala is being poorly inhibited. Children who cannot inhibit the amygdala are presented with a real challenge in learning situations which can leave them compromised. As explained, when the amygdala is alerted to a threat, it focuses attention on to what is disturbing. Yang (2007) states that working memory (attention) has a capacity of seven items and if the majority of this space is occupied by a disturbing threat to emotional survival, then there is little space left for what the teacher is saying and it is unlikely the child will learn much. On the other hand, when the messages of distress from the amygdala can be managed, attention is made available again for what needs to be focused on (Yang, 2007.) Consequently, Mischel (in Firth, 2006:1) concluded that "[t]hese delay abilities seem to be a protective buffer against the development of all kinds of vulnerabilities later in life."

In this way Mischel (in Firth 2006:1) highlights the ability to delay gratification as an indicator of the ability to inhibit amygdala activity. Viewing management of emotions from this perspective highlights awareness as fundamental to this level of emotional intelligence. Where children are attuned to their emotions they will more likely be able to dismiss those feelings that they know are not threatening at a given moment. In the way that awareness forms the basis for all EQ abilities, an increased level of awareness can assist in a child's ability to inhibit amygdala activity, and therefore delay gratification (Goleman, 2007).

Empirical findings suggest that participants struggled with the management of negative emotions in particular among themselves as well as their children (refer to 2.3.2.2). Anger and anxiety among children were cited as the two challenges. Also, participants were somewhat unclear about the appropriateness of sharing negative emotions with their children (refer to 2.3.2.2). In this regard the researcher is of the opinion that guidelines which encouraged sharing of such emotions within certain boundaries would be useful for parents who struggled with this aspect of EQ; sharing of emotions could provide a conducive environment for enhanced awareness, and also open up channels for enriched relationships. Here again, awareness of emotions and the meaning they may carry is often the first step in challenging the "hold" of a governing pattern. (Cf. Lagerström, 2008.) This domain of emotional intelligence that concerns emotional control hereby refers to the ability to, once the meaning behind the emotion is appreciated, capture and manage the emotion.

In allowing a level of authentic communication which gives a message of validation (as outlined in 3.2.4.1), a basis is provided for increased awareness. Management of the emotions may then be facilitated. Similarly, parents can feel open in their communication along this line of authentic contact making; they need not exclude their children from painful emotions (Vermeulen, 1999:173).

The researcher argues that it is up to parents to expose their children to the full human experience. If this can occur within a safe and nurturing relationship, valuable lessons may be learned which may stand children in better stead should they face similarly negative emotions in the future. Furthermore, Goleman (2007b) states that

> … neuroscience is now telling us that children's brains are plastic, that is, they're shaped by repeated experience and if you're going to help a child be prepared for life you want to give that child the repeated experiences that are going to help his brain or her brain be able to manage their anger, to calm down when they're upset, to tune into other people, to get along.

Providing children with a safe environment in which to have these experiences is thus beneficial (Vermeulen, 1999:22). According to this author, "Our experiences show us who we are and what we're capable of; and each new circumstance is an opportunity to decide how we invest our power" (Vermeulen, 1999:22). The researcher is of the opinion that while participants may feel that their emotional experience is separate from the emotions experienced by their children, these feelings have an element of relativity. For example, having a bleeding knee from a nasty fall can be as frightening for a child as delivering a speech at a big meeting is for a parent. There might therefore be more commonalities than participants or parents in general perhaps realise.

Harris and Butterworth (2002:299) cite the middle childhood phase as a sensitive stage in which children develop "… a much more sophisticated understanding – and conscious awareness – of their own emotional expression." According to these authors, an indication of "emotional sophistication" is the capacity to discern the internal and external emotional experience of emotion (Harris & Butterworth, 2002:299). It is argued that children in this phase, especially those aged 6 or 7, look to adults for social cues for guidance in this regard, however as the children reach age 10 they no longer look for these cues as much, emphasising the importance of those cues received in the earlier years as setting the stage for emotional expression.

Goleman (2007) suggests that the more often children have the experience of consciously controlling themselves in an emotionally charged situation (by asking questions such as: what they feel, why they feel the way they do, and how what they do is making others feel, and then act accordingly) the better. Getting these neural pathways to work may be very valuable in the development of other aspects of emotional intelligence since, as discussed, activity along the HPA axis affects most EQ abilities outlined (refer to 3.2.2). Goleman (2007) in fact points out that children, by definition, do not have a high emotional intelligence. The prefrontal cortex/ amygdala circuitry is the last part of the brain to be put in place and anatomically it doesn't mature until the mid 20s.

The discussion on emotional control communicates the necessity of this valuable skill. As it will be shown in the following section, this EQ ability lays the foundation for motivation.

3.3.3 Motivating oneself (emotional mobilisation)

Goleman (2007) explains that motivation is largely to do with the circuitry of the amygdala, the HPA axis and the prefrontal cortex. The ability to identify, maintain and pursue a goal is located in the left prefrontal cortex. As discussed in 3.2.2, activity along the HPA axis that is triggered by the amygdala causes a diversion from this very part of the brain as it shifts activity rather to the right side which is more characteristic of depressive and anxious emotions. Where the HPA axis activity can be managed, activity in the left prefrontal cortex will still be possible and motivation can in this way be maintained despite the presence of "threatening" distractions (Goleman, 2007).

According to Csikszentmihalyi (in Debold, 2002:2), an association has been made between pleasure and challenge, or looking for new challenges. This perhaps provides further evidence for the explanation that this ability is housed in the left prefrontal cortex. In this regard, Csikszentmihalyi (1998:1) is of the opinion that when a balance is struck between engaging in an activity that both challenges an individual's skills yet one that is within the sphere of capabilities, it creates an optimal zone known as "flow", that is, "a state of effortless concentration and enjoyment".

Figure 3.2 overleaf illustrates this desired balance between skill and challenge in order to achieve flow. The central dot indicates a person's mean balance between challenge and flow. Csizentmihayi (2004) advises that where a person is experiencing arousal it may be necessary to increase the level of skill in order to achieve flow. Where a person experiences control, this might feel comfortable, but it is necessary to increase the level of challenge in order to achieve a state of flow (Csizentmihayi, 2004).

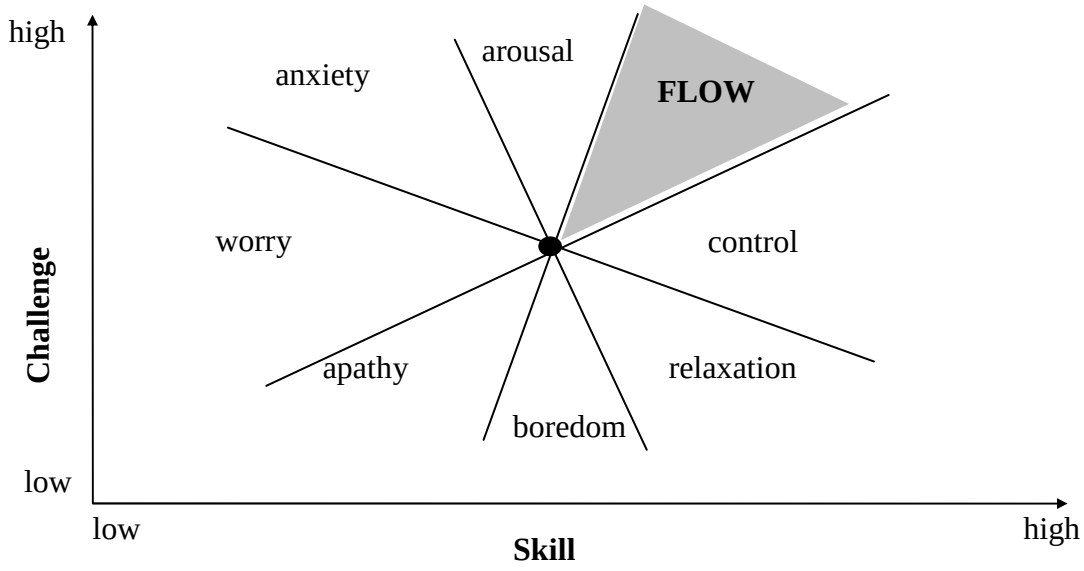

Figure 3.2 Graph depicting desired balance of challenge and skill to achieve flow (adapted from Csizentmihayi, 2004).

Goleman (2007) illustrates how flow can be explained with respect to HPA activity. Figure 3.3 below illustrates low HPA activity as associated with boredom and correlated with low performance, whereas when HPA activity increases so too does performance. There is a point where the right balance of HPA activity and performance can be achieved to create optimal functioning. Here attention is focused and not distracted, skills are challenged but adequate and it feels really good. If HPA activity continues to increase beyond this point, however, and adrenalin begins to take over, it can create a feeling of being distracted and frazzled, which is of course suboptimal.

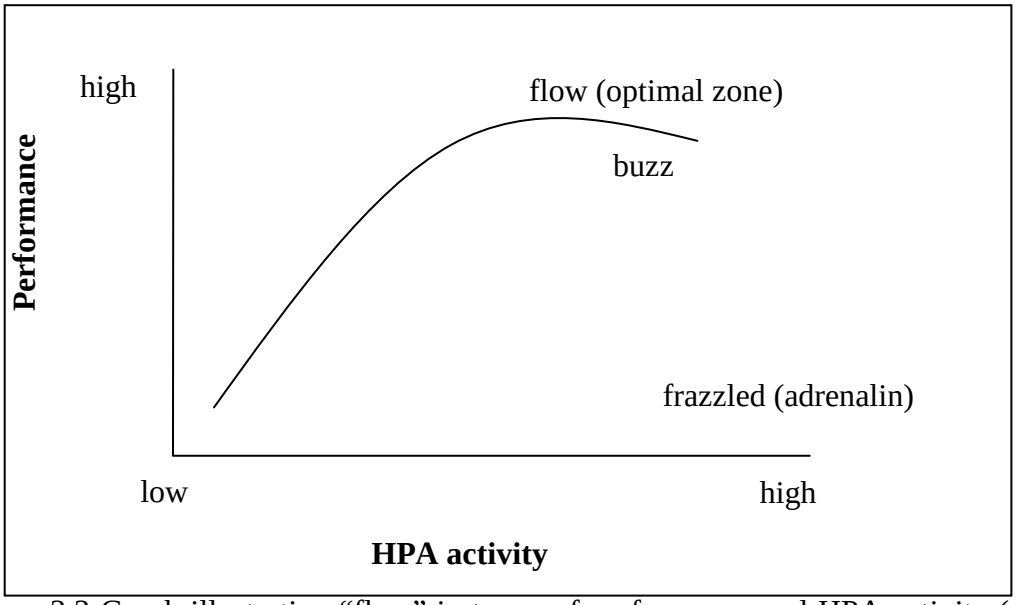

Figure 3.3 Graph illustrating "flow" in terms of performance and HPA activity (adapted from Goleman, 2000).

According to Goleman (2000), engaging in activities that produce this experience exercises the neural pathways relevant to this state and according to the theory of brain plasticity, this should establish the activity as one that becomes increasingly easier to attain. In order to manage functioning in the optimal zone it is required that the person has awareness regarding particular strengths as well as the ability to bring these to meet challenges such that the balance between the two is achieved. Furthermore, holding this balance requires energy. A large part of Vermeulen's (1999) model for EQ pertains to being in touch with that which energises (along physical, mental, emotional and spiritual domains). This again highlights awareness as valuable in laying the foundation for this skill. Parents are hereby urged to encourage activities that facilitate such a state. Vermeulen (2000:2) confirms that "getting to know your children and encouraging them in their particular interest is essential if you want to grow emotionally healthy individuals."

This viewpoint further echoes Erikson's (in Weiten, 2001:446) theory of psychosocial development as it pertains to mastery versus inferiority in the stage of middle childhood. If children are encouraged in areas that reinforce their perception of self mastery this would have a positive impact on their ability to resolve this stage. Because this internal debate concerns the

polarity between feeling good at something, and feeling good about one's self exploring areas where mastery can be felt (as would be the case where a state of flow is achieved) feelings of self worth would be positively impacted.

As discussed, Slee (2002:361) proposes the influential role parents and significant others play in this process. He argues that the sense of inadequacy and resulting feelings of worthlessness that arise when productivity is questioned can be buffered when "[s]ignificant others in the child's life can contribute to this by denigrating the child's efforts" (Slee, 2002:360).

3.3.4 Emotions in others (empathy)

Goleman (2000) argues that the brain is the only organ in the human body that is designed to connect on a cell level with the experiences and emotions of others. The field of emotional intelligence is in fact expanding to what is referred to as social intelligence which essentially explores the fourth and fifth domains of emotional intelligence (that is, empathy and handling relationships) more extensively. In the brain exist "mirror neurons" which have the ability to fire in response to somebody else's emotions. If one is aware of one's own emotions and has a fair ability to manage and mobilise them, then the capacity to empathise is strengthened (Goleman, 2000).

The egocentricity of children theorised by Piaget poses a challenge to the ability to empathise. Piaget (1980:168) proposes that the "[e]gocentric illusions, namely confusion between one's own thought and that of others and confusion between self and the external world" limit children's cognitive capacity during this stage of development to accommodate the appreciation of someone else's feelings. Yet, even though it is developmentally premature to expect children in the middle childhood to empathise, this skill is demonstrated to some extent and can be taught (refer to 2.3.4). Here again, parents are encouraged to reinforce this competency.

Gottman and DeClaire (1997:73) emphasises the importance of parents being examples of empathy as they interact with their children. This author argues that not only will lessons of empathy be conveyed, but also states, "If we can communicate this kind of intimate emotional

understanding to our children, we give them credence to their experience and help them learn to soothe themselves" (Gottman & DeClaire, 1997:73). Furthermore, the value of empathy in allowing children to see their parents as their allies is highlighted (Gottman & DeClaire, 1997:73).

3.3.5 Handling relationships (managing emotions in self and others)

Conflict management was highlighted by participants as an area in which input was most needed (refer to 2.3.5.1). Freedman (2004:1-4) emphasises the value of including validation as a fundamental base for the relationship. This may require putting aside feelings of hurt that might arise, but connecting with children on this level means that they feel heard and understood. Indeed, Gottman and DeClaire (1997:66) advocates validation to be of the most important aspects in resolving conflict. It is noted that this may require a high level of patience among parents. However, it is argued that in learning to deal with frustrations in childhood within the context of a supportive relationship where validation is felt, the child will grow to have the self confidence to know it is ok to feel a certain way, and the knowledge that he or she can do something about it (Gottman & DeClaire, 1997:66).

According to Yontef and Fairfield (2005:3), the Gestalt understanding of development and growth is not that all previous experiences or stages of life cause specific consequent behaviours, but rather that these experiences form the foundation for boundaries set between organism and environment and therefore the ability to function optimally. Not only is the interrelationship between various factors of development thus proposed as more important than the accumulation of various events or influences, but the relationship between the person and the environment is emphasised as crucial to optimal functioning. The researcher notes that it is for this reason that learning to manage conflict is vital to the child's ability to engage in the environment as a whole (refer to 4.3.2.1).

3.4 Summary

This chapter has placed EQ in the context of the development that takes place in middle childhood and has hereby highlighted ways in which this might influence emotionally

intelligent parenting during this stage. Various theories of Erikson, Piaget and Gestalt were offered so that a broad understanding of advancements in this phase could be appreciated.

The following chapter will address emotional intelligence as it is viewed from a Gestalt standpoint.

Chapter 4
Emotional Intelligence and Gestalt Philosophy

4.1 Introduction

This chapter forms part of the second phase of the Design and Development model. Included in this literary discussion is Gestalt perspective, which is presented in this study as especially complementary to the theory of emotional intelligence. As outlined in 1.2, there is much overlap between the principles of emotional intelligence and Gestalt philosophy. Areas of mutual ground will be explored here as the case for creating guidelines within a Gestalt context specifically is strengthened.

Yontef and Fairfield (2005:1) suggest Gestalt theory to be complex in nature as they cite the origins of the theory and practice as extending beyond "… the worlds of psychoanalysis, existentialism, Gestalt psychology and eastern philosophies." Therefore, given the limited scope of this study the theory will not be explored in its most complete context. However, the gist of its definition and philosophy will be presented such that the principles which hold relevance for emotional intelligence can be understood from this paradigm.

4.2 Gestalt philosophy

Among the direct translations for the German word "Gestalt" are: form, shape, pattern, to form, to organise (Clarkson in Blom, 2006:18; Yontef & Jacobs in Blom, 2006:18). According to Nelson-Jones (2000:147), this conveys the chief tenet of Gestalt psychology which argues that the human perceptual process tends toward the organisation of various elements perceived into whole pictures rather than allowing each element to be viewed separately. Wertheimer (2007:97) cites the idiom often associated with Gestalt theory which describes these whole pictures as being greater than the sum of their constituent parts. The Gestalt philosophy hereby proposes an appreciation for a complex network of collaborating factors in which experiences can be understood, and as Blom (2006:22) concurs, this appreciation of holism suggests that people cannot be fully understood outside of the environment in which they function and grow.

