

KEY Strategies to teach CHILDREN EMPATHY



3-5 YEARS

- **DESCRIBE AND LABEL** - Help children recognize their emotions and body, "You're clenching your fists. You stomped your feet. You seem angry."
- **READ STORIES** and discuss character's feelings
- Make a **WE CARE CENTER**
- Coach their **SOCIAL SKILLS**



5-7 YEARS

- Use **PICTURES** - Cut out pictures from magazines or print pictures that show sad, angry, or happy faces.
- **EMBRACE DIVERSITY** - Help children understand what they have in common with others.
- **OBSERVE OTHERS** - Note the body language of others and guess how they might be feeling.
- Teach about **HEALTHY LIMITS** and their own boundaries



7-9 YEARS

- Engage in high-level **DISCUSSIONS** about book characters
- Try loving kindness **MEDITATION**
- Engage in cooperative **BOARD GAMES**



9-11 YEARS

- Sign up for **ACTING CLASSES**
- Create **EMPATHY MAPS** - Choose an emotion, then brainstorm what you might say, think, and do when you feel that way



12+ YEARS

- Discuss current **EVENTS**
- Encourage your child to choose **VOLUNTEER WORK**
- Try "**WALK THE LINE**" activity - perfect for classrooms, summer camps, or other places with a large group of older children/teens.

Big Life Journal - biglifejournal.com

This week, we are focusing on another component of the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) standard of Social Awareness. Empathy is the ability to understand how another person feels, and to respond in helpful ways. When one child can empathize (put themselves in the other person's shoes) with another, they are better able to resolve conflict. Some children develop empathy more naturally than others, but all children need to be taught this critical skill.

Children who are empathic are better able to cope with conflict and difficult social situations. Children who are empathic will be less likely to engage in bullying behavior, and more likely to jump in and help a friend or peer who is being bullied. Children who are empathic are more likely to grow into well-adjusted adults with strong coping skills.

As parents, we are successfully modeling this skill all the time. We listen to our loved ones. We let them know we care and that they have a right to their feelings. Unfortunately, the stresses and worry that have entered our lives during this unprecedented time stretches our abilities to cope. We may snap and have a shorter fuse. This leads to hurt feelings all around. Take the time to listen to others, and in the meantime, you'll be giving yourself what you need too.

It's never too late to start teaching empathy to kids. Watch this video as Dr. Dehra Harris shares a few tips for parents to ensure children develop healthy emotional habits and empathy skills.

<https://youtu.be/od6Va6zROJc>

CULTIVATING ♥ EMPATHY ♥

Empathy is at the heart of good relationships of many kinds, and it begins with valuing other perspectives and other people. Parents can cultivate empathy in their children by showing their kids how to be empathetic and talking about why it's important.

-1-

EMPATHIZE WITH YOUR CHILD AND MODEL EMPATHY FOR OTHERS

When we empathize with our children, they develop trusting, secure attachments with us and want to adopt our values and model our behavior.

- ✓ Have conversations with your child (even before they can talk back!) and actively listen to them.
- ✓ Express interest in people in your community from various backgrounds.

-2-

MAKE CARING FOR OTHERS A PRIORITY

When other people are a priority, children will value a variety of perspectives.

- ✓ Help your children understand that they should be considerate of the people around them: be polite even when you're in a grumpy mood, help pick up your toys, listen while others are talking.

-3-

PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN TO PRACTICE EMPATHY

Learning empathy is like learning a language or a sport, it requires practice and guidance.

- ✓ Encourage empathy for family and friends by asking your kids to think about how they think their family and friends are feeling, or why they reacted in a certain way.
- ✓ Notice when your child exhibits empathy and tell them you noticed; point out when people around you exhibit empathy and talk about it.

-4-

HELP CHILDREN DEVELOP SELF-CONTROL AND MANAGE FEELINGS EFFECTIVELY

Often, when children don't express empathy it's not because they don't have it, it's because they're having big feelings that are blocking it.

- ✓ Identify feelings with your kids; encourage them to always talk about their feelings.
- ✓ Come up with a system together for taking control of big feelings, such as taking a deep breath and counting to three. Practice this system together while you're calm, and model it when you're feeling upset.
- ✓ Practice resolving conflicts; try to achieve mutual understanding by listening and talking about each other's feelings.



