



EMPATHY

The Creekers' Code theme for March is Empathy.

The ability to empathize affects our kids' future health, wealth, authentic happiness, relationship satisfaction, and ability to bounce back from adversity. It promotes kindness, prosocial skills, moral courage and it is an effective antidote to bullying, aggression, prejudice and racism. Empathy is also a positive predictor of children's reading and math test scores and critical thinking skills, prepares kids for global and gives them a job market boost

Harvard Business Review named it as one of the essential ingredients for leadership success and excellent performance.

By Samantha Rodman PhD

Clients and friends often ask me how to cultivate empathy in their children. Instead of only understanding their own point of view, parents want their children to learn how to share, take others' perspectives, and how to value other people's opinions just as they value their own. Although this skill can be tough when kids are very young, it is never too early to focus on empathy in the home and outside of it.



Here are six ways to teach empathy to your children, whether they are toddlers, preschool aged, or school aged.

1. Teach them about emotions.

As your child goes through his day, make sure to point out which emotions you see him feel and which ones you're feeling.

2. Read and watch TV together.

Even the simplest board book will have characters that your child can learn to empathize with. Don't just read but discuss what characters are feeling as the story progresses.

3. After conflicts, discuss feelings.

While your child is hitting his sibling is not the time to discuss feelings. But when the children are separated and have calmed down, it is a great time to go back and talk about what each child was feeling.

4. Let them see you resolve conflicts.

If kids never see conflict resolution in a relationship, they will be unlikely to be able to resolve conflicts in their own later relationships.

5. Model respect for everyone.

Children are naturally fascinated by those who are different. If a child is curious about someone with a disability, don't just shush them. Make friends with the person and allow your child to see that this person is more similar to him than different.

Teaching Children Empathy

By Jessica Lahey

1. Empathize with your child and model how to feel compassion for others.

Children who feel valued are more likely to value others and demonstrate respect for their needs. When we treat other people like they matter, our kids notice, and are more likely to emulate our acts of caring and compassion.

2. Make caring for others a priority and set high ethical expectations.

“The most important thing is that you are kind and that you are happy.” Prioritize caring when you talk about others, and help your child understand that the world does not revolve around them or their needs.

3. Provide opportunities for children to practice.

Empathy, like other emotional skills, requires repetition to become second nature. Hold family meetings and involve kids by challenging them to listen to and respect others’ perspectives.

4. Expand your child’s circle of concern.

Encourage your child to talk about and speculate on the feelings of people who are particularly vulnerable or in need. Talk about how those people could be helped and comforted.

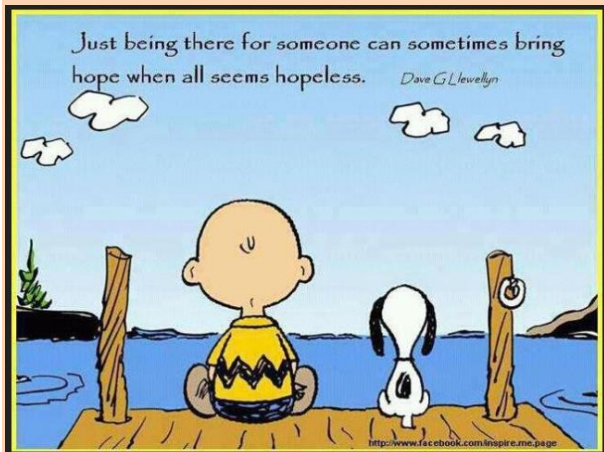
5. Help children develop self-control and manage feelings effectively.

Encourage kids to name those stereotypes and prejudices, and to talk about their anger, envy, shame and other negative emotions. Model conflict resolution and anger management in your own actions, and let your kids see you work through challenging feelings in your own life.

Educators will tell you that a classroom full of empathetic kids simply runs more smoothly than one filled with even the happiest group of self-serving children. Similarly, family life is more harmonious when siblings are able feel for each other and put the needs of others ahead of individual happiness. If a classroom or a family full of caring children makes for a more peaceful and cooperative learning environment, just imagine what we could accomplish in a world populated by such children.

Adapted: https://www.huffingtonpost.com/samantha-rodman-phd/how-to-teach-kids-empathy_b_12673540.html

Literature Connection – Books about Empathy



Younger Grades:

Dr. Seuss- The Sneetches
The Butter Battle
Chrysanthemum, by Kevin Henkes

Upper grades:

Chicken Soup for the Kid’s Soul by Jack Canfield
The Great Gilly Hopkins by Katherine Paterson
Counting by 7’s by Holly Goldberg Sloan
Out of my Mind by Sharon Draper