According to Yontef and Fairfield (2005:5), these translations of shape, pattern, and configuration which Blom (2006:18) cites, provide the context in which the interrelatedness of person and environment can be seen. In the same way that a person might "organise" a pattern or a painting, the elements of their life may also be seen within the context of this tendency to "organise"; a prominent figure in the foreground stands out against a significant but less focal background. The information contained in the background provides context to all the elements perceived and plays a role in highlighting a particular figure over another. In other words, the figures are given meaning in terms of their relationship to the background. Therefore, as Yontef and Fairfield (2005:5) explain, the way in which the "picture" is organised and understood tends to be reflective of the needs experienced at a particular time.

The process of "Gestalt formation" which handles the continual emergence of these needs, dictates a rhythmical flow constituted by the surfacing of figures from the background as prominent and pressing, acquisition of attention necessary in order to gain resolution, and then dispersion into the newly defined background (Nelson-Jones, 2000:142). Latner (in Mortola, 1999:311) describes this as "… the process of being alive" and as such conveys its fundamental role in mediating between person and environment. In this way it can be seen how engaging with the environment highlights various aspects of a person. In turn, the person utilises the resources held by the environment in order to resolve these needs. The relationship between environment and person is hereby intertwined in the creation of the "self"; it follows then that where there is no contact with the environment, the development of self is compromised and there is no growth (Yontef & Fairfield, 2005:3).

Gestalt philosophy draws upon field theory in order to understand this complex interaction of forces between organism and environment and the creation of self, and hereby "… looks at all events as a function of the relationship of multiple interacting forces" (Yontef, 2002:19). The essence of field theory is that each part of the field affects the field as a whole, and the whole in turn similarly affects parts of the field (Parlett & Lee, 2005:46-47).

In terms of the development of psychological theory, this thinking (first put forward by Perls, Hefferline & Goodman in 1951) marked a great shift from psychoanalytic and behavioural

theorists who believed in a cause-effect relationship between events and social learning, and behaviour (Yontef, 2005:3). Seeing a person's functioning and behaviour as influenced rather by a complex network of interrelated factors emphasised a more holistic view of the person and significantly changed the approach to therapy. Instead of setting out with specific objectives for change directed at altering causal factors, the priority of therapy became awareness of all these factors such that the person's experience of functioning and ability to self regulate in general would be positively influenced. Change became the by-product of this focus on awareness rather than a focus in itself. The tenet of Gestalt theory which advocates that change be approached in this way is coined "the paradoxical theory of change" as proposed by Beisser (1970).

This paradoxical theory of change argues that change will inadvertently be brought about when influential factors causing discomfort are addressed within a holistic understanding of their interrelatedness, and experienced in terms of the ways in which they affect the person in the present moment (Yontef & Fuhr, 2005:89-90). In other words, it is argued that when a person's relationship with these factors is addressed within a context of present-centred awareness, it is possible for a person to attune to their relationship with information in the "background". This ability allows the ways in which foreground issues are highlighted against these background issues to be discerned. This awareness is seen to make it possible for insight to be gained into the needs which certain feelings of discomfort might highlight. Yontef and Fuhr (2005:86) argue that the client can then proceed with this increased level of awareness, better poised to meet emerging needs by engaging in the environment more appropriately. Consideration of the multiple forces which constitute the field lends understanding to the view that awareness of these factors can facilitate insight into the self. This in turn would benefit relationships with elements of the environment, ultimately providing opportunities for growth and change. (Cf. Parlett & Lee, 2005:47.) Yontef and Fairfield (2005:2) support this notion in their assertion that expanded awareness could assist a person in satisfying unmet needs and growth.

This introduction to Gestalt philosophy outlines the basis of the theory which, according to Latner and Nevis (1992), is constituted by the twin lenses of *here-and-now awareness* and the *interactive field*. These two fundamental areas of focus are similarly reflected by the EQ

abilities highlighted in this study where the here and now awareness is incorporated in emotional awareness. On the other hand the abilities of emotional control, motivation, empathy and the handling of relationships all play a role in strengthening a person to engage with the environment and consequently contribute positively to the interactive field.

The parental guidelines to enhance emotional intelligence among children in middle childhood are in accordance with these points of intersection between the two fundamentals of Gestalt philosophy (namely here and now awareness, and the interactive field), and the abilities of EQ. Furthermore, the extent to which the guidelines echo the Gestalt philosophy is also reflected in the researcher's approach to the desired results of enhanced emotional intelligence among children. All this aligns with the paradoxical understanding of change characteristic of Gestalt philosophy (Beisser, 1970). Guidelines which are developed for the purpose of this study are directed at creating conditions for emotional growth among parents and children (even though they are directed towards parents), rather than specifying a list of attributes to which parents and children should subscribe. Oaklander (2006:46) concurs that the Gestalt approach is not centered on changing behaviour, but rather on allowing children to become aware of their own processes that facilitate certain types of behaviour. As such, the guidelines have as the primary aim for children to first and foremost be facilitated in understanding and being themselves.

4.3 Gestalt principles

This section further explores aspects of awareness as well as ways in which forces of the field interact. These facets have been emphasised as fundamental to Gestalt theory as well as valuable to the way in which emotional intelligence is understood (refer to 4.2). Other Gestalt principles which will be addressed include: here and now, contact and contact boundary disturbances, organismic self regulation, dialogue and relationship and the paradoxical theory of change. There are other principles advocated by the Gestalt philosophy, however, those listed here have been highlighted as being most relevant to emotional intelligence specifically.

4.3.1 Awareness

Kirchner (2000:1) refers to awareness as "… the beating heart of Gestalt therapy" and as such conveys its fundamental nature to all parts of the philosophy. This author argues that "[i]t is the

person's awareness of his/ her complexity within and exclusive of the field that manifests itself in uninterrupted organismic self-regulation, meaningful growth and long-term change" (Kirchner, 2000:1). This definition hereby highlights the process of awareness as central to a person's ability to interact with the environment and the associated advantages of consequent growth and the potential for long-term change. Nelson-Jones (2000:152) highlights the importance that Gestalt therapy attaches to the role emotions can play in this process. In this regard Nelson-Jones (2000:152) cites Perls' viewpoint which is that emotions offer "… unique deliveries of experience which have no substitute – they are the way we become aware of our concerns, and, therefore of what we are and what the world is." Awareness of the information contained in these emotions can therefore facilitate children as they grow in their understanding of themselves and the world in which they live.

It has been discussed how awareness of a person's relationship to all factors of the field is necessary in facilitating a person toward growth (refer to 4.2). Blom (2006:17) acknowledges that Gestalt therapy envelops in its approach an acknowledgement for emotional and cognitive elements of experience. This emphasis hereby echoes the integration of thinking and feeling (and doing) also advocated as fundamental to emotional intelligence. (Cf. Sparrow & Knight, 2006:29.) Following this idea of integration and containment, Gestalt philosophy proposes awareness to be a cyclical process. The "cycle of awareness" (refer to Figure 4.1 overleaf) illustrates the process of gestalt formation where a person moves from the point of identifying a need to the point of engaging in the environment to meet this need, and lastly withdrawing as the Gestalt is closed in order to prepare for acknowledging the next pressing need.

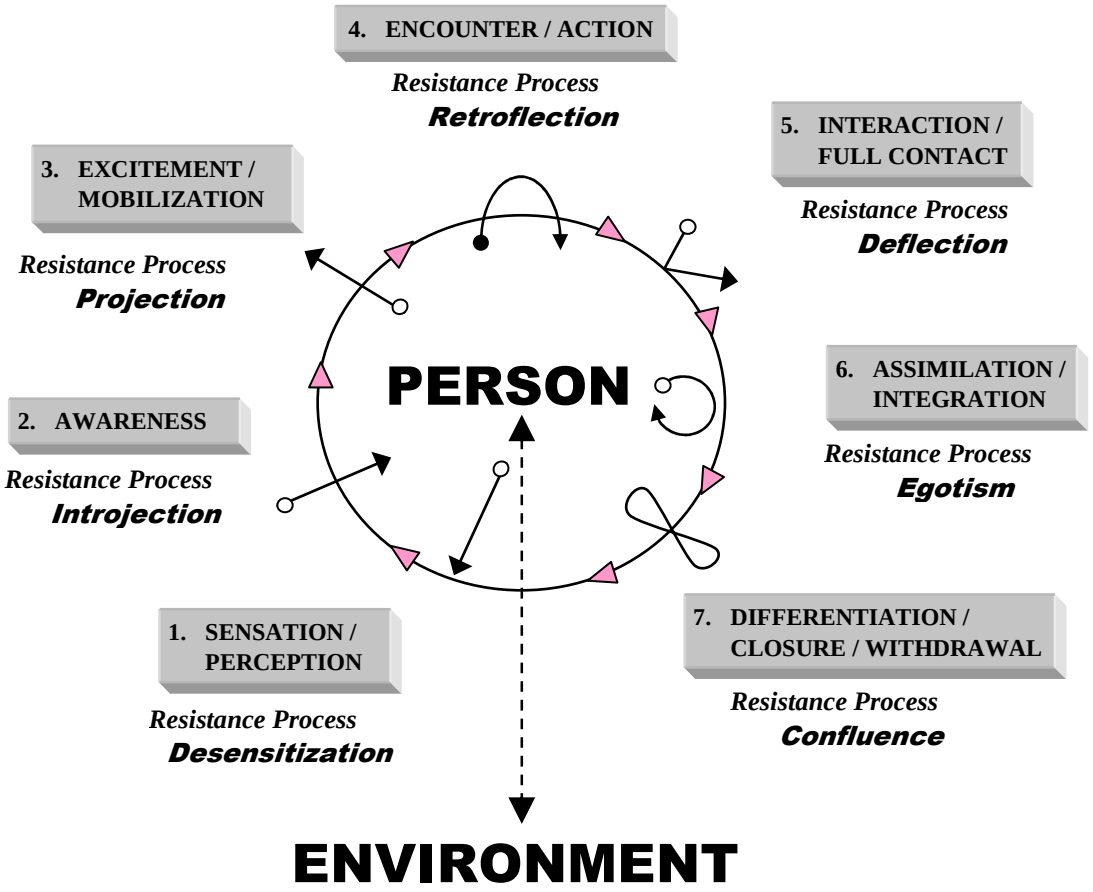

Figure 4.1 Cycle of awareness (adapted from Woldt & Toman, 2005:x).

Figure 4.1 indicates the various stages which characterise the interaction between organism and environment in the cyclical process of satisfying needs in the pursuit of growth. If the cycle flows in an uninterrupted fashion (refer to Figure 4.1) the person would firstly *sense* a need. The person would then gain *awareness* over this feeling of disequilibrium and be *moved* to take *action. Interaction* with the environment is required in order to satisfy the need, and once the resources are attained the person must *assimilate* the experience in order to make it their own. Once this exchange has occurred, the person can differentiate the self from the environment by *withdrawing* from this contact and allow for awareness of the next Gestalt (Woldt & Toman, 2005:x-xi).

Nelson-Jones (2000:148) describes the organism's mechanisms for awareness as being characterised by two components, namely sensory awareness and motor awareness. The

sensory awareness is what enables an organism to be orientated to various needs, and the motor behaviour provides the organism with the ability to engage and manipulate the environment accordingly. It is argued that both these functions of orientation and manipulation occur at the contact boundary (Nelson-Jones, 2000:148). In the way that orientation and manipulation represent processes of exchange between person and environment, it is suggested that there be a level of permeability across this boundary. Caghan (2007:339) confirm that this would allow a healthy balance of environmental influence and personal contribution and argue this to be most conducive for emotionally beneficial contact to take place.

In the instances where this permeable relationship between person and environment is not managed and contact is interrupted, disturbances in the cycle occur and growth is compromised (Blom, 2006:31). These occasions of potential disruptions in the cycle will be discussed in the section which addresses "contact and contact boundary disturbances" (refer to 4.3.2.1).

Focusing on all elements of the present experience as it happens in the here and now is one way in which Gestalt theory encourages the development of awareness and as such the here and now aspect of awareness is considered to be one of the most defining aspects in the subject matter of Gestalt theory (Latner, 1992:1). This aspect will subsequently be discussed in the next section.

4.3.1.1 The here and now

According to Gouws (in Blom, 2006:18), Gestalt therapy aims to facilitate clients toward an improved perception of the full experience of their reality, and the present awareness of experience can be valuable in this pursuit. Yontef and Fuhr (2005:82) view increased awareness as the ability to be attuned to needs, limitations and capacities. These authors further argue that this capability can place a person in an improved position to then self sufficiently meet these needs through their efficient contact with the environment in order to support the process of growth. Yontef and Fuhr (2005:89-90) also confirm that Gestalt philosophy emphasises the present moment as the essence of awareness.

It is argued that the exploration of sensory perception as the first stage of organising elements of the environment is an opportunity for increasing awareness (Yontef & Fuhr, 2005:88). The centering of oneself made possible by focusing on each of the senses brings a person into the moment, and facilitates the appreciation of the present experience. Schoeman (1996:99) explains that it is in this way that awareness of where one is according to each of the five senses helps one to be more aware of where one is emotionally as well. In other words, making contact with the senses helps a person to make contact with his/ her emotions and therefore increase awareness (Thomas & Rudolph in Blom, 2006:90).

Schoeman (2006:78) agrees that the five senses (that is, to see, touch, taste, smell and hear) form ways in which a person makes contact with and becomes aware of the environment, and in this way become aware of emotions. Asking children to listen to music or touch, smell, or taste something interesting can bring them to a point where they are integrated on a sensory level. Heightened sensory awareness enables a person to be more connected to his/her surroundings, and therefore more able to orientate the self in terms of various needs that arise (Nelson-Jones, 2000:148). Sensory development is thus fundamental to the ability to make meaning out of one's environment. Schoeman (1996:80) supports this argument by pointing out that,

> As part of their socialisation, children learn that they have the opportunity to make sensory contact with the external environment. A child who is unwilling or unable to observe what is going on around him finds it difficult to position himself in the world. Therefore it is important that the child explores, tests and realises what he finds agreeable or disagreeable.

The appreciation for facets of awareness discussed in this section, namely sensory and motor awareness as well as here and now, are incorporated in the guidelines which aim to enhance awareness as a fundamental aspect of emotional intelligence. In terms of this discussion on awareness, enhanced awareness is seen here as a commitment to the here and now experience and the consequent enhanced ability to orientate the development of self in the direction of various needs, and the ability to manipulate the environment accordingly. Daniels (2005) confirms that insofar as Gestalt therapy is an existential approach, "… it assists the client in

experiencing his or her existence and way of being in the world more fully, and in assuming full responsibility for that." The researcher argues that this responsibility offers a certain level of ownership and empowerment which encourages the organism to take a more engaging approach stance in their experience of awareness.

4.3.2 The interactive field

The second fundamental aspect of Gestalt theory according to Latner (1992), is that of the *interactive field*, which will be explored by addressing the various collaborating factors with which it is associated, namely: contact and various contact boundary disturbances, the process of organismic self regulation, elements of dialogue and relationship and the paradoxical theory of change.

4.3.2.1 Contact and contact boundary disturbances

Field theory has been described as a perspective which "… looks at all events as a function of the relationship of multiple interacting forces." (Cf. Yontef, 2002:19.) Because the interaction, relationship and contact between these forces take place at the contact boundary, a focus on this element is particularly relevant. In this study it is considered that this essence of contact with the environment is fundamental to emotional intelligence (refer to 1.3). A person is strengthened or leveraged to embrace the connection with the environment by means of the abilities encompassed by EQ (that is, those of awareness, emotional control, motivation, empathy and handling relationships).

Interference of this boundary between environment and organism means that contact is interrupted and growth is disturbed (Blom, 2006:31). Kirchner (2000) claims that each interruption of contact is a reflection of a person's organisation of experiences of themselves. Kirchner (2000) further confirms that at the base of each interruption of contact is an "… unclear experience of him/ herself." This suggests a confusion surrounding the boundary between person and environment. It has been argued that this boundary between organism and environment across which contact is made is ideally characterised by a healthy level of permeability; firm enough in order to maintain a sense of self, yet malleable enough in order to be open to new ideas. (Cf. Caghan, 2007:399.) In such cases where this balance is not achieved

contact boundary disturbances interferes with healthy contact and therefore growth as well. Woldt and Toman (2005:x-xi) explain that these instances of interrupted contact have the potential to disturb such healthy contact and growth proposed by the "cycle of awareness" at each of the various stages of: sensation/ perception, awareness, excitement/ mobilisation, encounter/ action, interaction/ full contact, assimilation/ integration, and/ or differentiation/ closure/ withdrawal (refer to Figure 4.1).

Contact boundary disturbance is often referred to as "neurosis" and Blom (2006:31) argues that children who have lost the sound balance between themselves and their environment no longer have the capacity for full awareness and are not able to respond to their needs. Therefore, these children with contact boundary disturbances are not capable of actualisation and tend to employ others, perhaps inappropriately, in their process of understanding their world (Blom, 2006:31). Where contact is broken along the cycle of awareness through the involvement of others, the organism may suspend their contact with various painful feelings and therefore be protected from the discomfort of these in the short term.

