

Counselor's Corner

November 2023

Cultivating Empathy

Empathy, or the ability to sense other people's emotions, and imagine what someone is thinking and feeling, is often considered a basic trait that all humans possess. In reality, it's not that simple. Many people are able to see other perspectives, but empathy requires us to look through the scope of value and compassion when trying to understand others. Research shows that empathy motivates many types of prosocial behaviors, such as forgiveness, volunteering, and helping, and is good for relationships, loving well and for success. Empathy is also key to preventing bullying and other forms of cruelty.

So how can parents foster empathy in their children, especially when it can be difficult to experience the uncomfortable feelings of others?

Practice empathy with your child & model empathy for others

Witnessing empathy in action can help children truly understand what it means to value others and their feelings. When they see that you are treating others kindly, it empowers them to do the same.

Provide your child with opportunities to practice and learn empathy

Children need guidance and support when learning how to be empathetic to others. Encourage them to be empathetic toward peers and provide praise when they show empathy toward others. Be intentional when addressing behavior that lacks empathy and discuss with your child ways to change their response in the future.

Support your child in understanding the feelings that may be stopping them from empathizing with others

Feelings like anger, sadness and frustration may make it difficult for a child to empathize in the moment. Work with your child to establish strategies to cope with the uncomfortable feelings they experience and make sure they know that it's normal to experience these feelings.

Help your child recognize moments where empathy can be used with family and friends



(831) 429-1456

<https://www.hvesd.com/>

Upcoming Events

11/5 Daylight Saving Times Ends

11/8 Board Meeting
3:30 pm MPR

11/10 No School
Veteran's Day

11/11 Redwood Gala
6-9 pm Bargetto Winery

11/13-11/17
Parent/Teacher Conference Week
Minimum Day

11/15
Parent Club Meeting
6:30 p.m. Zoom

11/20-11/24
Thanksgiving Break



Empathy in Action

Stories are a wonderful way to see empathy in action and demonstrate the giving and receiving for kids of all ages. Here are a few suggestions of books in print (the link pulls up a description of the book):

["Adrian Simcox Does NOT Have a Horse"](#) by Marcy Campbell (ages 3-5)

["Luli and the Language of Tea"](#) by Andrea Wang (ages 3-7)

["We're All Wonders"](#) by R.J. Palacio (ages 4-8)

["Each Kindness"](#) by Jacqueline Woodson (ages 5-8)

["Wonder"](#) by R.J. Palacio (ages 8-12 years)

["Wishtree"](#) by Katherine Applegate (ages 8-12)

["El Deafo"](#) by Cece Bell (ages 8-12)

Tips on using media to teach kids empathy

- Seek out books with diverse characters and backgrounds
- Encourage kids to express their feelings after watching TV shows and movies
- Encourage siblings to respect each other's feelings about shows
- Seek out movies and TV shows that promote empathy

Practice at home

Perspective-taking is an important skill that can help in managing social conflict. Encouraging the use of I-statements models the value of emotions and communication.

Consider taking I-statements to a new level by swapping places! The next time your child experiences a big emotion, say, "I am going to turn that into an I-Statement for you." Similarly, the next time YOU experience a big emotion, say to your child, "Put my feelings into an I-Message for me."

