

# Empathy (Grades K-2)

## For PurposeFull Families



### EXPLANATION:

This month we are talking about the social-emotional skill of Empathy. We are using this definition at school:

**Empathy: the ability to understand and connect to the feelings of another.**

Empathy is a crucial skill for being in community with others and a powerful skill to develop in personal and professional relationships. We are focusing on a few key pieces of Empathy: knowing how we feel (and having language to describe those feelings!), understanding what others are feeling, and listening to others well so that we can connect in more meaningful ways! We will reflect on powerful images that will inspire conversations about emotions, connection, and friendship. We will think about incredible people like the Indian author Arundhati Roy and our past president Barack Obama have to say about Empathy. We will celebrate what makes us different and find the amazing things that bring us together.

### CONVERSATION STARTERS:

- If we are going to understand someone else's feelings, it helps to first understand our own. Ask: What makes you happy? When do you feel sad? What frustrates you? What confuses you? When do you feel embarrassed? What scares you? Think about these questions and then share with your child!
- Everyone has tough days. What can people do to help when you are having a tough day? Do you like to talk about you are feeling? Does it help when you take your mind off of tough feelings? Do you like to write or draw about how you are feeling?
- Have a feelings check in as a family. How is everyone feeling? Do we know why we're feeling that way? Where do we feel or show that emotion in our bodies? How does it make us want to ask? What do we need from others right now?

### QUESTIONS YOU COULD ASK:

- How do you know what you are feeling? How can you tell how someone else is feeling?
- When do you feel most excited? Most upset? Most happy? Most sad?
- How do you show Empathy towards your friends when they are sad?
- What are things others might do when they're sad, worried or frustrated? What might they say?

### APPLICATION:

#### Books:

- [\*Those Shoes\*](#) by Maribeth Boelts
- [\*Hey, Little Ant\*](#) by Phillip and Hannah Hoose
- [\*Everyone\*](#) by Christopher Silas Neal
- [\*A Family Is a Family Is a Family\*](#) by Sara O'Leary
- [\*You, Me and Empathy\*](#) by Jayneen Sanders

### FOR YOUR READING:

- [\*Empathic Parenting\*](#) by Tamara Parney
- [\*Teaching Empathy: Evidence-based Tips\*](#) by Gwen Dewar, PhD
- [\*What to Do When Someone Is Upset\*](#) by Growth Psyc
- [\*Brene Brown on Empathy \(2:53\)\*](#): A wonderful video clip summarizing Empathy

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### ACTIVITY:

Sing along with The Mosaic Project's [Empathy Song \(3:49\)](#) to build vocabulary and talk about seeing the world through someone else's eyes and learn more about Empathy. If you want, add movement! Better yet, create words to a song or poem of your own!

### PURPOSEFULL PURSUITS:

#### A Feelings Walk

Take a walk around the neighborhood or at a local park. Be on the lookout for how people are feeling. Watch for facial expressions and body language. Talk through your observations about how they're feeling with your child. See if they agree! Then, ask some questions like: What might that person want? What might that person need?

Toughness: 2

Time: 3

Type: Partner

#### Reel Empathy

Schedule a family movie night so that you can specifically watch for feelings and emotions. Let everybody know that you'd like them to point out how the characters in the show are feeling and that there will be periodic pauses to discuss Empathy. As emotions are identified, invite one another to empathize by sharing about a time they felt that way or imagining how they might be feeling and what they might want or need at that moment.

Toughness: 2

Time: 4

Type: Group

#### Our Emotions Pizza

As a family, draw a large circle on a piece of paper and then divide it into segments like a pizza. In each slice of pizza (towards the center of the circle), write different emotions, especially trickier ones to navigate such as frustration, loneliness, anxiety, boredom, sadness, anger, etc.. Then, in the middle of each slice, draw a picture of what each emotion might look like for a family member. Clenched hands? Hair twirling? Crying? Finally, on the outside of the wheel write down tools or strategies that each member may use when feeling that emotion such as wrestling with a pillow, listening to happy music, asking for a hug, laying under a pile of blankets, taking deep breaths, drinking water, etc..

Now when you practice Empathy and notice another member of the family feeling a strong feeling, you "give them a slice" and recommend tools to help them take care of themselves!

Toughness: 2

Time: 2

Type: Group

#### Coping with Feelings

Coping skills are strategies that we use to manage challenging feelings. Have a family meeting and talk about your favorite coping skills that help with tough feelings. Using words and pictures, each family member should create a coping skills menu that shows a variety of strategy options. Ask each family member to hang their chart in a location where it can be utilized the next time tough feelings arise.

Here are some coping skills ideas to get your menu started: Draw, read, take a bath, go on a walk, play with a pet, listen to music, talk to someone you trust, spend time in nature, bake, ride a bike, hug a stuffed animal, dance, meditate, read a book, and a lot more!

Toughness: 4

Time: 3

Type: Group