Manifestations of contact boundary disturbances include: desensitisation, introjection, projection, retroflection, deflection, egotism, and confluence. (Cf. Woldt & Toman, 2005:x.) It is emphasised that the contact boundary disturbances are "… descriptions of processes and not of character traits" (Blom, 2006:31). These contact boundary disturbances are listed and briefly defined:

- *desensitisation* – is described by Clarkson and MacKewn (1994:77) as the "… process by which we numb ourselves to the sensation of our bodies. The existence of pain or discomfort is kept out of awareness." Needs which sensations of emotions may present are therefore kept from being appreciated as figures and can not be addressed.
- *introjection* – occurs when information regarding ideas, attitudes, beliefs or behaviours is taken in from the environment and taken on as a person's own without any process of digestion or assimilation (Blom, 2006:32). Introjection is illustrated in Figure 4.1 therefore as an arrow which points from the environment to the person representing this one way contact.

- *projection* – is the disowning of emotions and events which occur within the self and attributing these to objects or people in the environment hereby shifting responsibility for these (Blom, 2006:33). Children make use of projection particularly when they have learnt that certain emotions or personality traits are unacceptable and have not yet assimilated these introjections.
- *retroflection* – of behaviour is when a person "… does to himself what originally he did or tried to do to other person or objects" (Perls *et al*., in Blom, 2006:35). Blom (2006:36) argues that manifestations of psychosomatic symptoms in the child can be an indication of retroflection. Retroflection is illustrated in Figure 4.1 by an arrow that directs (usually destructive) emotions back toward the self.
- *deflection* – is the avoidance of stimuli from the environment. Blom (2006:37) explains that sensitive emotions or painful experiences can be deflected by reactionary behaviour such as anger outbursts, or by daydreaming where contact with the environment is avoided (or deflected) altogether.
- *egotism* – is a preoccupation with introspection which prevents a person from being spontaneous in their contact with others for fear of making a mistake or being seen as foolish (MacKewn in Brink, 2006:80).
- *confluence* – occurs when the boundary between organism and environment becomes blurred (Blom, 2006:34). Thompson and Rudolph (1996:142) view this disturbance of contact as one in which a person "… may incorporate too much of themselves into others or incorporate so much of the environment into themselves that they lose touch with where they are." Blom (2006:35) explains that confluence can be reflective of a poor sense of self and can manifest in children through their need to please, perhaps in the subconscious hope that that external affirmation will strengthen their sense of self.

After having outlined and briefly described the various contact boundary disturbances which pose a threat to contact and growth, these will be discussed in terms of how they might affect each stage of the cycle of awareness as pointed out in Figure 4.1.

At the stage where the strong emotion arises, *desensitisation* to the reaction will prevent any further involvement with this emotion. A person who is out of touch with their own senses may

for example not recognise the presence of an emotion (Schoeman, 1996:80). Also, *introjections* surrounding the acceptability of certain emotions could interfere with embracing the awareness of this emotion.

If *sensation* and *awareness* have, however, occurred, there is the possibility that at the *excitement* stage (that is, the stage in which the organism may feel a discomfort over the emotion and be moved to take action) the emotion could be disowned through *projection.* (Cf. Blom, 2006:33.) The hurtful/ unwanted feelings would in this case be projected outward. Woldt and Toman (2005:x) explain that the mobilisation of energy occurs but it is misdirected and the rest of the cycle is completed in a hindered way.

Woldt and Toman (2005:x) indicate that at the *encounter/ action* stage there is the potential for *retroflection* to occur whereby an emotion can be inflicted back upon the self. This could potentially manifest in a psychosomatic manner, creating a level of apathy that could conflict with the demands of the *action/ encounter* stage. (Cf. Blom, 2006:36.) Even at this stage there is the possibility that a deflection could occur and all contact may be broken making resolution of the issue unlikely.

At the stage where resolved issues are *assimilated/ integrated* there is the possibility that *egotism* may interfere with this process. (Cf. Woldt & Toman, 2005:x.) If there is an unbalanced focus on a person's identity that does not fall within the context of being in relation to the environment, the contact made may not be assimilated. (Cf. MacKewn in Brink, 2006:80.)

And lastly, at the point where *differentiation/ closure/ withdrawal* occurs, Woldt and Toman (2005:x) highlight the potential for an inability to break contact and engage in *confluence.* This state in which the self is merged in the environment from where it draws its support means that the organism would be reluctant to break away on its own again with the newly assimilated resolved issue integrated. (Cf. Thompson & Rudolph, 1996:142.)

Consideration of all the above potential disturbances that are involved in the process of growth suggests this to be a complex procedure. If foreground issues are not resolved, incomplete Gestalts compound one another and contribute to further contact boundary disturbances, only exacerbating the inability to proceed in the direction of growth (Lobb & Lichtenberg, 2005:33).

The cycle of awareness illustrates the importance of a strong sense of self in order for the contact boundary to be an area across which healthy contact and growth may take place. In other words, if the sense of self is compromised, the person may tend toward contact with the environment that does not align with the self, for example projection, confluence, deflection. The above discussion also reflects the extent to which the relationship a person has with the surrounding environment is central to this process. (Cf. Woldt & Toman, 2005:x.)

Awareness is what can afford a person the capacity to prioritise various needs that emerge, and enable appropriate access to the environment in a way that will allow these needs to be met. (Cf. Yontef & Fairfield, 2005:5.) According to Latner (1992:1), a person exists by differentiating self from other and by connecting self and other in the way that contact becomes "… the experience of difference; without difference, there is no contact." Growth occurs as a function of this idea of relatedness. Therefore, if contact with the self and the environment can be strengthened, the organism will be better placed to meet arising needs appropriately and grow. Jarosewitsch (1995:1) argues that only once unfinished business is addressed is it possible to move out of the hold that previous events may have on a person. Therefore, increased awareness will not only assist in prioritising needs as they arise, but also those that have been unfulfilled in the past and are experienced as interference, or disturbance to the ability to make contact in the present.

4.3.2.2 Organismic self regulation

It has been discussed (refer to 4.3.1.1) that increased awareness and commitment to the experience of the present moment is connected to facilitating a person's relationship with aspects of their environment. Indeed, Yontef and Fairfield (2005:50) define organismic self regulation as "[t]he inherent capacity to recognise needs and conditions, find available supports, and achieve successful adjustments in relationship to the environment." Corey

(2001:196) explains organismic self regulation in terms of homeostasis and balance and argues that the concept refers to the organism's ability to regulate in order to maintain a state of balance or equilibrium which an emerging need, sensation or interest may have disturbed.

Hardy (in Blom, 2006:19) confirms that organismic self regulation is facilitated by heightening awareness. In other words heightened sensitivity of sensory and motor awareness can empower a person to orientate and manipulate appropriately and therefore embrace their ability to self regulate. This self sufficient process allows a person to take responsibility for their needs and emotions, a capability advocated as fundamental emotional intelligence. According to Yontef and Jacobs (2000:305) "… organismic self-regulation requires knowing and owning." Looking at the cycle of awareness with special attention to potential areas where contact with the environment may not be made with full awareness and responsibility (as discussed above), it can be seen that this is crucial to the process; not only is the organism tasked with knowing and committing to awareness of aspects, but is also required to own these aspects as acceptable elements of the self.

4.3.2.3 Dialogue and relationship

The importance of contact between self and environment has been addressed (refer to 4.3.2.1). As Buber (in Kirchner, 2000:2) aptly states, "… neither one [exists] without relating to and being informed by its counterpart. Consequently, relationships are indispensable with relatedness being an irreducible fact of existence." Therefore, a person's ability to engage in relationship, and mediate the element of interrelatedness as they handle this aspect of existence is vital to emotional development. It has been discussed (refer to 2.3.5) that the handling of relationships is the most complex of the five abilities of EQ proposed in this study as it draws upon the preceding capacities of awareness, emotional control, motivation and empathy.

Given the value of relationship, it appears valuable to consider the aspects which might enhance this. Buber (in Bowman & Nevis, 2005:12) is a proponent of presence, authenticity and inclusion as defining elements of what is referred to as the "dialogic relationship", a most influential aspect of Gestalt therapy. According to Blom (2006:56), this typically refers to the kind of relationship that is optimal between client and therapist, however, the researcher is of

the opinion that these elements are valuable building blocks for any genuine relationship and could therefore be applied to that between parent and child.

Woldt and Toman (2005:xix-xx) outline these aspects of authentic connection that is about "… a meeting of souls" and is referred to as the I-Thou connection in which the separateness of "I" and "you" is temporarily suspended in favour of a connection of nurturance and respect (Buber in Smith, 2000:3). According to Woldt and Toman (2005:xix), presence echoes the aspects of here and now awareness and requires the preparedness to bring the "fullness" of the authentic self to the interaction. Genuine and unreserved communication allows free expression outside of conditions and expectations. Inclusion "… is a concrete imagining of the reality of the other, in oneself, while still retaining one's own self identity", and in a sense is a heightened form of empathy (Woldt & Toman, 2005:xx). Lastly, the dialogic attitude as the final element of the "I-Thou" possibility allows the potential for this absolute connection characterised by genuine acceptance. (Cf. Woldt & Toman, 2005:xix-xx.)

This merging of "I" and "thou" in a fully contactful connection draws on elements of confluence. This concept has been proposed as negative to growth in the above discussion. However, within the context of relationship, there is scope for confluence to be positive as long as it occurs within an arena of awareness and is used in order to gain an appreciation for the other. The experience of empathy is that in which a person's experience of another's feelings as their own is made possible through the blurring of boundaries (Latner 1992:1). Latner (1992:1) refers to this as an "oceanic" experience in which the ability to feel an all-encompassing, real connection with others (much like the experience of dipping in the ocean) is so much of what makes a person real, and defines fellowship and what it is to be human. Guidelines will encourage parents to make use of such connections from time to time in their pursuit of connecting genuinely with their children.

Woldt and Toman (2005:110) concur that "[a]n authentic relationship is, by definition, psychological nourishment that enables us to grow" and hereby emphasise this as crucial to the emotional growth and development of children. Guidelines which address the relationship aspect of EQ encourage parents to allow themselves and their children the freedom in which

this level of authenticity can take place. It is argued that by employing elements of presence, authenticity and inclusion this can be achieved. (Cf. Woldt & Toman, 2005:110.)

4.3.2.4 Paradoxical theory of change

The paradox that is referred to by the Gestalt philosophy theory of change is that which says, "… the more one tries to be who one is not, the more one stays the same" (Beisser in Yontef & Fuhr, 2005:82). It is argued that,

> When people identify with their whole selves, when they acknowledge whatever aspect arises at a moment, the conditions for wholeness and growth are created. When people do not identify with part of who they are, inner conflict is created, and all of a person's resources cannot go into needed interactions of self and other (Yontef & Fuhr, 2005:83).

Therefore, it is argued that a level of acceptance is required as a starting point from which growth and change can occur (Tolle, 2005:22). The discussion returns then to the importance of awareness as the fundamental aspect in the web of interrelatedness. Awareness is thus characteristic of the Gestalt understanding since it is this awareness of self that is required in order to establish a level of acceptance. Increased awareness regarding any fragmented parts of the self provides a starting point in order for these elements to be re-owned and then accepted (Blom, 2006:27). Blom (2006:53) explains that a level of authenticity is regained with regained integration and the possibility for a full commitment to the process of contact is inadvertently facilitated.

4.4 Summary

By lending a Gestalt perspective to the understanding of aspects of EQ, the researcher proposes a complementary relationship of the two theories. The abilities of emotional intelligence can be seen as a bridge between organism and environment, supplying the organism, or child, with skills in order to embrace aspects of the environment. Clarkson (1991:1) states that "[t]he aim of the Gestalt approach is for a person to discover, explore, and experience his or her own shape, pattern and wholeness" and to this end, it is argued that abilities of emotional intelligence could certainly facilitate this process. The table below (refer to Table 4.1)

highlights the points of intersection between EQ abilities and Gestalt principles highlighted in this chapter.

Emotional intelligence abilities	**Gestalt principles**
Emotional awareness	Awareness Here and now figure/ figure ground/ Gestalt formation boundaries and contact boundary disturbances, unfinished business, holism, assimilation, integration
Managing emotions	Organismic self regulation Contact boundary disturbances
Motivation	Empowerment Responsibility
Empathy	Boundaries relationship
Handling Relationships	Dialogue Contact Growth and development of self

Table 4.1 Table outlining points of intersection between EQ abilities and Gestalt principles

The following chapter will address functional elements of existing guidelines and hereby complete the literary element of the research process, namely phase two of the Design and Development model which concerns “Information gathering and synthesis”.

Chapter 5
Functional Elements of Existing Programmes

5.1 Introduction

The aspect of the literary focus that explores existing programmes fulfils the final of the three tasks that constitute phase 2 of the Design and Development model. This chapter will take the form of a discussion in which successful models are explored for functional elements. These functional aspects of existing programmes were explored in order to steer the process of developing guidelines relevant to this study.

Because the emphasis of the guidelines that were developed for the purpose of this study spans the subjects of emotional intelligence, Gestalt theory, and parenting; existing programmes that touched on any of these aspects were explored. Given the limited scope of this study, the researcher has selected four programmes for consideration which are discussed in this chapter. Functional elements will hereby be presented from the following programmes:

- De Klerk and Le Roux's (2003) Emotional Intelligence for Children and Teens;
- Elias, Tobias, and Friedlander's (1999) Emotionally Intelligent Parenting;
- Phelan's (2003) 1-2-3 Magic; and
- Gurney and Gurney's (1960s) Filial Therapy.

5.2 Emotional intelligence for children and teens

"Emotional intelligence for children and teens" was developed by two South African experts on emotional intelligence, Dr Rina de Klerk and Dr Ronél le Roux, and was first published in 2003. This programme takes the form of a practical guide in which various activities for developing skills of EQ are provided. The aim is that parents and teachers work through these alongside children (from toddlerhood to teenage years).

5.2.1 Parenting philosophy

De Klerk and Le Roux (2003:13) view parents as central to the way in which children learn about emotions. They argue that as first educators of the emotional experience, parents have a

significant influence in initiating the development of emotional intelligence among their children. De Klerk and Le Roux (2003:13) advise against relying on discipline alone and encourage an attitude to parenting that incorporates the emotional experience of the child.

Emphasis on the emotional dimension of a child's life is crucial in raising a well-adjusted individual. They argue that "[f]or parents emotional intelligence means being aware of the children's feelings, having empathy and providing comfort and guidance" (Le Roux & De Klerk, 2003:12). Emphasis is placed on parents' own EQ as much as on the importance of their role in affecting the development of EQ in their children. An open, honest and accepting attitude is advocated as the setting in which parent-child relationships flourish.

Le Roux and De Klerk (2003:14) draw on Gottman and DeClaire's theory of the four styles of parenting in encouraging awareness of the qualities that define a "good parent". In their terms, this would imply a parenting style that encourages principles of emotional intelligence and results in a child who is aware of arising feelings and is able to control these; and who feels good about the self and those in the surrounding environment.

5.2.2 Elements of the programme

As a part of the way of life that is proposed which ideally involves the use of EQ principles as a guide, De Klerk and Le Roux (2003:13) encourage parents to:

- Know themselves and help others in the household to really know themselves as well. This may include their likes, dislikes, their fears, things that make them proud, et cetera.
- Start talking about feelings. Parents are advised to teach their children feeling words and look for situations that elicit feelings. Empathy is highlighted as crucial to this process and encouraging children to become aware also of the possible feelings of others is important. Parents are urged to never ignore intense feelings.
- Accept and acknowledge children's feelings. It is recommended that parents teach that all feelings are acceptable but not all behaviour. Important to this lesson is explaining acceptable reactions to the feelings children experience.

- To be a good example of emotional control. On the occasions that this is not managed, parents are tasked with explaining this to their children, using it as a learning opportunity.
- Show their children how to look at a certain situation from different points of view, and how to consider various possibilities and how to do things differently.
- To teach their children that their thinking patterns have to be constructive in order for them to reach an optimal attitude of happiness.
- Be on the lookout for humour in situations and teach their children to find joy in the little things.
- To embrace an attitude of caring about other people: to have empathy, respect, and good people skills.

5.2.3 Process of the programme

The practical guide which De Klerk and Le Roux (2003) propose facilitates the enhancement of emotional intelligence by providing information as well as age-appropriate activities relevant to each of a variety of aspects relevant to EQ. These include:

- Self knowledge and the improvement of self worth
- Self acceptance and assertiveness
- Self awareness and feelings
- Communication
- Emotional control
- Values
- Beliefs and thinking patterns
- Social skills
- Resilience
- Decisions and the challenge of problem solving
- Motivation.

Parents and teachers select suitable activities and work through these with the children.

5.3 Emotionally intelligent parenting

Elias, Tobias and Friedlander (1999) provide guidelines on "[h]ow to raise a self disciplined, responsible, socially skilled child" through emotional intelligence principles as they relate to parenting. The value of emotional intelligence is emphasised within the context of a lifestyle characterised by increased pressures. Elias *et al*. (1999) argue that "[l]ife is hectic, complicated, exciting, challenging, and exhausting", and acknowledge that now more than ever parents and children are urged to improve their emotional resources as they strive for a life of fulfilment and calm. The guidelines are most useful for the parent with children in the middle childhood.

5.3.1 Parenting philosophy

Elias *et al*. (1999) propose an attitude of parenting that draws on what they refer to as the "Twenty-four-Karat Golden Rule" which states, "Do unto your children as you would have other people do unto your children." This rule encourages an attitude of respect, honesty, and honour in the parenting of children. The task of parenting, according to these authors is to develop a strong self concept with a feeling of confidence; and the self discipline and responsibility to support this as the child is prepared for the future.

