

What is Empathy?

Empathy is the ability to share and understand the feelings of another person. Empathy is important in relationships as it allows us to take time to prioritize the feelings of those closest to us in order to best resolve conflict, strengthen relationships, and validate their experiences. Building empathy in youth promotes healthier relationships throughout their childhood and lifespan!

How can Adults Support Building Empathy in Youth?



Encourage listening

Ask children to listen to others and share back what they heard. Giving someone undivided attention and reflecting back what you heard them say allows them to feel validated. It also allows the listener to have a deeper understanding of how the speaker is feeling.

Talk about feelings

Make space for children and teens to share their feelings in the home. Support children in identifying emotions, using feelings words (happy, sad, angry) and noticing what their body feels like when they experience those emotions. The more openly feelings are discussed, the more children and teens are able to identify feelings in others!



Use books and media

When reading or watching a movie, ask questions about how characters might be feeling in certain situations.

Support children in observing cues about character's emotions. For example, if a character seems sad, how do you know? Are they crying? What does their body language look like? Have children and teens discuss what they would do if they experienced a friend or loved on in a similar situation.

