



Be the Best that You can Be

Cedarwood School

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Developing Empathy in School-Going Children

Before we start, we need to differentiate between empathy and sympathy...

Empathy *n.* 1. The ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

Sympathy *n.* 1. Feelings of pity and sorrow for someone else's misfortune.



As parents and teachers we need to encourage empathy instead of sympathy. But how?

Recognise their own feelings before they can recognise somebody else's:

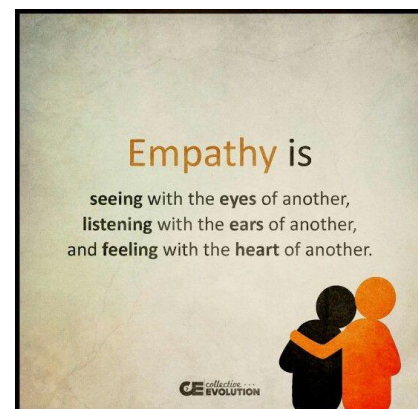
- ♥ Acknowledge their feelings about certain situations – allow them to feel what they feel!
- ♥ Encourage healthy expression of negative feelings.
- ♥ Help them to label their own feelings. Put names to the emotion.
- ♥ Provide a space to discuss feelings.
- ♥ Model sharing of emotions.

Tips for parents of primary school kids:

- ♥ Use feelings wheels or charts to differentiate between different feelings.
- ♥ Read story books. Discuss the feelings of the characters and how your child may feel in the same situation.
- ♥ Encourage turn-taking and sharing.
- ♥ Play games that encourage expression of feelings and turn-taking.
- ♥ Play generally with your children where they can learn appropriate ways to socialise and be with others.

Tips for parents of teenagers:

- ♥ Encourage your child to join an Outreach program.
- ♥ Encourage reflective journaling – ask your child to keep a diary and document how they're feeling. Reflection on their own feelings can encourage empathy with others.
- ♥ Discuss issues of prejudice and oppression – allow your child to take on the perspectives of others for a while.



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(Association incorporated under Section 21 - not for gain)
Fundraising Number: 01 101753 000 2
Co registration number 1997/018168/08
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Some General Tips:

- ♥ Model empathic behaviour.
- ♥ Discuss emotive books or movies with your child.
- ♥ Teach, practice and encourage tolerance of others.
- ♥ Teach respect and respect your child.
- ♥ Encourage mindfulness.
- ♥ Be kind.
- ♥ Listen actively.



Some books, movies and series to encourage empathy:

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| ♥ Tangled | ♥ The Blind Side* |
| ♥ Beauty and the Beast | ♥ The Diary of Anne Frank* |
| ♥ Inside Out | ♥ Wonder |
| ♥ The Sneetches | ♥ The Fosters |
| ♥ Fly Away Home | ♥ The Outsiders* |
| ♥ The BFG | ♥ Forest Gump |
| ♥ ET | ♥ Pay it Forward* |
| ♥ Freaky Friday | ♥ Frozen |
| ♥ Spiderman | ♥ Schindler's List* |
| ♥ Charlotte's Web | ♥ Hotel Rwanda* |

*Check for age restrictions

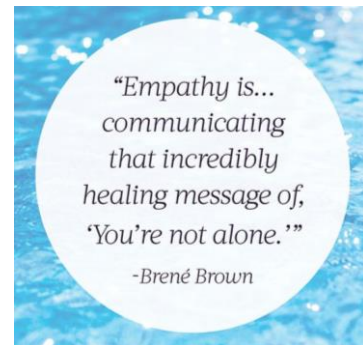


Why bother teaching empathy?

Research on the 'Future Skills of 2020' has listed 'emotional intelligence' as the 6th most important skill that human beings will need from 2020 and going forward. Emotional intelligence, among other things, includes the ability to understand one's own emotions, as well as the emotions of those around them – empathy. So in order for our children to function well in their careers and society in 2020 and beyond, we need to teach them empathy.

Some other benefits of empathy:

- ♥ Builds a positive classroom culture.
- ♥ Academic success.
- ♥ Encourages positive feelings about self and others.
- ♥ Fosters physical and emotional well-being.
- ♥ Assists with conflict resolution.
- ♥ Expands our perspectives about people and situations.
- ♥ Strengthens community.
- ♥ Prepares children to be leaders.



My child is not empathic... Help!

- ♥ Be patient. It's a work in progress.
- ♥ Address it and teach them how to be empathic.
- ♥ Encourage your child to be aware of their behaviours.
- ♥ If they continue to show no remorse or care for others you may require additional support from family, teachers or the SBST to assist you.



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