5.3.2 Elements of the programme

The Golden Rule filters through into the five main principles of emotionally intelligent parenting. According to Elias *et al*. (1999) these include:

- Being aware of one's own feelings and those of others,
- Showing empathy and understanding for others' points of view,
- Regulating and coping positively with emotional and behavioural impulses,
- Being positive and goal- and plan-oriented, and
- Using positive social skills in handling relationships.

These principles echo the very elements of EQ that have been highlighted in this study as defining the concept. Each of the elements outlined above are addressed through the various topics relevant to parenting. The topics include:

- "Creating a sharing, caring problem-solving family", where the family set up is explored. Ways of improving quality family time are suggested so that this is experienced as more fun and less stressful.
- "How to talk so children will think", where parents are encouraged to instil an environment where children are encouraged to respond more actively and reasonably.
- "Self-direction and self improvement: The EQ approach to discipline."
- "How children can be less impulsive and build self-control and social skills."
- Coaching your children in responsible action where problem solving strategies and self control are proposed.
- Parent-child conversations on important education-related problems and choices such as: homework, anger, parental conflict regarding one another's parenting styles, car rides, bedtimes, teen dishonesty, lying and cheating, setting limits with teenagers, sadness, mobilising a family.

5.3.3 Process of the programme

The guidelines proposed by Elias *et al*.(1999) are put forward in a book which parents can work through at their own pace. The guidelines begin by including an informal measure of the emotional intelligence of parents and their children respectively where parents are able to determine areas where improvement is best focused. Parents can then process the information in terms of their unique needs. The style in which the guidelines are presented lends appreciation to the challenge that is parenting.

5.4 1-2-3 Magic

1-2-3 Magic is a guideline for parents with children aged 2-12. This behaviour modification programme was developed by Phelan (2003) who suggests effective practical techniques to assist parents specifically in the disciplining of their children. The idea is that parents adopt a system of counting to 3 as a way of issuing a child a series of warnings in order to convey that what they are doing is not acceptable, and to give the child a choice in averting the behaviour. If the child does not respond to this, time-outs are given. It is argued that this negative condition experienced as a consequence of the behaviour will lead to it being weakened.

5.4.1 Parenting philosophy

1-2-3 Magic suggests that the process of discipline is carried out straightforwardly and unemotionally yet within a context of patience and compassion. The researcher notes that, in this way, the approach contrasts with that of the emotional intelligence programmes where more emphasis is given to the emotional dimension.

1-2-3 Magic implies that parents have the control. This dynamic to the parent-child relationship may provide the child with boundaries and security needed. However, the researcher notes that it is possible that this element of authority could conflict with principles of emotional intelligence where a move away from authority is favoured. Nevertheless, the element of choice that the child is given promotes responsibility and associated empowerment (Blom, 2006:53).

5.4.2 Elements of the programme

The three aspects of the programme are outlined below:

- The first step involves putting a *stop* to negative behaviour. Simple techniques are suggested to get the child to stop carrying out undesirable behaviour (for example: whining, arguing, tantrums, sibling rivalry);
- Secondly, parents encourage positive behaviour. Several effective methods are presented in order to help parents get their children to *start* engaging in good behaviour (for example: cleaning rooms, going to bed, homework);
- Thirdly, parents are encouraged to strengthen the relationship between themselves and their children. Ways of reinforcing the bond are addressed, and threats to this which include testing and manipulation are acknowledged and discussed.

Practical scenarios are addressed such as mealtimes, family meetings, and household chores. Consistent discipline is emphasised which suggests the disciplining techniques be applied to all settings.

Phelan (2003) advises on avoidance of over-parenting, and addresses the importance of building children's social skills.

5.4.3 Process of the programme

Parents work through the book or video in which the 1-2-3 Magic programme is presented. Parents and children decide on rules and consequences together before the discipline programme is implemented. Alternatively, parents can join a support group in their community where this is available. The groups will work through the material with a professional and parents will have the opportunity to discuss various challenges they experience with this professional as well as other parents.

5.5 Filial therapy

Filial therapy is a family-based play therapy model and offers an approach which focuses on the parent-child interaction (Haslam, 2006:18). Filial therapy was developed in the 1960s by Louise and Bernard Gurney and is aimed at strengthening family relationships and empowers children with regard to emotional expression (Gurney & Gurney in Haslam, 2006:18). The approach is placed within Carl Rogers' client-centred orientation which Virginia Axline made available to children through play therapy. Principles of empathy, acceptance and unconditional positive regard apply (Guerney, 1997:131). The link between play therapy and filial therapy provides a strong motivation for inclusion of this programme in the review.

5.5.1 Parenting philosophy

The model on which filial therapy is based lends responsibility to the parents, challenging the notion that "… the therapist is the infallible 'expert' and the only one that can intervene in the child's problems" (Haslam 2006:30). In this way the family is empowered as a unit to address their challenges. Haslam (2006:33) states that rapport and empathy are among the qualities that are transferred from the sessions to more generalised settings. Placing the parent-child relationship at the centre of this programme aligns with the emphasis Gestalt philosophy places on relationship as fundamental to growth.

5.5.2 Elements of the programme

- Even though this orientation differs from Gestalt theory, it echoes the chief value that is placed on authenticity and awareness in the context of a relationship. According to Guerney (1997:131), "The overarching goal [of client centred therapy] is to achieve

psychological adjustment, which exists when the concept of the self has become such that all the sensory and visceral experiences of the organism are or may be assimilated on a symbolic level into a consistent relationship with the concept of the self."

- Filial therapy is about building the parent-child relationship under therapeutic conditions.
- The parents become the primary therapeutic change agent.
- Shumann (2002:1) describes that the therapeutic role parents take on for the duration of the intervention "…permits a child to explore personal struggles by breaking previous patterns of parent-child interaction."

5.5.3 Process of the programme

Parents can attend a filial therapy group which typically meets weekly for a minimum of 10 sessions but can go on for 6 months. Alternatively, they could receive individual intervention. The play session is seen as a "microscope" through which the parent-child relationship can be explored, understood and developed (Guerney, 1997:139).

Guerney (1997:145-146) describes the stages that constitute the filial therapy process:

Stage one: Training

The therapist will demonstrate to parents the theories around play therapy and the parent-child relationship. This is carried out over 2-3 sessions.

Stage two: Practice play

Parents practice play in sessions without the children. This takes place over 1-2 sessions.

Stage three: Therapy sessions by parents

Parents conduct play sessions with their children. The number of sessions is determined by the progress of the children but usually lasts 6-8 sessions. Feedback is given to parents after each session. The content of the feedback surrounds parents' experience of the play sessions and also children's behaviour outside of the sessions.

Stage four: Transfer and generalisation

This stage is a form of debriefing where sustainability of skills learned is encouraged as these are applied to life outside the play sessions.

Stage five: Formal evaluation of progress

This is an optional stage which involves the discussion of changes that have taken place over the course of the intervention.

Sessions take place in a room that is catered for children's need for emotional expression and should contain toys that may be useful in facilitating this process.

5.6 Summary

In this chapter, various elements of existing programmes are discussed. In particular, those that appeared valuable in guiding the process of the development of guidelines in order to enhance emotional intelligence among children in middle childhood are emphasised. Programmes focused on parenting and emotional intelligence and less on Gestalt philosophy. However, many of the principles appear to be shared which makes these worthwhile nonetheless.

The chapter which follows presents the Early Development Phase of the Intervention in which guidelines are produced.

Chapter 6
Design and Early Development

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the final two phases of the intervention research process relevant to this study are discussed. These are namely; Design, and Early Development. The Design phase is constituted by two stages which address firstly, the "development of an observational system", and secondly, the specification of "procedural elements of the intervention" (De Vos, 2005: 400). The observational system offers a means by which the intervention can be evaluated in order to focus further improvements. The procedural elements outline various conditions under which the intervention is considered to be best carried out (De Vos, 2005:401).

The Early Development phase concerns the "development of a prototype" for parental guidelines to enhance emotional intelligence among children in middle childhood. These guidelines address needs highlighted by participants in the empirical study (refer to chapter 2). The guidelines also draw upon information gathered regarding emotional intelligence and parenting (refer to chapter 3), the Gestalt philosophy (refer to chapter 4) as well as functional elements of existing programmes (refer to chapter 5) in its pursuit to address identified concerns.

6.2 Design

As outlined in 6.1, this third phase in the intervention research process concerns the two tasks of designing an observational system, and identifying specifications for procedural elements of the intervention. These two tasks will subsequently be discussed.

6.2.1 Observational system design

Through interaction with participants in the empirical study, the researcher has identified areas in which change is desired (refer to chapter 2). In particular, these changes pertain to the emotional behaviour of children as far as enhanced EQ across specified domains is concerned. The observational system involves classifying and defining relevant behavioural events in a

way that allows them to be tangibly observed, allowing progress to be measured (De Vos, 2005:400). In the instance of this study, behaviour which falls within the sphere of emotional intelligence is classified. This gauge could assist in determining whether the intervention is in fact achieving its desired outcomes. The suggestion is that parents, the target group for which the guidelines are aimed, will be in a favourable position to directly observe changes in their children. The system is thus prepared for their use. The idea is that they will be able to assess whether emotional intelligence is being enhanced as the guidelines propose. The feedback process that the observational system aims to facilitate would hereby play a valuable role in guiding accordingly the course of intervention development and improvement.

Through the use of the observational system the parents will also receive valuable feedback. A tangible measure of parental input could provide evidence of short term wins (refer to 3.2.3) and might hereby encourage an engaging level of participation in the intervention. Alternatively, areas in which efforts to enhance EQ among children might not have been as successful will be highlighted and would in this case assist in directing focus of future parental input. The observational system thus has a dual function in benefiting both parents and the study (that is, this study as well as future studies).

It is anticipated that the extent to which changes could be attributed to the intervention alone may be scientifically challenging to determine given the interrelatedness of many factors at play. However, the general trend toward enhanced EQ could certainly be noted. This would be a consideration to take into account for future studies which may further this intervention. Another potential limitation is the self reporting nature of the evaluation. It is advised that results will need to be interpreted within the context of this limitation. Nevertheless, the focus of the observational system is to detect *enhancement* of emotional intelligence as a result of the intervention rather than to gauge levels of EQ among children. The observational system will therefore provide an appropriate accompaniment to the guidelines used by parents who partake in the initial stages of implementation.

The researcher also raises a few considerations to be kept in mind in the process of developing the observational system. Firstly, emotional intelligence has been cited as a difficult construct

to measure (Salovey, 2008). Salovey (2008) cites the various assessments which have been developed for this purpose to include the: Baron EQ-i, MSCEIT, TalentSmart Perform Appraisal, Organisational Vital Signs Survey, and the Six Seconds EI Assessment. None of these instruments are freely available and therefore were not accessed given the limited scope of this project. Formal measures of the construct are thus not forthcoming. However, the research drew upon valuable elements of work relating to EQ and emotional development by De Klerk and Le Roux (2003), Blom (2006) and Elias *et al*. (1999) which involves the following;

- De Klerk and Le Roux (2003) conclude each addressed element of EQ by outlining certain objectives which guide the user in assessing whether the EQ quality is being achieved. The elements of EQ addressed by De Klerk and Le Roux (2003) were classified into the five specified domains of emotional intelligence and adapted for use in an observational system specific to this study.
- The guidelines which Blom (2006:68-70) proposes for assessing children in Gestalt play therapy were also useful in highlighting important questions regarding behaviour relevant to emotional development. Some of these were selected and adapted for use in the observational system.
- Elias *et al*. (1999:18-20) provide an informal measure of family members' emotional intelligence. This measure consists of questions aimed at assessing the EQ of parents and children. These questions were designed to encourage thought regarding the respective domains of emotional intelligence among both parents and children. These questions are included in the observational system and provide a valuable introductory question to begin each domain addressed.

Attention is given to the spirit of change in which a move toward enhanced EQ is proposed. The paradoxical theory of change (refer to 4.3.2.2) is defined as that which places value on, first and foremost, understanding the self and acceptance of all aspects of this. Once this is realised, it is argued that positive behavioural changes will follow. Gestalt philosophy is hereby not directed at modifying behaviour as such. It can be said that this approach poses a challenge to the development of an observational system; the specific identification of behaviours which

is required in order for the system to be effective presents a conflict to the more non-linear growth process proposed by the paradoxical theory of change and Gestalt philosophy. (Cf. Yontef & Fuhr, 2005:83.) However, even though the general philosophy supporting the guidelines emphasises this more general approach they are constructed around specific domains of emotional behaviour, namely; emotional awareness, emotional control, motivation, empathy and handling relationships. Documenting these behaviours along domains of EQ will therefore be possible.

As stated in 1.5.3.1, De Vos (2005:400) explains that for the observational system to function effectively, it should consist of three working parts, namely:

- *Definitions* of the behaviour associated with the problem.
- *Examples and non-examples* of the behaviours to help discern occurrences of the behaviour product.
- *Scoring (or evaluating) instructions* to guide the recording of desired behaviours.

The observational system provides parents with thorough examples of behaviour associated with each EQ domain. This serves to guide parents regarding definitions and examples and non-examples of targeted behaviour. Evaluation is facilitated by the reframing of targeted behaviour into questions which parents can answer. Further scoring (or rather, evaluating) instructions are specified in the procedural elements.

The observational system is presented in Table 6.1. The system provides an opportunity for parents to systematically evaluate EQ behaviour among their children. They are also encouraged to contemplate their own abilities along specified EQ domains. It is noted that evaluating EQ behaviour in this way might illustrate the interrelatedness between the emotionally intelligent behaviour of parents and their children. It is suggested that this observational system be completed in the first session and then again in the final session.

Table 6.1 Observational system highlighting desired emotionally intelligent behaviour with respect to the five EQ domains

Domains of emotional intelligence	**Classification of questions**	**Questions highlighting targeted emotionally intelligent behaviour**	**Evaluation of emotionally intelligent behaviour within the *parent***		**Evaluation of emotionally intelligent behaviour within the *child***	
			before intervention (1st session) Date: _____	**after intervention (final session) Date: _____**	**before intervention (1st session) Date: _____**	**after intervention (final session) Date: _____**
Awareness	Introductory question – parent	How well do you know your own feelings? How well do you know the feelings of your family? Think of a recent problem in the family. How were you feeling, or your children, or others involved in the problem?				
	Introductory question – child	How well can your child verbalise feelings? If you ask him/ her how he/ she feels, can he/ she respond with a feeling word, or does he/ she tell you what happened? Can your child identify a range of feelings with gradations in between? Can your child identify feelings in others?				
	Self knowledge and the improvement of self worth	Comment on your child's knowledge of personal strengths and growth areas.				
		Does your child have appreciation for the fact that certain characteristics are shared by others, and that some characteristics are unique?				
		Comment on the acceptance of self, and the consequent readiness to fulfil potential.				
		How do you/ your child fare regarding the ability to give attention to own special characteristics without the need to compare to others?				
		Comment on the ease with which others are accepted.				
		Does your child have the ability to have realistic expectations of him/ herself? How do you fare in this regard?				
		Comment on the readiness to let go of perfectionism. How does your child experience this? … How do you experience this?				
	Self acceptance and assertiveness	Rate your child's ability to laugh at him/ herself (indicating an acceptance of the self including mistakes). How naturally does this come to you?				
		Rate your ability to view mistakes as learning opportunities. How does your child experience mistakes?				
		Comment on your child's ability to accept mistakes in others. How do you fare in this regard?				
		Comment on the extent to which attention is given to liking, accepting and appreciating the self.				
		Comment on the preparedness with which your child takes risks in order to learn and grow. How easily do you take risks in favour of growth experiences?				
		Rate your and your child's ability to draw on assertiveness. In other words, feeling comfortable with saying "no" to unfair requests or communicating effectively about needs and wants.				
		How do you and your child fare with regard to a move away from the tendency to compare with others?				

		Comment on you and your child's knowledge of values and boundaries.				
	Self awareness and feelings	To what extent does your child have personal insight into physical symptoms? For example, does your child know which sensations communicate illness, toothache, tiredness, temperature discomfort, sleepiness, hunger, sadness, excitement etc.? Comment on your own awareness of the physical dimension of your emotions.				
		Would you say your child is aware of the senses as valuable channels through which a person's world is experienced? (Sensory integration). To what extent are you aware of your sensory contact with the environment?				
		Is your child able to associate memories of previous events with various sensations of feeling, touching, smelling, and hearing? To what extent are you?				
		The ability to become aware of emotions requires a level of emotional literacy (feelings vocabulary). Rate your child's feeling vocabulary. Give examples of words he or she has used to describe emotions. Rate your own emotional literacy.				
		To what extent does your child have an appreciation for the element of choice involved in reacting to a feeling? And to what extent do you have such an appreciation?				
		In what way is your child able to take responsibility for his/ her own feelings and have control over them? For example, using language such as "I am getting angry" rather than "You make me angry". How do you fare in this regard?				
		Rate your child's awareness of the various ways in which it is acceptable to react to a feeling. For example, is your child sensitive to occasions where it might be inappropriate to cry or lash out.				
	Values	How does your child fare with regard to EQ values such as empathy, tolerance, happiness, personal responsibility, sense of humour, connecting with people (and keeping eye contact)? And you?				
	Beliefs and thinking patterns	How astute is your child in terms of altering beliefs where these cultivate negative feelings? How do you manage this? Give examples.				
		Does your child know that it is in fact possible to alter beliefs and thinking patterns? Do you know it is possible to alter beliefs and thinking patterns? Motivate.				
		Does your child have an appreciation for the way in which this applies to beliefs about the self and how this affects the way in which a person feels about the self? Motivate.				
		To what extent is your child able to draw on empathy when trying to understand other's beliefs and thinking patterns? How easily are you able to do this?				
		Does your child have respect for other's points of view as a result of this increased understanding made possible by empathy? How about you?				
	Humour	To what extent does your child respond relevantly to humour? Would you say you do?				
		Does your child have a sense of humour? How naturally does having a sense of humour come for you?				
	Cognitive aspects	Can your child express his/ her feelings and thoughts? How easy or difficult is this for you?				

