

Playground Politics: Tips for Parents

Empathy

Empathy is the ability to understand and share someone else's feelings. It helps children recognize that each person in the situation may have different feelings. It is the intersect of perspective taking and compassion.

Model empathy

- Ask your child open ended questions about their day, their activities, their preferences, their friendships
- Listen and repeat what you hear them say
 - "It sounds like..."
 - "What I'm hearing you say is..."
- Identify and validate feelings
 - Encourage them to share any and all feelings
 - Talk about why they are feeling that way
 - Help name feelings when your child can only describe them, "When you walked away from your friends you were feeling disappointed"
- Reflect on empathy during your daily lives, TV shows and books

Role Play

Role playing is one of the best ways to support growth and help your child feel prepared to handle difficult situations when they arise. It's like going to practice before a big game.

Practice role plays

- With a book or a TV show
 - Pause the story or show and discuss the different perspectives (build empathy)
 - Then talk through different solutions to the problem before you see how it plays out
 - Pick a possible solution and act it out
- With an "I" statement
 - I feel (name the emotion) when (name the behavior)
 - Practice the scenario without giving pushback
 - Once comfortable, add some realistic pushback to the situation
- With "7 Steps to Solving a Conflict"