

THE COUNSELORS' CONNECTION



The Newsletter of the
Elementary Counseling Department

5 TIPS FOR CULTIVATING EMPATHY

What's in this month's issue:

- 5 TIPS FOR CULTIVATING EMPATHY
- HOW CAN I USE MEDIA TO TEACH MY KID EMPATHY?
- TRY IT AT HOME!
- SEL BOOK OF THE MONTH

"Empathy is at the heart of what it means to be human. It's a foundation for acting ethically, for good relationships of many kinds, for loving well, and for professional success. And it's key to preventing bullying and many other forms of cruelty." (The President and Fellows of Harvard College, 2022).

In simple terms, empathy is the ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes to understand what they are feeling. Sounds pretty simple right? It is not as simple as it may seem. Many individuals are able to see other perspectives, but empathy requires us to look through the scope of value and compassion when trying to understand others.

Here are some strategies that adults can use to help foster empathy in children:

- **Model empathy for others and for your child.**
 - Witnessing empathy in action can help children truly understand what it means to value others and their feelings. When they see that you are treating others kindly, it empowers them to do the same.
- **Provide your child with opportunities to practice and learn empathy.**
 - Children need guidance and support when learning how to be empathetic to others. Encourage them to be empathetic toward peers and provide praise when they show empathy toward others.
 - Be intentional when addressing behavior that lacks empathy and discuss with your child ways to change their response in the future.
- **Support your child in understanding the feelings that may be stopping them from empathizing with others. At times, feelings like anger, frustration, and other emotions challenge a child's ability to empathize with others at that moment.**
 - Work with your child to establish strategies to cope with negative emotions.
- **Help your child recognize moments where empathy can be used with family and friends.**
- **Read books that focus on empathy.**

*The article was adapted from Making Common Caring Project.
[To view the full article, click here.](#)*

DID YOU KNOW?

The SEL Program includes lessons that teach children to identify feelings in themselves and others; recognize body language; and develop and demonstrate empathy, especially by taking action to help others.

HOW CAN I USE MEDIA TO TEACH MY KID EMPATHY?

According to Common Sense Media, many parents worry that cyberbullying, trolls, and rude behavior have taken over the internet. While it may seem that the online world has worn away our empathy, many studies show that kids and teens develop strong, supportive online bonds both with known friends and those they've met online. And there are plenty of examples in which an outpouring of empathy has swept through pop culture, the internet, and other mass media.

Here's how you can use media to teach kids empathy:

Movies, TV, and Books:

- Seek out books with diverse characters and backgrounds.
- Encourage kids to express their feelings after watching TV shows and movies.
- Encourage siblings to respect each other's feelings about shows.
- Seek out movies and TV shows that promote empathy.

Social Media, Apps, Games, and Websites:

- Look for games and apps that switch among characters' perspectives.
- Choose games and apps that rely on and reward collaboration among players.
- Start teaching positive online communication as soon as your kids start using the internet.
- Encourage kids to find positive online environments that are warm and welcoming.
- Ask kids how they would feel if they were cyberbullied.
- Encourage your kid to stand up for people who are victimized online.
- Train kids to think through the impact their posts might have on others.
- Join in hashtag campaigns that support people



This article was adapted from Common Sense Media. [To view the full article, click here](#)

TRY IT AT HOME: I-MESSAGE SWAPS



Perspective-taking is an important skill that can help in managing social conflict. Encouraging the use of I-Statements models the value of emotions and communication.

Consider taking I-Statements to another level by swapping places! The next time your child experiences a big emotion, say, "I am going to turn that into an I-Statement for you." Similarly, the next time YOU experience a big emotion, say to your child, "Put my feelings into an I-Message for me."

Flexibility in considering yourself and another perspective is a vital skill in successfully navigating social situations.

SEL BOOK OF THE MONTH