		Does the child have ideas and opinions of his or her own?				
	Creativity	Is your child capable of participating freely in creative techniques? What about you?				
		Does your child test new things? Comment on your tendency to test new things.				
		Is your child withdrawn, restricted and/ or defensive? Would you say you are withdrawn, restricted and/ or defensive?				
	Sense of self	Comment on the degree of self-awareness and introspection possessed by your child. How about yourself?				
		Does your child run him/ herself down? Do you run yourself down?				
		Are you self critical and uncertain of yourself? Is your child?				
		Would your child be able to make statements about him or herself? Would you be able to? Give 2 examples.				
		Is your child able to make choices? Rate the ease with which you are able to make day-to-day decisions.				
		Are you self assertive or inhibited? What about your child?				
		Is your child capable of separating from his or her parents? How have you experienced separating from your parents?				
		Does the child reveal confluent behaviour? Would you say you reveal confluent behaviour? *parents will be told what is meant by confluent behaviour.				
		Does your child fight for power? Comment on your need for power.				
		Does the child have an age-related sense for mastery? Comment on your own sense of mastery in the work you do.				
Emotional control	Introductory question – parent	How do you cope with anger, anxiety, and other stresses? Are you able to maintain self-control when stressed? How do you behave after a hard day? How often do you yell at others? When are your best and worst times, and do these vary on different days?				
	Introductory question – child	Can your child wait to get what she wants, especially when it is something he/ she *really* wants? Can your child wait to get something that is right there in front of him/ her, but that he/ she cannot have now? How well can he/ she tolerate frustrations? How does he/ she express anger, anxiety and other uncomfortable feelings?				
	Emotional control	Comment on your appreciation for the fact that it is possible to be in control of a person's feelings. Does your child have such an appreciation?				
		Comment on your awareness of the physical symptoms and sensations associated with emotions as well as on your ability to name the emotion these indicate. (A valuable step in being able to control emotions).				
		Comment on your/ your child's ability to control emotions without suppressing them.				
		Does your child appreciate the fact that emotions translate into behaviour and control over this is possible as well? Do you appreciate this connection?				
		Is your child able to stop, think, and then act on an emotion? How naturally does this come to you in the experience of a strong emotion?				

	Emotional expression	Does your child know what emotions are? Comment on your understanding of emotions.				
		Can your child express the basic emotions of happiness, sadness, anger and fear? Can you?				
		Can the child identify reasons for his or her emotions? Give an example. How easily are you able to give reasons for your emotions?				
		Is your child's emotional expression relevant? Would your say your emotional expression is in line with the emotion experienced?				
		Is your child able to express emotions? Are you able to express emotions?				
		How does your child handle emotions towards family and friends? Comment on your approach to handling emotions toward family and friends.				
		How does your child handle his/ her anger? How do you handle your feelings of anger?				
		Would you say your child has unfinished emotions that should be addressed? Would you say you have unfinished emotions that should be addressed? If yes, comment on the nature of this unfinished business.				
Motivation	Introductory question – parent	What goals do you have for yourself and your family? What plans do you have for achieving them?				
	Introductory question – child	What goals does your child have? What goals would you like him/ her to have? Does your child ever plan things out before doing something? Have yourever helped him/ her develop a plan for achieving a goal? Comment on the way you went about this.				
	Resilience	How easily do you accept the fact that a person does not have control of certain events; but it is possible to choose how these are reacted to and learned from? Comment on your child's acceptance of this.				
		Rate your resilience. Comment on the resilience of your child.				
		Resilience can be seen as the ability to overcome adversities by drawing from three sources of resilience features labelled by De Klerk and Le Roux (2003:81-82) as: "I have", "I am", and "I can". Comment on these three sources of resilience in terms of how they relate to you and your child;				
		I have (for example, trusting relationships, structure and rules, role models, encouragement to be autonomous, access to resources such as health and education).				
		I am (for example, loveable loving, empathetic and altruistic, proud of myself, autonomous and responsible, filled with hope, faith, and trust).				
		I can (for example, communicate, problem-solving, manage my feelings and impulses, gauge the temperament of myself and others, seek trusting relationships).				
	Decisions and the challenge of problem solving	Does your child take responsibility for his/ her decisions? Do you? Give an example.				
		Do you have an appreciation for the link between each decision and its responsibilities and consequences? Does your child? Give an example of an incident where this needed to be explained.				

		How easily are you able to take values into account when a tough decision between two equally difficult alternatives (each with serious consequences) needs to be made? How does your child handle such conflicts?				
		Do you have an awareness of the emotionally sapping process that is associated with pondering decisions? Does this influence your tendency to make decisions as soon as possible, with the knowledge that making a decision provides energy for action? What is your child's approach regarding decision making? Do they ponder over difficult decisions or are they able to make them quickly?				
		How reluctant are you to employ ideas which are too rigid since these limit choices? How open or closed is your child to rigid ideas?				
		Would you say you are open-minded? Comment on the open-mindedness of your child. What do you do to impart this quality?				
	Motivation	Comment on your ability to economically allocate your energy to things over which you have the capacity to control. In other words, do you lose energy through worrying and fretting or can you focus your energy to taking action where this is possible? How does your child fare in terms of the ability to allocate energy economically?				
		Where adaptability is required, flexibility and open mindedness are essential in order for necessary change to take place. Comment on your flexibility and open-mindedness in as far as these qualities allow you to be adaptable. What about your child's flexibility and open-mindedness and consequent adaptability?				
		Rate your child's faith in him/ herself and his/ her ability to deal with uncertainty with a sense of purpose. Comment on the faith you have in yourself. How easily are you able to deal with uncertainty?				
		Are you able to visualise desired goals in an attempt to enhance motivation directed at achieving these? How naturally does your child visualise goals? Are these used to enhance his/ her motivation?				
		How easily is your child able to view mistakes as opportunities for growth? This is necessary for the preparedness to make mistakes which is essential to trying new things as growth is explored. Comment on your ability to view mistakes as opportunities for growth.				
		Is your child able to draw on personal resources? What is your experience of drawing on personal resources? How easily does this come to you?				
		Are you able to draw on friends and family as sources of motivation? Is your child able to drawn on friends and family as sources of motivation?				
	Interest	Does your child show involvement, interest and excitement? Do you?				
	Body posture	How does your child move; is his/ her body impaired or loose and flexible? Comment on your body posture in the way you move. Do you feel restricted or flexible?				
Empathy	Introductory question – parent	How much empathy would you say you have for others? Do you express it to them? When was the last time you did this? Are you sure they were aware of what you were doing? Are you able to understand another's point of view even during an argument?				

	Introductory question – child	How does your child show empathy? When was the last time he/ she seemed to relate to another's feelings? Does he/ she show interest in other's feelings? When you tell him stories about others' misfortunes, how does he/ she react? Can he/ she understand different points of view? Can he/ she see both sides of an argument? Can he/ she do this when in the midst of a conflict?				
	Social skills	Briefly comment on the child's relationships with others in his/ her life? Write down the first five words that come to mind when you think of your relationships with others in your life.				
		Does your child have friends? Do you?				
		Does your child show signs of independent thoughts and actions? How independent are you in your thoughts and actions? Give an example.				
		Does your child have environmental support for his/ her needs? Do you feel supported by your environment in terms of meeting your needs?				
		How does your child present him/ herself to the world? How would you say you present yourself to the world? You may write down the first five words that come to mind.				
		In what ways does your child try to satisfy needs and acquire a sense of self? How do you go about doing this?				
Handling Relationships	Introductory question – parent	How do you deal with problematic, everyday, interpersonal situations? Do you really listen to others? Do you reflect back to people what they are saying? Do you approach social conflicts in a thoughtful manner? Do you consider alternatives before deciding on a course of action?				
	Introductory question – child	How does your child resolve conflicts? How independent is he/ she in resolving conflicts? Does he/ she listen or turn others off? Can he/ she think of different ways of resolving conflict?				
	Communication	Comment on your level of awareness regarding body language as an expression of feelings. How open would you say your child is to cues offered by body language?				
		Are you able to take responsibility for feelings and own these in the context of communication? This ability is demonstrated by the use of "I-messages". For example, "I feel… (name of feeling) because …. (reason for feeling)". How does your child fare regarding this ability? How have you tried to teach your child the importance of taking responsibility of feelings within the context of communication?				
		Has your child developed the ability to listen attentively? How developed is your ability to listen to others attentively?				
	Social skills	Comment on your ability to read social signs (body language) correctly, confirm observations and react appropriately? How does your child fare regarding these abilities?				
		Comment on your child's ability to handle a situation which hasn't gone according to plan. Rate your ability to handle a situation which hasn't gone according to plan.				

		Do you have awareness of what is required of a friend? Name the first five qualities that come to mind. Rate your child's awareness of what is required of a friend.				
		Do you have an appreciation for certain behaviours which can be annoying and can result in avoidance by friends? Name three. Do you think your child has an appreciation for behaviours which may result in avoidance by friends?				
		Do you have an appreciation for certain behaviours which may attract friends? Name the first five that come to mind. Do you think your child has an appreciation for certain behaviours which may attract friends?				
		Comment on your child's level of trust. How easily do you find it to trust others?				
	Contact and contact skills	Does your child make good contact and can this be maintained? How easily do you find it to make and maintain contact with others?				
	Contact boundary disturbances	Does the child make use of any of the contact boundary disturbances to satisfy his or her needs? Do you?				
		What is the influence of introjects in the child's life? Comment on the influence of introjects in your life? Give examples.				
	Resistance	How does resistance (broken contact) manifest in the child? Do you make use of resistance? If so, in what context?				

6.2.2 Procedural elements of the intervention

As outlined in 1.5.3.2, procedural elements concern the environmental aspects of the intervention which allow change to take place. It is therefore necessary for these to be identified and conveyed in order for change to be replicated by future practitioners or change agents (De Vos, 2005:401). Among the procedural elements for this intervention are:

For the practitioner;

- An appreciation for the challenge of parenting.
- An aspiration to improve the emotional capacity of children in an attempt to equip them for the unknowns of the future.
- A belief in the potential enhanced emotional intelligence may create for children (and parents).
- A clear understanding of emotional development as it pertains to middle childhood (particularly theories of Erikson and Piaget).
- A sound knowledge and understanding of the Gestalt approach and its principles which are relevant to EQ, namely: awareness, sensory awareness, here and now, organismic self-regulation, dialogue, responsibility, and the paradoxical theory of change. (The paradoxical theory of change is highlighted as being especially important as this provides the framework for the attitude toward change.)
- An understanding for the fact that parents who wish to enhance the emotional intelligence of their children may need to work on their own EQ. It is possible that unfinished business of the past may be brought to fore through this process of growth which parents commit to. The practitioner should therefore have relevant counselling skills and facilitation experience in order to contain such instances.
- It is advised that the guidelines be presented over the course of eight sessions. This would allow the practitioner to empower parents with a rich understanding of each of the domains of emotional intelligence conveyed from a Gestalt perspective.
- It is suggested that a contract of confidentiality is drawn up between practitioner and participants.

- The practitioner should be available for follow up consultations once the course of eight sessions is complete.

For the parents involved;

- The guidelines are specifically for parents with children in middle childhood.
- It is advised that both parents should be involved as far as this is possible.
- Parents should be open to their own emotional growth.
- A level of compliance is required by parents and a commitment to their own EQ development is also encouraged. Despite the fact that the limited scope of this study does not accommodate enhancement of EQ among parents as well, it is nevertheless argued to be a crucial component to the enhancement of EQ among children.
- Changes on a neurobiological level require practice, especially as far as emotional control goes. There needs to be a commitment to this.
- Parents should be willing to complete the observational system which accompanies the guidelines. Evaluation instructions will be provided for this process. This includes questions to be answered as fully as possible both before and after the intervention.

For the sessions;

It is proposed that the guidelines be presented over a course of 8 sessions.

- Session 1 – introduction, observational system presented in order for parents to answer questions before the intervention takes place, expectations discussed, confidentiality contracts agreed upon.
- Session 2 – awareness
- Session 3 – emotional control
- Session 4 – motivation
- Session 5 – empathy
- Session 6 – handling relationships
- Session 7 – opportunity for general discussion

        - Session 8 – closure, observational systems to be revisited and answered to evaluate enhanced emotional intelligence once the intervention has been introduced.
- It is advised that participants attend in a group of 4-6 pairs of parents.
- The role of the practitioner is advised to shift between educator (of Gestalt philosophy and EQ material), and facilitator (of the group process).
- Participation of parents is encouraged by regular discussions which punctuate the training elements.
- Each session will focus on offering experiential learning and include time for making contact (check-in) which includes making use of sensory awareness where parents are encouraged in the direction of present centred awareness. These experiences are argued to encourage their individual awareness on issues raised and hereby build their sense of self. Also, it is proposed that these will facilitate parents' capacity to manage relationships within the group dynamic. Any difficulties experienced by parents will be used as learning opportunities.
- Flexibility is encouraged and the content of the course can shift according to the needs of the group.

Procedural elements for the guidelines are not rigid. The facilitator-parent relationship is held in high regard as a context in which change can be encouraged and a level of flexibility is important in order for practitioners to feel they can bring their unique style to the implementation of guidelines.

6.3 Early development

For the purposes of this study, "early development" concerns the phase in which the intervention is proposed (Thomas in De Vos, 2005:401). It is expected that various recommendations and feedback offered by the observational system will alter the proposed guidelines as it goes through the valuable process of refinement. Nevertheless, this section presents a preliminary version of the proposed parental guidelines which aim to enhance emotional intelligence among children in middle childhood.

It is stressed that guidelines are not to be interpreted as a list of prescribed traits. Recommendations are to be viewed as guiding principles in which EQ can be better understood by parents so that they may be empowered to enhance this aspect of their own development, but specifically that of their children. Among the principle elements of the proposed guidelines are:

- A focus on the enhancement of children's emotional intelligence.
- An appreciation for the important role parents' own EQ plays in this process.
- A focus on the parent-child relationship – responsibility placed with parents.
- Importance placed on empowering children with regard to emotional expression.
- The importance of children's feelings is acknowledged. Boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable ways of expressing these are explored.
- Value placed on authenticity and awareness in the context of a relationship.
- Emphasis on integration of the self; congruency between thinking, feeling and doing.
- Overall change is aimed at broadening awareness. Parents are however guided with specific objectives for each domain.
- Practitioner is involved with parents directly and change is encouraged within the context of this supportive relationship.
- Respect, honesty and honour for the child is encouraged (golden rule – do unto your child as you would have others do unto him).
- The balance between emotional freedom, and discipline and responsibility is considered important.
- Choices which are available in the pursuit of emotional control are emphasised.

6.3.1 Development of a prototype or preliminary intervention

In order to meet the needs highlighted in the empirical study for increased knowledge on the concept of emotional intelligence it is advised that the first point of focus is a discussion which addresses the definition of EQ. Following this should be an explanation of the functions of emotions. Neuroscience could be drawn upon to facilitate this account. It is also suggested that reasons for the importance of enhanced EQ be reiterated in order

to supplement parents' existing appreciation. A simplified take on Gestalt philosophy could then be presented in order to provide parents with a framework in which to understand the discussion of the respective domains of EQ which follows. Parents will also be briefed on the developmental elements specific to middle childhood. In particular, the psychosocial crisis of inferiority versus industry should be taught (refer to 1.2 and 2.3.4). (Cf. Erikson, in Weiten, 2001:446.) During the empirical investigation, the parental need for input was identified with regard to areas of: conflict management, accepting individuality among children, awareness and how this could be enhanced, management of anger and anxiety, self esteem and self worth (refer to 2.3). These needs will all be addressed under the relevant EQ domains. Recommendations are made regarding the parental role in enhancing these various aspects of EQ. Each domain will contain guidelines relevant to parents, children, or both parents and children.

