

Empathy



What is it?

Being able to recognize/understand how someone is feeling and respond with care

Why is it important?

- Increases understanding that you are a separate individual (your own person)
- Increases ability to recognize that people feel differently than you
- Improves recognition of common feelings
- Learns appropriate responses to various situations

Milestones of Empathy

6 months

- **Social Referencing:** baby will look for reaction from adult to various people or situations
 - this helps baby know if a person or situation is safe & helps them understand the world around them

18-24 months

- **Theory of Mind:** child will start to learn that he has his own thoughts/feelings/goals that may be different from others
- Toddlers start to recognize self in mirror, showing them that they are their own/separate person

How to teach empathy

- Model acceptance & understanding so that kids can learn how to accept & understand others
- Validate child's feelings & verbally walk through how they are feeling (ex: child crying because they fell - you could say "Oh no did you fall down? Are you okay? I bet that was scary, let me give you a hug")
- Talk about other kids feelings
- Demonstrate how children can show empathy (ex: bring them with to help you get ice for someone who fell)
- Read stories about feelings
- Use "I" phrases (ex: I dont like when you hit me)
- Think through the use of "I'm sorry"
 - kids don't always know what "I'm sorry" means - instead focus the child on the other child's feelings so they understand that their actions have consequences

How it relates to social emotional learning

- Improves interpersonal relationships
- Develops communication skills
- Promotes inclusivity
- Increases self-awareness



References

Zero to Three Early Connections Last a Lifetime. (2016, February 1). How to Help Your Child Develop Empathy. Zero to Three. <https://www.zerotothree.org/resource/how-to-help-your-child-develop-empathy/>