

COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

*SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)
& TEACHING EMPATHY*



THE KEY COMPONENTS OF EMPATHY

by Siomara Bridges-Mata, Senior Community Programs Specialist

As the local experts for teaching social and emotional learning, we often get asked the question during our trainings, "can I really teach empathy, isn't this something you are born with?" We are always excited about these types of questions because it gives us the opportunity to share strategies that invite participants to engage in new ways of thinking and responding. Empathy, in fact, can be taught and there is a list of reasons as to why it is so important for us to learn and build upon this muscle of caring for each other. So, what exactly is empathy? Emotion researchers generally define empathy as the ability to sense other people's emotions, coupled with the ability to imagine what someone else might be thinking or feeling. In order to teach empathy, you must first be able to acknowledge your own feelings and emotions. When we understand what we are feeling it will increase our ability to genuinely connect and empathize with those around us. In this month's SEL community newsletter, you will learn more about the importance and benefits of teaching empathy as well as gain tools, strategies and resources that will equip you for success.

EARLY LEARNING

Empathy building occurs in stages and begins in infancy through the mimicking/mirroring of a caregiver's behaviors and emotions. From 0-2 years old, the foundation for empathy is built through learning how to read facial expressions, gestural cues, and repeating activities. From ages 3-4, a child begins to develop an awareness of the feelings of themselves and others. Then, at ages 5-6, children begin to feel and show compassion. As children grow older, they begin to practice self-awareness of their own emotions and feelings, making others' emotions and feelings easier to recognize— a staple in developing empathy at an early age.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Elementary aged children are absorbing knowledge at an unbelievable rate – not just educational knowledge but social and emotional as well. Using targeted strategies to help build empathy can be an exceptional and fun way to teach your child kindness and understanding. Reading literature/discussing video and movies to teach "being in someone else's shoes"; talking about emotions using I-statements, and keeping an emotion vocabulary wheel can be incredibly effective (download Frameworks' Emotional Vocabulary now by [clicking here](#)). This is a great way to teach social-emotional learning explicitly by building their emotional vocabulary and providing children with age-appropriate tools to cope in a healthy way.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Middle school can be a scary place for kids and teachers alike! Kids are coming into their own while trying to navigate their feelings and the budding pressures of the world around them. This is also a time when many kids are starting to gain access to the internet and social-networking sites. It is in this space that we begin to see online 'trolling' and internet bullying – and the damage that a lack of empathy can cause. It's especially important to teach and build empathy and compassion at this age. Getting ahead of these issues by teaching tolerance and respect, practicing empathy activities, and modeling active listening can help middle schoolers proactively set healthy boundaries about what they will/will not tolerate from their own, or peer's, behavior.

HIGH SCHOOL

High school students are about to enter the 'real world', and empathy can take them a very long way. As they have grown older, so has their exposure to life experiences, and helping them learn how to process these experiences is crucial to their social-emotional wellness. At this age, empathy is critical to their development as a human, an employee, and as someone who participates in healthy relationships. For example, "interviewees are most successful when they can take the perspective of the interviewer" (Edutopia.org, April 2021). In a healthy relationship, there is give and take, compromise and understanding through putting yourself in the other's shoes. How can one take the perspective of another (interviewer, friend, or partner)? By practicing and engaging in empathy and compassion.

COPING SKILLS & ACTIVITIES



WHY EMPATHY IS IMPORTANT

by *Jordan Sims*
Community Programs Specialist

Empathy is something we may know is important in theory but we may not think much about why it's important. There are a multitude of reasons why it's beneficial to teach children how to have empathy for others. Below we highlight five of these reasons, but we encourage you to think about your own personal reasons too.

1. Empathetic children **develop stronger relationships** with others when they can connect with another person's feelings and respond accordingly.
2. When children are taught empathy, they are **more tolerant and accepting**, making them more likely to learn from and get along with others.
3. Having empathy **enhances leadership abilities** as children get older by enabling them to better relate to others and identify strengths and areas for growth.
4. Children who are empathetic have **better mental health** because they are better able to navigate social situations and feel connected in their community.
5. Empathetic children **resolve conflict more effectively** because they can see others' perspectives and find more mutually agreeable solutions.

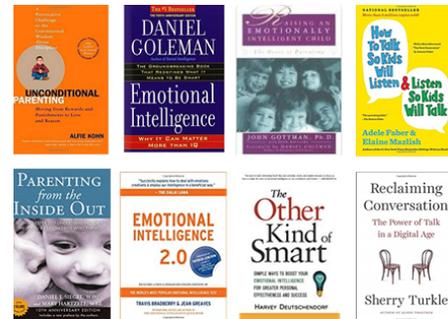
STRATEGIES TO FOSTER EMPATHY

by *Carolyn Tompkins*
SEL Programs Specialist

Empathy is the ability to understand the feelings of another person or group of people by being able to place yourself in their circumstance(s). Children can develop empathy through the intentional efforts of their families. Here are some great strategies to help you foster empathy in your children:

- Empathize with your child and model empathy for others. Consider volunteering within the community alongside your child(ren). This can be especially impactful when volunteering with groups from different backgrounds and who may be facing different challenges than your own family.
- Provide opportunities for your child to practice empathy. A great way to do this is to have "family meetings" to help solve conflicts. When you listen carefully to the views of your child(ren) and encourage them to do the same in return, your family is not only actively practicing empathy, but is also likely to problem solve more effectively and efficiently.
- Make caring for others a high priority and set high ethical expectations. For example, when setting expectations for your child at school, it is important to say "I expect you to do your best work." To actively set high ethical expectations, consider saying, "I expect you to be kind to everyone you encounter today and to do your best work."

Resources for this topic were found on Harvard's School of Education Website. For more information on this topic, [click here](#).



RESOURCES AND READINGS

by *Eddie Underwood*
SEL Programs Specialist

We are always growing and working on our SEL skills, and growing our empathy is a great way to do that. Below you will find resources to help you on your way.

Videos: "[Brené Brown on Empathy](#)" (YouTube)
"[Empathy Why It Matters & How to Get It | Roman Krznaric](#)" (YouTube)

Books: "[Empathy: Why It Matters and How to Get It](#)" (Roman Krznaric)
"[I Thought It Was Just Me \(But It Isn't\)](#)" (Brené Brown)

Podcast: In this [Design Matters With Debbie Millman](#) audio interview, Millman talks with Simon Sinek, the author of [Start With Why](#).

Blog post: Brain Picking's "[How Kindness Became Our Forbidden Pleasure](#)" is a great overview of an awesome empathy-related book, [On Kindness](#).

Library: An element of the Empathy Museum online is the world's only digital [Empathy Library](#). It contains great lists, reviews and ratings of hundreds of books and films, all on the theme of empathy.

Exercises and Resources: A unique exercise led by [Lee Mun Wah](#). [Empathy Worksheets and Teaching Resources](#) (talkingtreebooks.com)

To access free resources or purchase resources for home, classroom, or office use visit www.myframeworks.org



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"Empathy is seeing with the eyes of another, listening with the ears of another, and feeling with the heart of another."

ALFRED ADLER

UPCOMING EVENTS

Tampa Oyster Fest 2021

[CLICK HERE](http://www.tampaoysterfest.com)
www.tampaoysterfest.com

for Tickets and Information

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2022 Head & Heart Luncheon

FEATURING KEYNOTE SPEAKER
ARTHUR BROOKS

ARMATURE WORKS | APRIL 21, 2022



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