6.3.1.1 Awareness

It is argued that enhanced awareness has the capacity to empower a person in the ability to identify needs accurately, the ability to make contact with the environment, and to go about meeting the needs in healthful ways (refer to 4.3.1). Enhanced awareness is therefore emphasised as the most important area focus. The following aspects regarding awareness need to be addressed in the sessions with the parents in order to enable them to enhance awareness among their children:

Aspects of awareness which relate to parents:

- It is suggested that parents be guided through the cycle of awareness (refer to 4.3.1) in which it is highlighted that managing the boundary between self and environment is not always easy. It is suggested that parents' attention is drawn to ways in which they can minimise the occurrence of contact boundary disturbances (refer to 4.3.2.1). For example, introjections need to be addressed by encouraging individual thought on assumed truths. Confluence is also something to be aware of as this could indicate a poor sense of self. In instances where confluence is observed, parents are encouraged to give their child more choices. The child

would then gradually become aware of likes and dislikes and this could play a part in encouraging the child toward a clearer perception of the self.

- Parents' attention is drawn to Gestalt perspective of needs-based functioning (refer to 4.2). Parents are encouraged to understand their children's behaviour within this context and to ask themselves the following questions:
    - What need is the child communicating?
    - Is the child aware of this need?
    - What need is this behaviour triggering in the parent?
    - What can be done to enter into a contract whereby the child can meet their expressed need within acceptable limits?
- Parents are encouraged to examine their awareness regarding their feelings around their children. This could include birth process, conception, postnatal experience, or position of the child in the family. It is argued that there are feelings associated with each child and the place they establish in a family.
- Parents are encouraged to be proactive about taking time out for themselves and invest in activities that are an expression of themselves. Although the parental role is often associated with self sacrifice, it is argued that children will benefit from having parents who engage in activities that indicate an expression of self and hereby convey an example of the integration between thoughts, feelings and actions.
- Parents are encouraged to examine their own self regulatory system (refer to 4.3.2.2). In other words, what are the indicators which highlight the need for time alone, for example? Parents are encouraged also to think about their family's regulatory system. What are the signs that the family needs a day out together, for example?
- Parents are encouraged to explore their awareness regarding their feelings which relate to their child's independence (refer to 2.3.5.2). A practical suggestion is that the parent could begin by giving up a room in the house (for example, the child's room). Parents would be encouraged to have no say or influence regarding what goes where. This refers to an arrangement whereby the child has the say in her/his

room and the child is, within pre-agreed boundaries, given permission to do there as he/she likes.

- Parents' attention is drawn to the fact that middle childhood is a stage in the developmental process where self worth is entwined with industry (refer to 1.2). The awareness of this means that parents will be encouraged to highlight something like handwriting as simply *part* of the child. For example, if writing is reported as being bad, the child may need to be guided in realising that this does not mean they are bad. Furthermore, it is suggested that parents provide children with age-appropriate opportunities to produce things that they can feel good about.
- Exploration of parents' awareness regarding unfinished business that is influencing current experience is encouraged. It is argued that this would positively impact their interaction with their children (refer to 2.3.1.2).
- Parents' are guarded against falling into the trap of wanting to "rescue" their children (refer to 3.3.1). Vermeulen (1999:169) explains that "[p]eople learn most from their own experiences and every time you jump in to solve their problems, you're robbing them of their own learning." What would be helpful is if parents could acknowledge and validate their children in the emotions they are experiencing. Where this awareness is encouraged, they may be buoyed to tackle the situation independently.
- Parents are encouraged to explore their awareness of the expectations they hold of children. Parents are asked:
    1. Are these expectations realistic (that is, in terms of developmental stage, personality and unique capability of the child)?
    2. What need within the self motivates these expectations?
- Awareness of parents' temperaments is encouraged. Patience is needed in order to foster a natural process of growth among children. Parents are encouraged to examine situations which test their patience and take responsibility for these by avoiding such atmospheres where possible (refer to 3.3.2).

Aspects of awareness which relate to children:

- It is necessary for parents to encourage awareness among their children's energy patterns. Identifying what energises and depletes them is then useful (refer to 3.3.3). Tasks of parenting are exhausting and ongoing and an awareness of the parent's own energy patterns is also proposed to be useful.
- Parents are encouraged to explore their awareness regarding the establishment of priorities and values and to explore the extent to which their child has established their values and priorities (refer to 4.3.1). These are crucial to the development of the self concept. Their accessibility is also essential in decision making processes (refer to 3.3.3).
- Parents are encouraged to highlight the importance of responsibility among their children. This may mean allowing a child to face certain consequences. Children may be given certain tasks in the home in order to facilitate taking responsibility. Taking ownership of such tasks may assist in improving the child's self concept and sense of self worth and contribution and translate to taking responsibility for emotions.
- Sensory awareness is emphasised as a gateway through which self awareness can be enhanced. Parents are encouraged to provide opportunities for their children which expose them to a heightened sensory experience of their world (refer to 4.3.1.1). For example, the encouragement of engaging with textures such as sand or finger paints, listening to music, smelling flowers, or encouraging movement would all stimulate sensory interaction with the environment and enhance awareness.

Aspects of awareness which relate to both parents and children are:

- Integration between elements of the self (for example, thinking, feeling, and doing) is encouraged. In instances where parts of the self are not owned, fragmentation can result. This can impact a person's identity and can therefore interrupt contact with the environment as the boundary surrounding the self is not clear (refer to 4.3.2.1). This applies to both parents and children in their development of emotional intelligence. Parents and children are encouraged to

engage in here and now awareness through sensory modalities in order to connect with their most inner thoughts and feelings.

- Important for parents and children is an emphasis on acceptance of the self within an awareness of *all* aspects of self. Parents and children are encouraged toward a more open relationship with themselves and with each other so that this level of acceptance becomes possible (refer to 4.3.2.3). For example, parents are encouraged to share with their children their experience of uncomfortable feelings without feeling like they need to protect their children (refer to 2.3.2.2).

6.3.1.2 Emotional control

Aspects of emotional control which relate to parents:

- Parents are encouraged to identify the emotions which they struggle to control since they may find it more difficult to manage emotions in their children that they themselves struggle with (refer to 2.3.2.2).
- Parents are encouraged to share uncomfortable emotions within appropriate boundaries with their children. This may involve having to let go of being "the parent that has it all together". The reaction this creates within parents could also be explored.

Aspects of emotional control which relate to children:

- Parents are encouraged to train controlling behaviour by facilitating their children through the experience of strong emotions which may be painful or uncomfortable (refer to 3.3.2). It is advised that parents encourage children to stop when they are experiencing the emotion, try and understand what it is that is making them feel this way, and then assess the options of ways in which to go about expressing the emotion. It is emphasised that this be done in the atmosphere of acceptance and warmth.
- Parents are encouraged to appreciate the extent to which supporting a child in the management of his/ her desires could set the stage for lessons of emotional control in general (refer to 3.3.2).

- Parents are encouraged to teach their children that emotions are triggered by certain events or stimuli, which can then lead to a particular behaviour (refer to 3.3.2). It is advised that the "trigger → emotion → behaviour" process be explained to children in concrete terms, for example with tower blocks – the last block is placed on the tower (trigger), the tower shakes (emotion), and then falls (behaviour). This concrete approach will meet the children at their cognitive developmental level where abstract thinking is not advanced.
- It is encouraged that parents begin to understand emotional outbursts as instances of projection, and in other words involve a break in contact with the environment (refer to 4.3.2.1).
- Parents' attention is brought to the fact that middle childhood is an especially important stage of development for emotional expression (refer to 3.3.1). Children look to adults and other role models for guidance regarding this aspect of emotional development. (Cf. Harris & Butterworth, 2002:299.)

6.3.1.3 Motivation

Aspects of motivation which relate to parents:

- Parents are encouraged to be aware of their own level of motivation. They are encouraged to contemplate where their energy is going (for example physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual pursuits), and review their priorities accordingly. A valuable emphasis of the session on motivation (refer to 6.2.2) might be to encourage parents to think about where they get their energy from. This of course has links to awareness.

Aspects of motivation which relate to children:

- Children should be made aware of what gives them energy (refer to 3.3.3). Also, internal motivation as opposed to external motivation is important to consider. In other words, children should be encouraged in the direction of activities that are in line with their intrinsic motives rather than be guided by the motives of others. If children are doing a sport in order to please their parents for example,

achievement in this sport will not be felt on an internal, genuine level. This dynamic will constantly urge the child to look outside for approval and validation.

- Parents are encouraged to teach their children that confidence and self worth are to come internally from personal sources of strength rather than something that is offered by marks or favour of others, for example.
- Parents are encouraged to create opportunities for their children where they can engage in activities that are characterised by a balance between skill and challenge (refer to 3.3.3). This balance provides the most conducive environment for creating a state of flow and encourages motivation. Pottery, computer programming, ballet, gymnastics, and music are examples of such activities. (Cf. Csizentmihayi, 2004.)
- Where apathy or control is experienced (refer to 3.3.3), parents are encouraged to intervene as appropriate to up skill or challenge in order for flow to be achieved by the child. For example, if a child is in a comfort zone of control, where skills are exceeding the challenge at hand, then the challenge could be increased. Entering a ballet exam could be an example of a way in which the challenge could be increased. If the child is aroused by the challenge, furthering skills in the area would shift the child into a more beneficial and motivated state of flow.

6.3.1.4 Empathy

Aspects of empathy which relate to parents:

- Parents are encouraged to express empathy through nurturing behaviour towards their family members but also toward the people they come in contact with. Parents are also urged to encourage this among their children. The role of empathy in the parent-child relationship in particular is highlighted as important (refer to 3.3.4).

Aspects of empathy which relate to children:

- Parents' attention is drawn to the egocentric nature of children. Empathy challenges the tendency to think only in terms of the self. Empathy is therefore an

ability that should be nurtured. Acting as an example of empathy will surely facilitate this (refer to 3.3.4).

- Where awareness is well developed and empathy is enhanced, it is sometimes necessary to manage these high levels of sensitivity (refer to 2.3.1). In such instances it might be beneficial to build up the self concept in order to maintain the idea of separateness between self and other and define this boundary. If necessary, developing assertiveness within the realm of the personality may also be useful. Exercises which encourage children to consolidate the self concept could be used to enhance this (De Klerk & Le Roux, 2003:37).

Aspects of empathy which relate to both parents and children:

- The benefits of focusing on self nurturing as an important part of emotional intelligence are also highlighted. Not only does self nurturing restore energy by engaging in activities that are an expression of the self and are relaxing; engaging in self nurturing also reflects the ability to attune to a person's own needs (refer to 3.3.4). This is emphasised as equally important for parents and children. Self esteem is also enhanced through this activity since self nurturing draws on the ability to love and accept the self, further strengthening the self concept (refer to 4.3.2.1).

6.3.1.5 *Management of relationships*

Aspects of managing relationships which relate to parents:

- Parents are encouraged to see children not as a challenge in themselves but rather in the way in which they relate to their parents (refer to 2.2.2). It is emphasised that parents explore that which children trigger within themselves and take ownership for any issues that are being highlighted by these aspects.
- Parents are guarded against authority-based discipline that is built on facts, force and fear alone (refer to 3.2.3). It is argued that by drawing on this attitude, parents can side step the essence of the parent-child relationship in growth and development.

- Aspects of dialogue such as presence, inclusion, authenticity, respect, and trust are highlighted (refer to 4.3.2.3). Parents are encouraged to detach from their authoritative role at times when it is not necessary, and allow themselves to connect in an authentic manner with their children.

Aspects of managing relationships which relate to children:

- Responsibility of day-to-day tasks is referred to again. The attitude of responsibility and ownership that this is argued to enhance is understood to translate to taking responsibility for emotions as well and hereby facilitate this process.
- It is acknowledged that most systems need rules in order to operate effectively. These rules however strengthen the roles and expectations that can cloud the essence of the personality. It is therefore important for family units to spend time outside of this home environment in order to allow room for the respective personalities behind various roles to emerge again.
- Parents are encouraged to listen to the feelings behind the facts which the child is saying (refer to 2.3.2.2). Even in instances where it seems that a child's sorrow is a call for attention rather than sorrow itself, this need for attention needs to be addressed. The child is making an attempt at harnessing the environment in order to meet needs and, in terms of the parent's role, this message is argued to be more important than the emotion being experienced.

Aspects of managing relationships which relate to both parents and children:

- Parents and children are urged to examine their responsibility during conflict (refer to 4.3.2.1). "I language" is encouraged, for example, "I feel … when you …" rather than "You make me …"

6.4 Summary

This chapter concludes the research process in its discussion of the final two phases of Design, and Early Development. An observational system that has been designed for the purposes of this study has been proposed. This observation tool is to be used by parents

to self-monitor and self-record any change in behaviour which indicates an enhancement of emotional intelligence among their children. It is encouraged that parents' own development in the abilities of EQ is also noted. Procedural elements which outline desirable conditions in which implementation of the guidelines should take place have also been put forward. Lastly, a prototype for the guidelines is provided as a preliminary step in the implementation process. The chapter which follows concludes this study as a whole as it pays attention to conclusions drawn thus far and recommendations (for developing the research further).

Chapter 7
Recommendations and Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

In previous chapters, attention was given to phases of the Design and Development model of intervention research, namely; problem analysis and project planning, information gathering and synthesis, design, and early development. This chapter brings the research process to a close by addressing conclusions and recommendations that were identified through the study and which may hold value for future research in the field.

The researcher will offer an evaluation of this study in so far as exploring the extent to which research goals and objectives have been achieved. Limitations experienced at various points of the research will be identified, suggestions for further research will be put forward, and conclusions gleaned will be summarised.

7.2 Research process

The various phases of the Design and Development intervention research process will be presented here as considerations relating to each stage of the different phases are reported.

7.2.1 Phase 1: Problem analysis and project planning

Stages encompassed by the problem analysis and project planning phase of the research process are addressed in chapters 1 and 2.

7.2.1.1 Identifying and involving clients, and gaining entry

The researcher identified parents of children in middle childhood as the criteria for participants sought. Parents from a school in the Western Cape were involved. Members of the staff were collaborative in the pursuit of identifying and involving participants and facilitated the process by circulating a letter which informed parents of the study and invited them to interview. From the response on the letters that were circulated, parents

were identified and invited to participate as participants in the study. With this, stages one and two of the first phase were successfully completed.

7.2.1.2 Identifying concerns and analysing identified problems

An empirical study was carried out which identified parental concerns through semi-structured interviews with eleven participants. The initial stages of this empirical study involved the consultation of relevant literature and experts to develop an appropriate interview schedule that would in fact determine parental needs and concerns regarding the emotional development of their children in middle childhood. The researcher is of the opinion that the interview schedule was apt in gleaning the relevant information. Participants were given the opportunity to add anything which was not covered by the interview schedule. Through this and the use of the interview schedule the various dimensions of the parental experience as it pertained to the emotional development of their children were covered. The rapport between researcher and participants was mutually experienced as sincere and positive. This surely contributed to the generous sharing of the parental experience which participants offered.

The data received was analysed according to Creswell's analysis spiral (refer to 1.5.1.3). From the analysed data three dominant themes were identified which related to factors concerning: knowledge of EQ and appreciation of its importance, raising an emotionally intelligent child, and, challenges to raising an emotionally intelligent child.

It could be argued that a bigger sample group may have yielded a wider range of data and this could be a consideration for future research. However, it is noted that many of the needs and concerns were in fact shared among participants. Furthermore, a saturation point in the gathering of the information was experienced which further indicated that this task was thoroughly explored.

Within the context of a study of limited scope such as this, the identification of concerns and analysis of identified problems were completed sufficiently.

7.2.1.3 Setting goals and objectives

The goal for this study was to develop a set of parental guidelines which offer a Gestalt perspective in enhancing the emotional intelligence of children in middle childhood.

The objectives that were identified in order for this to be achieved were:

- An empirical study that has taken the form of semi-structured interviews with parents at a primary school in Cape Town. The data obtained was analysed qualitatively as outlined above to determine the needs and concerns of parents regarding the emotional intelligence of their children.
- A literature review which formed part of phase two of the Design and Development model and which explored concepts and principles surrounding EQ, child development theories in middle childhood, parenting and Gestalt theory and how these all relate to EQ. Existing sources, natural samples, and functional elements of existing programmes were also drawn on for this purpose.
- The design of an observational system and the specification of procedural elements of the intervention was carried out as phase 3 of the research.
- The development of a prototype intervention. And lastly,
- Consideration of conclusions and recommendations for parents and for further research.

These objectives focused the researcher in fulfilling the main goal, that is, to establish the parental guidelines.

Therefore, this aspect of the research process filled its role satisfactorily and successfully concluded phase 1 of the intervention research process as outlined by the Design and Development model.

7.2.2 Phase 2: Information gathering and synthesis

The different stages of phase 2 were addressed across chapters 3, 4 and 5 respectively. The completion of these stages is subsequently evaluated.

7.2.2.1 Using existing information sources

Existing information sources were used so as not to reinvent the wheel. There is a lot of literature available on emotional intelligence and the researcher had to distinguish between that of popular versus academic nature.

Literature searches explored emotional intelligence with a focus on middle childhood, and in particular emotionally intelligent parenting in middle childhood. The literary aspect also extended to Gestalt philosophy which brought an understanding of this perspective to the topic of emotional intelligence.

7.2.2.2 Studying natural examples

Various professionals were consulted in their management of emotional intelligence abilities in school and therapeutic settings. This practical perspective complemented the academic angle of the study and provided the researcher with a broader outlook on the topic.

