



6 WAYS
to Teach Empathy
to Children

A photograph of a man and a young boy sitting together, reading a book. The man is on the left, looking towards the boy on the right. The boy is smiling and looking at the book. They are both wearing light-colored shirts. The background is a wooden wall.

6 WAYS TO TEACH EMPATHY TO CHILDREN

The ability to understand the feelings of others is a core quality that contributes to healthy, prosperous relationships and social connections.

Parents who know how to foster empathy in their children weren't born with this knowledge - **they learned and applied it.** And you can too!

This skill can be tricky to learn, especially for toddlers. However, all of the work and effort you put in to teach this important trait pays off greatly.

The founder of the school of individual psychology, Alfred Adler, said, **“Empathy is seeing with the eyes of another, listening with the ears of another and feeling with the heart of another.”**

When is the right time to start teaching our kids empathy? How should we do it? Is the occasional lecture about the importance of the skill enough? Are there some creative ways to do it? Will your child end up overwhelmed by empathy?

Parents who practice conscious parenting deal with these and many other questions on a daily basis. Fortunately, even though it is a learned behavior, your child is born with the capacity for empathy. You just have to recognize it and encourage the attitude that cultivates this capacity.

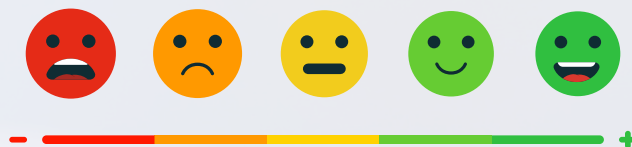
Any parent who is capable of being kind and shows compassion already provides their children with a good foundation of empathy.

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Here are 6 ways to teach your child the art of compassion and empathy:

1. Teach about emotions.

Emotional intelligence, the ability to recognize, differ, and name various emotions correctly is the key to future empathy



A child cannot empathize with feelings they can't explain. By pointing out and naming emotions you assume your child is feeling, and the ones you're feeling as well, you will stimulate the development of emotional intelligence.

2. Model and interpret a variety of feelings.

Use everyday situations of observing distress (in real life, books, or on TV) and talk with your child about how the main character of the story could be feeling. Teach them to take a pause and think about other people's emotions before taking any action.



3. Inspire curiosity for similarities.

Kids feel greater empathy for familiar individuals and people who are more similar to them.

Make your children aware of characteristics or experiences that they have in common with others. Allow them to meet people from different backgrounds so they can hear their stories and identify with them.

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4. Read stories and organize role-plays

Empathy is more than just “emotion sharing.” **It means taking another person’s perspective as well and trying to walk a mile in their shoes.**

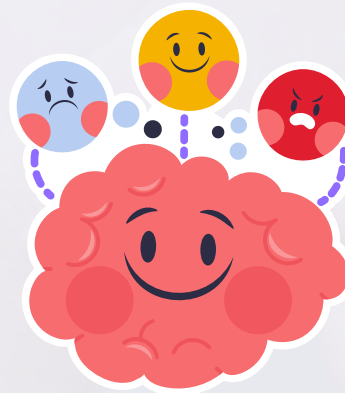
- Fictional stories and real-life narratives offer excellent opportunities for teaching empathy. Discuss the story you are reading with your child and focus on the hero’s emotions.
- Simulate common difficulties and life challenges with your children. This way they can perceive how they feel playing the role which will help them understand other people better.

5. Practice recognizing facial expressions.

Being empathic is hard if you can’t read someone’s face. **Toddlers often misinterpret facial expressions.** Show them pictures of people expressing different emotions and help them name each one of them correctly.

6. After a conflict, share emotions.

Conflicts happen in every family. Maybe you got angry with your child for something they did, or perhaps they got in a fight with their sibling.



- Once you’ve calmed down after the conflict, talk to your child about everyone’s emotions. **This will enhance their empathy and also help them express their feelings more adaptively.**

The moment you decide to teach your child empathy, you can be sure that you’re on the right path. **Remember, each time you demonstrate empathy on your own, you are one step closer to having an emotionally well-developed child.**

