



## What is empathy?

**SEEING with the EYES of another.**  
**LISTENING with the EARS of another.**  
**FEELING the HEART of another.**

Alfred Adler

Empathy is a skill which is both innate and learned. The development of empathy begins at around 6 months of age as infants begin to look at their caregivers for social cues in daily situations. Children will continue to develop their empathy skills as they begin to recognize common feelings in themselves and others.

Empathy uses a complex set of social and emotional skills to put yourself in someone else's shoes. Empathy can help children learn how to regulate their emotional responses. So rather than reacting to a difficult situation, they are able to slow down and think before responding.

### **Skills to help build empathy:**

- Teach children to identify their emotions and how their body feels when they are experiencing it.
  - Teach feelings words to help expand an emotional vocabulary
  - <https://wasatchfamilytherapy.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Feelings.pdf>
  - <https://www.bjeschooloutreach.org/Portals/0/Tools%20for%20Building%20Healthier%20Youth/Materials/Building%20Resilience/Children%27s%20List%20of%20Feeling%20Words.pdf>
- Explain what empathy is and how it's different from sympathy
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HznVuCVQd10>
  - The following link is a read aloud about empathy for Pre-K-3rd grade
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9RxO3HG9bM>
- Model empathetic behaviors
- Practice perspective taking
  - The following link is good for 6th grade+
  - <https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=Perspective+taking&docid=608051662769360798&mid=08BE837A9D7BE1DDCED208BE837A9D7BE1DDCED2&view=detail&FORM=VIRE>

Resources:

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/5-how-to-help-your-child-develop-empathy>  
<https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/resources-for-educators/how-build-empathy-strengthen-school-community>