7.2.2.3 Identifying functional elements of successful models

This task was fulfilled by consulting successful models which provided guidance relating to the development of emotional intelligence. This was a valuable step in establishing parental guidelines. Functional elements identified by participants were also taken into consideration.

7.2.3 Phase 3: Design

Phases 3 and 4 are addressed in chapter 6 of the study.

7.2.3.1 Designing an observational system

The observational system developed for the purpose of this study was designed for use by parents. Targeted emotionally intelligent behaviour was classified with respect to highlighted domains of EQ. As discussed (refer to 6.2.1), emotional intelligence is not a straight forward concept to operationalise and measure.

The observational system therefore draws on work by Elias *et al*. (1999), De Klerk and Le Roux (2003) and Blom (2006) in its pursuit to create a system that does in fact evaluate the targeted behaviour. The functionality of the observational system will become apparent when the first stages of implementation are employed. It is however argued that the observational system will be valuable – both in terms of furthering the study, as well as in terms of enriching the parents' experience of the intervention.

As stated, the observational system is designed for use by parents. A suggestion for future use is that the observational system includes an assessment designed for use by children whereby they are given the opportunity to report their progress subjectively.

7.2.3.2 Specifying procedural elements of the intervention

Procedural elements for the intervention were established (refer to 6.2.2). These relate to specifications which concern the practitioner, the parents, and the sessions themselves. The researcher is of the opinion that these recommendations will give practitioners a clear idea of suggested conditions in which the intervention is best implemented.

7.2.4 Phase 4: Early development

This phase of the research saw the proposal of a preliminary version of the guidelines.

7.2.4.1 Developing a prototype or preliminary intervention

The preliminary guidelines that were developed mark the completion of the phases of the Design and Development model that were carried out for this research project. The researcher made use of information gathered during the empirical and literature studies in the development of guidelines. Guidelines are presented according to the emotional intelligence domains of awareness, emotional control, motivation, empathy, and handling relationships.

With regards to the above discussion the researcher is of the opinion that tasks of the research process were sufficiently fulfilled.

7.3 Limitations of this research

Even though the researcher felt that on the whole the phases of research were approached thoroughly and objectives were sufficiently attained, it is noted that there were various aspects of the research process which were associated with elements of restriction. For one, the researcher is of the opinion that the empirical findings would hold more scientific value if the views of more parents could have been heard. It is argued that in the case of a larger sample group, needs could more conclusively be considered representative of a greater parental population. Even though for the limited scope of this study the sample group was adequate, the limitations which accompany a small sample should be acknowledged.

There is also the question regarding the extent to which participants could be considered representative of the population even if the sample group was large enough. The fact that parents volunteered themselves for the interviews could indicate a high level of dedication to parenting which is not necessarily typical of the greater parenting population. Parents who did not volunteer may represent a portion of the population who are not interested in this type of support. The kind of sampling neglects the views of this group. Furthermore, attention is given to the possibility of the Hawthorne effect on those who did participate. This effect is described as "... the beneficial effect of taking part in research" (Russel & Grimshwa in Holden, 2001:65). The fact that parenting abilities are typically seen as a reflection of parents as people might have even enhanced this effect. The possibility that these factors might have skewed findings to reflect an inflated sense of the emotional intelligence among parents and children is a consideration.

Lastly, the very nature of *parental* guidelines poses a question of limitation. Given the personal and unique nature of parenting, the extent to which guidelines will be useful for all parents is therefore associated with limitations.

7.4 Conclusions from this research

The researcher concludes that:

- The values of emotional intelligence fall strongly in line with the principles of Gestalt theory. This study therefore highlights the overlap between emotional intelligence and Gestalt theory. Principles of awareness, here and now, dialogue, organismic self regulation, contact and contact boundary disturbances provide a valuable framework in which to understand the EQ abilities of awareness, emotional control, motivation, empathy and handling relationships. In particular, the Gestalt understanding of change echoes the spirit of this intervention. In other words, the guidelines are not aimed at proposing recommended traits that are good to cultivate among children in order for them to be successful. Rather, the focus is on the individual child and the EQ abilities are proposed to assist the child in becoming the truest expression of themselves. Focusing intervention at this root level rather than addressing a symptom, for example, bullying behaviour or depressive tendencies, is perhaps what will create a sustainable change.

- Through this research the importance of awareness, emotional control, motivation, empathy, and the ability to handle relationships as crucial to a child's capacity to achieve a level of integration between what it is they think and feel, and furthermore for this to be reflected in their behaviour were also highlighted.
- In the pursuit to develop parental guidelines which recommend guiding principles aimed at facilitating these EQ abilities among children, the importance of establishing these abilities among parents as well became evermore apparent. It is confirmed that parents are of the greatest stake holders in their child's emotional development. The researcher concludes through this study that parents have a need for more information regarding the EQ of their children, and in particular ways in which this can be enhanced.

7.5 Suggestions for further research

In light of the limitations presented, as well as the vastness of the topics of EQ, parenting and Gestalt theory, the researcher would like to put forward some suggestions for aspects of further research both of this study, as well as related studies.

Firstly, it is suggested that more parents be included in future empirical studies. Further to the increased sample size, it is also suggested that participants be sampled from a wider range of schools and areas in order for results gleaned to be more generalisable. Increasing the sample size also has benefits for minimising the Hawthorne effect (Holden, 2001:67). Also included in the suggestions Holden (2001:67) proposes in order to reduce the effect is a detailed follow up of the intervention in which comparison with a control group is recommended. It is furthermore recommended that data less subject to reporting bias is given attention. For example, practitioners could have more interaction with the children, and also be included in the evaluation process. Parents' self evaluations could be supplemented in this way and an element of objectivity could hereby be brought to data gathered. The suggestion has also been made to extend the observational system to include children's evaluation of their progress (refer to 7.2.3.1).

In terms of the theory explored, the research experienced a limitation with respect to the exploration of Gestalt theory. It is argued that this study could benefit from further exploration of the theory; in particular, ways in which Gestalt concepts relate to the theory of EQ. It is proposed that such an investigation could be of value to both fields; Gestalt theory offers emotional intelligence a broader philosophical context in which to explore its principles, and emotional intelligence offers various practical elements through which Gestalt theory could be made more applicable and accessible.

The field of neuropsychology is continually developing and there will always be room for research in this field as findings bring new meaning to existing knowledge. Since emotional intelligence and Gestalt are both linked to functioning at the neural level, these areas could be broadened by further research in the field of neuroscience. In particular research pertaining to the HPA axis (refer to 3.2.2) could shed light on how this neural pathway may be enhanced. Among other benefits, the development of this pathway in children is said to enhance concentration. For example, the research question which asks how this might effect the understanding of ADHD and its management could be valuable to consider.

Empirical findings suggest that teachers are in need of greater knowledge in accommodating the emotional development of children (refer to 2.4.2). The concepts of emotional intelligence have been brought to American classrooms in the form of SEL (social emotional learning) programmes. Where this is part of the curriculum, it is part of the teacher's job description rather than an extra. The researcher would like to suggest that a review of available curriculum programmes which address EI be carried out. It is advised that these programmes be assessed for functional elements and then be made applicable to schools in South Africa. This study argues parents to be the most influential in developing emotional development among their children. However, it is noted that teachers also play an influential role especially given the amount of time they spend with children. In the South African context particularly where HIV and AIDS have left many children orphaned, there is great demand placed on teachers and support in this regard will no doubt have positively influential consequences.

By the nature of proposing parental guidelines, children who do not have parents are excluded from the impact of this study. Therefore, it is suggested that further research gives attention to making these guidelines applicable to other significant care givers, such as teachers. In such a study, attention might be given to ways in which teachers may be able to balance their disciplining role with emotional nurturance, for example.

By nature of the fact that this research completes only the first four phases of Design and Developmental research, the remaining two phases could be given attention and the intervention process of the proposed guidelines could be furthered.

7.6 Conclusive summary

Professor Bar-On (2004) sees '… the future of emotional intelligence going in the direction of how best to raise children." Echoing this vision, it is concluded that this study makes a valuable contribution to the field of EQ.

This study identifies emotional intelligence as a crucial tool in the emotional development of children. Gestalt theory has provided a philosophical context in which to

employ the abilities which characterise emotional intelligence. These fields of intersection are conveyed to parents through the development of guidelines. The hope is that this study contributes in some way toward developing children so that they are able to excel not only at geography or spelling (even though the importance of this is indeed recognised) but at being themselves. The researcher draws the reader back to the way in which emotional intelligence was defined at the outset of this study as an ability that integrates feeling, thinking and doing, as the "… habitual practice of thinking about feeling and feeling about thinking when choosing what to do." (Cf. Sparrow & Knight, 2006:29.) It is concluded that attention given to each of the areas of thinking, feeling and doing is important in achieving this level of integration. By proposing parental guidelines to enhance the emotional intelligence of children, this study provides input to the aspect of "feeling" and as such provides a valuable element to this goal. Nelson Mandela (in Fernandez, 2007:76) concurs that indeed "A good head and a good heart are always a formidable combination."

Reference List

Barlow, A.R., 1981. Gestalt theory and Gestalt psychology. *The Gestalt Journal,* Fall IV (2). Available at: http://www.gestalt.org/barlow.htm [Accessed 26th April 2009].

Bar-On, R. & Parker, J.D.A., 2000. *The handbook of emotional intelligence.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Beisser, A. 1970. *Paradoxical theory of change*. Available at: http://pioneersofchange.net/library/articles/Paradoxical%20Theory%20of%20Change.pdf [Accessed 26th April 2009].

Beland, K. 2007. Boosting social and emotional competence. *The Prepared Graduate,* 64(7):68-71.

Berk, L.E. 2006. *Child development.* 7th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pearson Education.

Blom, 2006. *The handbook of Gestalt play therapy: Practical guidelines for child therapists.* London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Bowman, C.E. & Nevis, E.C. 2005. The history and development of Gestalt therapy. In: Woldt, A.L. & Toman, S.M. *Gestalt therapy – History, theory and practice.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Pp. 3-20.

Bradberry, T., Greaves, J. & Su, L.D. 2005. Sizing up the whole person. [Online] Available at: http://www.usb.sun.ac.za/usb/discover/SizingUp.pdf [Accessed on 20th January 2009].

Brink, M.E. 2006. *Gestalt guidelines assisting parents to enhance psychosocial development in children.* MDiac. thesis, University of South Africa, Pretoria.

Caghan, L. 2007. Boundaries and the processing of self. *International Journal of Psychoanalytic Self Psychology*, 2:339-366.

Calitz, M.G. 2005. *A cultural sensitive therapeutic approach to enhance emotional intelligence in primary school children.* Ph D.thesis, University of South Africa, Pretoria.

Charlesworth, L., Wood, J. & Viggiani, P. 2003. Middle childhood. In: Hutchison, D. *Dimensions of human behaviour: The changing life course.* 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc. Pp.175-226.

Clarkson, P., 1999. *Gestalt counselling in action.* London: SAGE Publications.

Clarkson, P. & MacKewn, J. 1994. *Fritz Perls*. London: SAGE.

Cole, M. & Cole, S. R. 2001. *The development of children.* 4th ed. New York, NY: Wadsworth Publishers.

Oxford dictionary of psychology. 2003 s.v "Qualitative Research". Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Corey, G. 2001. *Theory and practice of counselling and psychotherapy.* Pacific Grove, CA: Cole Publishers.

Creswell, J.W. 1998. *Qualitative inquiry and research design.* London: SAGE Publications.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. 1998. *Finding flow: The psychology of engagement with everyday life*. S.l: Basic Books.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. 2004. *Flow*. [Public lecture]. Available at: http://www.ted.com/talks/mihaly_csikszentmihalyi_on_flow.html [Accessed 5th January 2009].

Daniels, V. 2005. The Gestalt working process: A thumbnail summary of principles. *Lecture notes for PSY. 307 and 429.* Rohnert Park, CA: Sonoma State University. Available at: http://www.sonoma.edu/users/d/daniels/gestaltthumbnail.html [Accessed Retrieved 18th December 2007].

Debold, E. 2002. Flow with soul: An interview with Dr Csikszentmihalyi. [Online]. Available at: The Evolution of Spirituality http://www.enlightennext.org/magazine/j21/csiksz.asp [Accessed 17th January 2009].

De Klerk, R. & le Roux, R. 2003. *Emotional Intelligence for children and teens: A practical guide for parents and teachers.* Cape Town: Human & Rousseau Publishers.

Delport, C.S.L. & Fouché, C.B. 2005. The qualitative research report. In: De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B. & Delport, C.S.L. *Research at grass roots for the social sciences and human service professions*, 3rd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik, Pp. 350-354.

De Vos, A. S. 2005. Qualitative data analysis and interpretation. In: De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B. & Delport, C.S.L. *Research at grass roots for the social sciences and human service professions*, 3rd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Durrheim, K. 1999. Research design. In: Terre Blanche, M,. & Durrheim, K. *Research in practice: Applied methods for the social sciences.* Cape Town: University of Cape Town. Pp. 29-53.

Elias, M., Tobias, S. E., & Friedlander, B.S. 1999. *Emotionally intelligent parenting: How to raise a self-disciplined, responsible, socially-skilled child.* New York, NY: Harmony Books.

Elias, M. 2008. Emotion in education: An interview with Maurice Elias. Edutopia. Available at: http://vodpod.com/watch/1049736-emotion-in-education-an-interview-with-maurice-elias-edutopia [Accessed 16th June].

Emotional Intelligence. 2004. [Documentary] South Africa: Carte Blanche. 4th August 2004. Producer: Kate Barry. Transcript available at: www.mnet.co.za/Mnet/Shows/carteblanche/DisplayPrint.asp?ID=2594 [Accessed 22nd January 2009].

Fariselli, L., Freedman, J., Moassimiliano, G. & Federica, V. 2008. Stress, emotional intelligence and performance in health care. *Six seconds: The emotional intelligence network.* 25th February 2008. Pp.1-11.

Fawcett, S.B. *et al*., 1994. Conducting intervention research: The design and development process. In: Rothman, J. & Thomas, E.J. (Eds). *Intervention research: design and development for human service.* New York, NY: Haworth.

Fernandez, I. 2007. *Through the eye of a needle: Transforming relationships.* Berkshire, UK: Sterling Publishers.

Firth, S. 2006. 4 Classic Bing Studies. *Stanford Magazine.* January/ Febuary 2006. [Online] Available at: www.stanfordalumni.org/news/magazine/2006/janfeb/features/studies.html [Accessed 27th March 2009].

Fouché, C.B. & De Vos, A.S. 2005. Quantitative research designs. In: De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B. & Delport, C.S.L. *Research at grass roots for the*

social sciences and human service professions. 3rd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers. Pp. 267-273.

Freedman, J. 2002. Emotional what? Definitions and history of EQ. [Online]. *EQ Today*. Nov 2002. Available at: http://www.6seconds.org/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=290 [Accessed 21st January 2009].

Freedman, J. 2004. EQ News – EQ Reflections: Precious feelings. Available at: http://www.6seconds.org/news/2004226.html [Accessed 12th February 2009].

Freedman, J. 2007. A hope for change: Alan Deutschman on "Change or Die". Available at: http://www.sixseconds.com/pdf/a_hope_for_change.pdf [Accessed 20th January 2009].

Gardner, H. 1983. *Frames of mind: the theory of multiple intelligences.* New York, NY: Basic Books.

Goleman, D. 1995. *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Goleman, D. 2007. [Public Lecture]. Available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hoo_dIOP8k [Accessed on 17th January 2009]. Mountain View, CA: authors@Google.

Goleman, D. 2007b. Plasticity of the brain. [Online discussion]. New York City: CASEL Forum. Available at www.edutopia.org/daniel-goleman-sel-video [Accessed 14th January 2009].

Gottman, J., & DeClaire, J. 1997. *The heart of parenting: How to raise an emotionally intelligent child*. London: Bloomsbury.

Greeff, M. 2005. Information collection: interviewing. In: De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B. & Delport, C.S.L. 2005. *Research at grass roots for the social sciences and human service professions.* 3rd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers. Pp. 286-313.

Harris, M. & Butterworth, G. 2002. *Developmental psychology: A student's handbook.* London: Taylor & Francis Publishers.

Haslam, D. R. 2006. *The practice patterns and attitudes of play therapists on family play therapy: Where are we?* PhD. Thesis, Texas Tech University: Lubbock, TX.

Health Professions Council of South Africa. Seeking patients' informed consent: Ethical considerations, 2007. 2nd ed. Pretoria. Available at: http://www.hpcsa.co.za/hpcsa/UserFiles/File/Booklets/HPCSA%2010%20Booklet%2010%20Informed%20Consent.doc#_Toc176062771 [Accessed 29th April 2008].

Heller, W. 2004. Emotion. In: Banich, M.T. *Cognitive neuroscience and neuropsychology.* 2nd ed. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin. Pp. 393- 428.

Henning, E. 2004. *Finding your way in qualitative research.* Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Holden, J.D. 2001. Hawthorne effects and research into professional practice. *Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice,* 7(1):65-70.

Jarosewitsch, R. 1995. *What is Gestalt therapy?* [Online] Available at: http://www.partnering.inet.net.nz/frame2.htm (click on "Articles") [Accessed on 21st April, 2008].