Primary Resources

Social Awareness- Empathy

Empathy means understanding what another person might be feeling. If you have empathy for someone, you can imagine what that person is going through. For example, if a classmate tripped on the way to school and fell into a mud puddle, getting their clothes wet and dirty, would you have an idea about how that made them feel? If you said yes, then you can show empathy. When you have empathy and can tell when someone feels sad, that can lead you to do or say something nice to them to help them feel better.

Watch this video about Empathy “Think about how someone else is feeling”:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qLlv6YR8MWc>

Choose one of the feeling words, try to answer all the questions for that one feeling word.



Sad Happy



Mad



Confused



Confident



- Can you think of a time when you felt...
- How do you know when someone is feeling...
- What does their face do?
- What does their body do?
- What do their words sound like?
- What would you like someone to do for you if you were...?

How can I show empathy?

Example: When a classmate is frustrated because the schoolwork seems too hard, I can offer to help them.

- Your brother/sister is angry because he/she cannot see his friends, I can...
- Your neighbor is crying because they fell off their bike, I can...
- Your friend just found out that he won an award, he is proud, I can...
- Someone in your house is sick, I can...

Practice: Emotion Charades

Pick one or two of the examples above and ask a family member to role play or “act it out” with you. Remember to pay attention to what your family member’s face and body looks like, and what their words sound like.

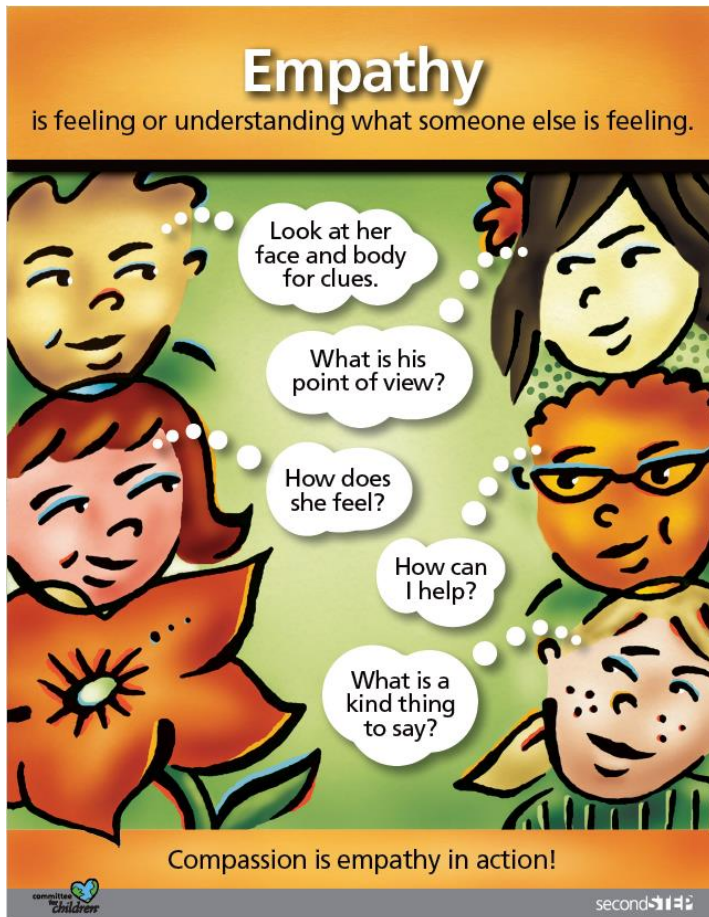
- What would you like someone to do for you if you were...?

Intermediate Resources

Hello, Students!

This week we are going to learn about Empathy; what it is, why it's important, and how to practice it!

First, watch this [video](#) to hear how other kids understand and describe empathy.



Empathy is when you can understand how someone else might be feeling or thinking about a certain situation. Empathy is often described as “walking in someone else’s shoes” as we try to *imagine* what another person might be feeling or going through.

This poster provides helpful steps in how we understand others using empathy.

It's important to practice empathy because it helps us know how to *respond* to someone in a *helpful* way. This is also called showing *compassion*.

Next, watch this [video](#) to learn more about empathy and how to *practice* it.

Now that you've learned what empathy is and how to practice it, think about the following prompts and how you might respond to these situations using empathy:

1. In the restroom at school, a student gets teased and pushed into a stall by other kids. Imagine how the student is feeling. How can you show them empathy?
2. A friend in your class has just failed a big test. Your friend is upset because they studied, tried their best, and still failed. Imagine how they're feeling. How can you show them empathy?
3. It is your classmate's birthday and they are having a birthday party this weekend. Imagine how they're feeling. How can you show them empathy?