Kelly, K. 1999a.Calling it a day: Reaching conclusions in qualitative research. In: Terre Blanche, M. & Durrheim, K. *Research in practice: Applied methods for the social sciences.* Cape Town: University of Cape Town. Pp. 421-437.

Kelly, K. 1999b. From encounter to text: Collecting qualitative data for interpretative research. In: Terre Blanche, M. & Durrheim, K. *Research in practice: Applied methods for the social sciences.* Cape Town: University of Cape Town. Pp. 379-397.

Kirchner, M. 2000. Gestalt therapy theory: An overview. *Gestalt,* [Online], 4(2). Available at: http://www.g-gej.org/4-3/theoryoverview.html [Accessed 18th December 2006].

Lagerström, N. 2008. *Defining the interview schedule* [Discussion] (Personal communication, 9th August 2008).

Latner, J. & Nevis, E.C. 1992. Gestalt therapy perspectives and applications: Aware relations. Gestalt Institute of Cleveland (GIC) Press. Available at: The Association for the advancement of Gestalt therapy. http://www.aagt.org/main.cfm?p=gestalt&c=relations [Accessed 18th April 2009]

Le Roux, R. & De Klerk, R. 2003. *Emotional intelligence for children and teens.* Cape Town: Human & Rousseau.

Le Roux, R. 2008. [telephone discussion] (Personal communication, 2nd April 2008).

Lobb, M.S. & Lichtenberg, P. 2005. Classical Gestalt therapy theory. In: Woldt, A.L. & Toman, S.M. *Gestalt therapy – History, theory and practice.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. Pp. 21-40.

Lourens, A. 2007. *Scientific writing skills: Guidelines for writing theses and dissertations.* Stellenbosch: Sun Press.

Mayer, J.D. & Salovey, P. 1997. What is emotional intelligence? In: Salovey, P. & Sluyter D.J. (Eds.). *Emotional development and emotional intelligence.* New York, NY: Basic Books. Pp.3-31.

Mayer, J.D. 1999. Emotional intelligence: Popular or scientific psychology? *APA Monitor,* 20(8) September. Available at www.apa.org/monitor/sep99/sp.html retrieved 21/01/2009 [Accessed 10th July 2008].

Mortola, P. 1999. Narrative formation and Gestalt closure: Helping clients make sense of "Disequilibrium" through stories in the therapeutic setting. *Gestalt Review,* 3(4):308-320.

Naidoo, S. 2008. Ballet, netball, piano, drama, skating, swimming – and an ugly dose of depression. *The Sunday Times,* 27th April, P. 27e.

Nelson-Jones, R. 2000. *Six key approaches to counselling and therapy.* Pp.142-173. London: SAGE.

Oaklander, V. 2006. *Hidden treasure: A map to the child's inner self.* London: Karnac Books.

Pariante, C.M. 2003. Depression, stress and the adrenal axis. [Online]. Available at: Institute of Psychiatry, King's College London, British Society for Neuroendocrinology http://www.neuroendo.org.uk/content/view/31/11/ [Accessed on 25th January 2009].

Parlett, M. & Lee, R.G. 2005. Contemporary Gestalt therapy: Field theory. In: Woldt, A.L. & Toman, S.M. *Gestalt therapy – History, theory and practice.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. Pp. 41-64.

Phelan, T. W. 2003.1-2-3 Magic: Effective Discipline for Children 2-12. 3rd ed. Glen Ellyn, IL: Child management, Inc.

Philippson, P. 2002. Body and character as a field event. *Manchester Gestalt Centre*, [Online] Available at: http://www.123webpages.co.uk/user/index.php?user=mgc&pn=10741 [Accessed 18th December, 2006].

Prendergast, A. 2006, The use of Gestalt therapy in guidance in schools. Available at: National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) http://www.ncge.ie/handbook_docs/Section1/Gestalt_Therapy_Guide_Sch.doc [Accessed 15 December, 2006].

The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology. 2001. S.v "Gestalt therapy". London: Penguin Books.

Robertson, V. 2006. Introduction to and methodology in play therapy: Confluence. MA Paper. University of South Africa. [Online] Available at: http://playtherapyonline.net/Students/Robertson-Veronica-Paper1.html [Accessed 22nd December 2006].

Rothman, J. & Thomas, E.J. 1994. *Intervention research: Design and development for human service.* New York, NY: The Haworth Press.

Salovey, 2008. Interview with Lea Brovedani. [video]. Available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zfZkbyjP7w0 [Accessed on 29th January 2009].

Salovey, P., Bedell, B. T., Detweiler, J. B., & Mayer, J.D. 1999. Coping intelligently: Emotional intelligence and the coping process. In: Snyder, C. R. (Ed.). *Coping: The Psychology of what works.* New York: Oxford University Press. Pp. 141-164.

Salovey, P. & Mayer, D.M. 1990. *Emotional intelligence.* S.l: Baywood Publishing Co. Inc. Pp.185-211.

Salovey, P. & Mayer, J. D. 1997. What is emotional intelligence? In: Salovey, P. & Sluyter, D. J. (Eds.) *Emotional development and emotional intelligence.* New York: Basic Books.

Schoeman, J.P. & Van der Merwe, M. 1996. *Entering the child's world: A play therapy approach.* Pretoria: Kagiso.

Schoeman, J.P. 2005. *Play therapy: An important skill in child therapy. A learning experience that will add value.* Wellington: Centre for Play Therapy and Training.

Schoeman, J.P. 2006. *Advanced course in play therapy*. Wellington: Centre for Play Therapy and Training.

Schomer, H. 2007. *Stress management* [Public Lecture] Psychologies Workshop. Cape Town. 1st August 2008.

Shumann. 2002. *Filial Therapy.* [Online] Available at: www.athealth.com/consumer/disorders/filialtherapy.html. [Accessed 9th April 2009].

Six seconds. 2008. [Online] Available at: http://6seconds.org/ [Accessed March 2008].

Slee, P.T. 2002. *Child, adolescent, and family development.* 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Smith, M.K. 2000. Martin Buber on education: The encyclopaedia of informal education. [Online] Available at: http://www.infed.org/thinkers/et-buber.htm. [Accessed 25th May 2007].

Sparrow, T. & Knight, A. 2006. *Applied emotional intelligence.* Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Strydom, H. 2005a. Sampling and sampling methods. In: De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B. & Delport, C.S.L. *Research at grass roots for the social sciences and human service professions.* 3rd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik. Pp. 192-204.

Strydom, H. 2005b. Ethical aspects of research in the social sciences and human service professions. In: De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B. & Delport, C.S.L. *Research at grass roots for the social sciences and human service professions.* 3rd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik. Pp. 56-70.

Strydom, H. 2005c. Information collection: Participant observation. In: De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B. & Delport, C.S.L. *Research at grass roots for the social sciences and human service professions.* 3rd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik. Pp. 275-285.

Su, L.D. 2004. Emotional intelligence: Old wine with a new label. *White paper. TalentSmart*. Pp.1-3.

The Pocket Oxford Dictionary of Current English. 1996. S. v. "enhance". London: Clarendon Press.

Thompson, C.L. & Rudolph, L.B. 1996. *Counselling children.* Grove, CA: Cole Publishers.

Tolle, E. 2005. *A new earth: Awakening to your life's purpose.* London: Penguin.

Vermeulen, S. 1999. *Emotional intelligence for everyone.* Cape Town: Zebra Press.

Vermeulen, S. 1999b. *Busy Business.* [Online] Available at: http://www.theeqsite.co.za/EQ_Site_pages/Articles/Busy_Business_Stress.htm [Accessed 2nd January 2009].

Vermeulen, S., 2000. Emotionally intelligent parenting. [Online] Available at: http://www.theeqsite.co.za/EQ_Site_pages/Articles/Emotionally_Intelligent_Parenting.htm [Accessed 2nd January 2009].

Warehime, R.G. 1981. Interactional Gestalt therapy. *Small Group Behaviour,* 12(1):37-54.

Weiten, W. 2001. *Psychology: Themes and variations.* 5th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Wertheimer, M. 2007. *K. Max Wertheimer and Gestalt theory*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Woldt, A.L. & Toman, S.M. 2005. *Gestalt therapy – History, theory and practice.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Wood, D. 2008. [Discussion]. (Personal communication, 5 May 2008).

Yang, I. 2007. Mind, education and the brain. Available at: You Tube Lectures www.youtube.com/watch?v=kZ1EN7YNg8Q [Accessed on 10th January 2009].

Yontef, G. 1981. Gestalt therapy: An introduction. [Online] Available at http://www.gestalt.org/yontef.htm [Accessed 3rd June 2007].

Yontef, G., 1992. Considering "Gestalt reconsidered": A review in depth. Available at: http://www.gestalt.org/gary.htm [Accessed 12th December 2006].

Yontef, G. 2002. The relational attitude in Gestalt therapy theory and practice. *International Gestalt Journal,* 25(1):15-34.

Yontef, G.M. 1993. *Awareness, dialogue and process: Essays on Gestalt therapy.* New York, NY: The Gestalt Journal Press.

Yontef, G. & Fairfield, M. 2005. Gestalt therapy. *Republication.* Pp. 1-22. Available at: www.relationalcenter.org/uploads/Theory_Reference_Guide_Gestalt_Chapter.pdf [Accessed on 29th January 2009].

Yontef, G. & Fuhr, R. 2005. Gestalt therapy theory of change. In: Woldt, A.L. & Toman, S.M. *Gestalt therapy – History, theory and practice.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. Pp. 81-100.

Yontef, G.M. & Jacobs, L. 2000. Gestalt therapy. In: Corsini, R.J. & Wedding, D. (eds.) *Current psychotherapies.* 6th ed. Itasca, IL: F.E. Peacock.

Addenda

Addendum 1.1 – Participation letter

Dear Parent,

Emotional Intelligence Enhancement: Participation in Research Project

I have been the Intern Play Therapist at *** for the past year and have had the pleasure of working with a number of the children here. In order to now complete my Masters qualification it is required that I carry out a dissertation (of limited scope). My topic is *emotional intelligence*, and particularly looking at *what parents are able to do* to enhance the level of EQ among their children.

Hearing from parents themselves is of course going to be an imperative part of making this study worthwhile, and I would really value your input here. I will conduct once-off interviews (no longer than an hour) with the first ten parents who respond. Your experiences, concerns, challenges, and joys regarding the emotional aspect of your child's development will be discussed. From my current knowledge and reading I'm sure this will be a beneficial experience for you as well.

Should you be interested, please contact me via phone (083 407 3693) or email (tessa.eadie@gmail.com) indicating so as soon as possible and I will get in touch with you with more information regarding interview times, venue, confidentiality etc.

Thank you in advance for your support in this endeavour. I really look forward to hearing from you.

Warm regards,
Tessa Eadie
*Intern Play Therapist - **** Primary*

Addendum 1.2 – Consent form

Information regarding the study:

Participants should be aware of the fact that for recording purposes, a dictaphone will be used in the interviews to ensure the information presented is reported as accurately as possible. These recordings will be handled with the strictest confidentiality; they will be seen by the researcher only, and at most confidentiality may be extended to the researcher's study leader upon request. The researcher will be transcribing the interviews personally, and will keep these files on her computer which is password protected. The researcher will be happy to answer any questions pertaining to the research process before, after or during the interview. Participants are free to opt out at any point in the process.

Please fill in your contact details and sign below to indicate you are aware of the necessary information pertaining to this research project. Thanking you in advance for your contribution to this valuable research.

Name: _____

Contact Number: _____

Email address: _____

_____ _____

Signed Date

Addendum 1.3 – Chapter outline

Chapters	**Research Process**
Chapter 1 – Problem Analysis and Project Planning	**Phase 1 – Problem Analysis and Project Planning** • Identifying and involving clients
Chapter 2 – Empirical Findings	• Identifying concerns of the population • Setting goals and objectives that will guide the research process
Chapter 3 – Emotional Intelligence and Parenting	**Phase 2 – Information gathering and synthesis** • Using existing information sources *(literature review)* • Studying natural samples *(experts)*
Chapter 4 – Emotional Intelligence and Gestalt Philosophy	
Chapter 5 – Functional Elements of existing programmes	• Functional elements *(existing programmes*)
Chapter 6 – Design and Early Development	**Phase 3 – Design** • Observational system design • Specifying procedural elements of the intervention **Phase 4 – Early development** • Development of a prototype
Chapter 7 – Recommendations and Conclusions	

Addendum 2.1 – Interview schedule

Introduction

Interviews opened with a clarification of interviewer and interviewee's understanding of emotional intelligence. Since this term refers to a wide range of aspects relating to emotional development the researcher felt it necessary to conceptualise this subject. It was asked of participants what their perspective was, and explained that for the purposes of this study, EQ will be explored according to the five domains as set out by Salovey which are as listed:

1. Knowing one's emotions (self awareness)
2. Managing one's emotions (emotional control)
3. Motivating oneself (emotional mobilisation)
4. Emotions in others (empathy), and
5. Handling relationships (managing emotions in self and others).

This structured understanding of EQ was then used to explore how EQ is dealt with by both participants and their children. It is noted once again that the interviews were semi-structured, but more or less covered the following questions:

Questions

1. I would like to know about the awareness aspect of EQ in your home. How accurate are you/ your child in identifying and naming emotions? (You can rate this high/ medium/ low.)
2. How does something like emotional control play out in your home? For example, anger outbursts, delayed gratification.
3. I am interested to know how you and your child motivate yourselves. If you are experiencing an emotional down (for example, being brought down by feelings of anger, guilt, jealousy, shame et cetera) what do you do? What does your child do? What are you teaching your child in this regard?
4. What does empathy mean to you?
    a. How would you say you bring this into the home?
    b. How do the members in your family nurture themselves and one another?

5. Handling of relationships is probably the area where EQ is most felt as understanding of one's own emotions has to extend to others as well. Could you describe how conflict/ differences are handled among members of your family?

---

6. What would you say the most difficult thing is in raising an EQ child?
7. What comes to mind immediately when I ask you: What would you like to see most on an EQ guideline for parents?
8. How much effort do you put into EQ education? How easy/ difficult do you find it to integrate this knowledge? If you can think of an insight that came to you whilst reading could you describe this and how you were able to apply this to your relationships?
9. Is there anything else you'd like to add regarding the way emotions are approached in your home? (open question)

Addendum 3.1 – Diagram of the brain

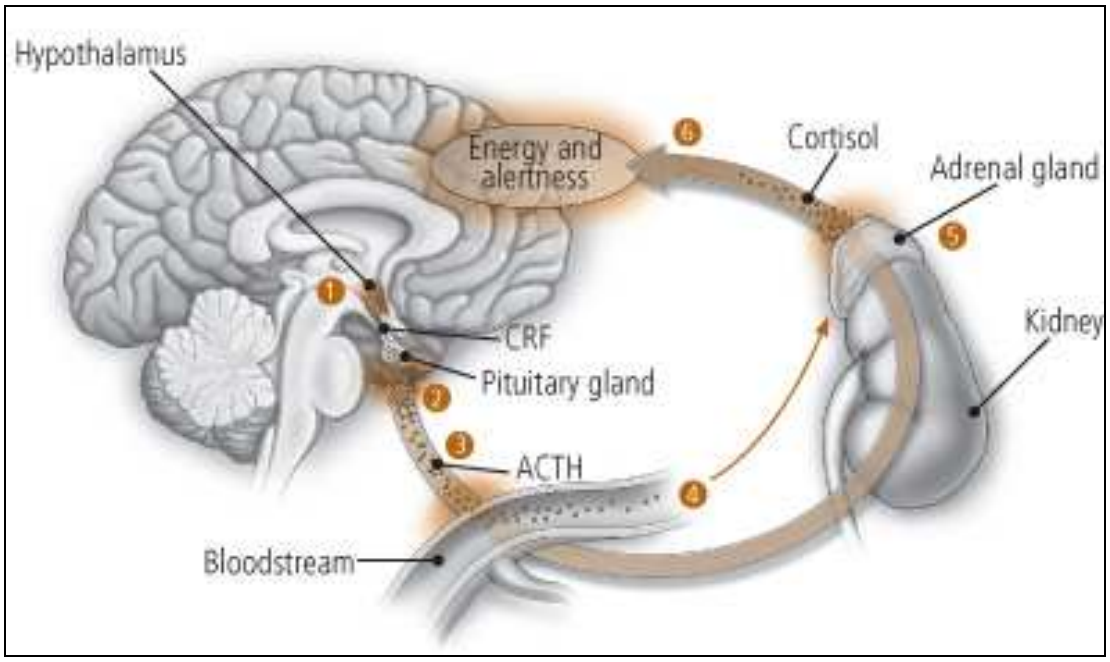

Figure: Diagram of the Brain illustrating HPA axis activity

This diagram, presented by Harvard Medical School (2007), illustrates aspects of HPA axis activity.

1. The hypothalamus secretes a hormone which rouses the body (called corticotropin-releasing factor, (CRF).
2. This hormone travels to the pituitary gland.
3. The pituitary gland then secretes adrenocorticotropic hormone (ACTH).
4. ACTH circulates in the bloodstream, travelling to the adrenal gland.
5. The adrenal gland releases cortisol, another hormone.

Cortisol stimulates many reactions in the body, including a rush of energy and alertness.