

# Counseling Corner

Monthly school newsletter from Lutheran Counseling Services



## Word of the month: Empathy

It seems like the pace of life keeps moving faster and faster! For parents, this pace can mean that much of what children are facing today is very different from the childhood that parents experienced themselves. This can make it difficult to have empathy for our children and truly understand what their world is like. It can elicit stories about walking miles to school in the snow (or heat) and other “back in my day...” stories! But finding a way to understand what it is like to be a kid these days can reap many rewards to your relationship, and also greatly benefit your child.

Empathy encourages us to **understand how others are feeling and experiencing a situation**. Putting ourselves in their shoes. Understanding their feelings, even when we disagree with them, or when we would experience something very differently. As we build our ability to understand our children, we can help them build their own empathy skills to apply toward family, friend, school and all relationships.

Children move through a lot of developmental stages as they grow up. Some of the stages can make it more difficult for them to understand others’ perspectives. Preschool aged children are just learning about their worlds and it does not yet extend much beyond

### FEELINGS CHECK

Would interactions with your child go more smoothly if you had a better understanding of how he/she was feeling? If so, make it a point to talk about your child’s feelings.

### I FEEL...?

Many children lack the vocabulary to express their feelings. Use feeling words when you talk about your day with your child to help build this vocabulary & build a feelings focus in your home.

### ACTION!

We can’t choose our feelings but we can choose how to act on them. When talking with your child, discuss possible actions that could be taken in response to various feelings.

themselves. At this phase, they can begin to learn that they do not like certain behaviors, such as when others take their toys, and they can begin to understand their own feelings and know that others feel those feelings as well.

Young adolescents are in an egocentric time of life in which they focus on their own needs. This can sometimes feel isolating as they think no one else is dealing with things that they are dealing with. As they begin to develop empathy for others, they can begin to understand that others experience feelings similar to their own. They can begin to feel connected to others through those similarities. They can deepen their relationships with others through deeper understanding of their feelings.

Take a look at the tips in this newsletter to help develop this important skill. Find ways to incorporate feeling words in your conversations. Take a moment during your prayer reflection to share feeling words that describe your own emotions. Consider periodic pauses during the day to reflect on the emotions you are experiencing at that moment. Becoming more aware of what we feel, and what others may be feeling, can create many positive connections with others around us.

**“ Empathy is seeing with the eyes of another, listening with the ears of another and feeling with the heart of another.”**

**Alfred Adler**



## COUNSELOR CONNECTION

Your school has a school counselor available for additional resources on building empathy in your child or to help address other mental health concerns. Reach out to your school or to the LCS main office at (407) 644-4692 or [lcsfl.com](http://lcsfl.com) to learn more.

**Miss a month?** Did you miss one of the newsletters or want a refresher? Find them all here: <http://lcsfl.com/news-resources/newsletters.html>



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## Car conversations

Whether in the car, at the dinner table or grocery store line, here are conversation ideas to build this quality in your child.

**What does empathy mean and why is it important?**

**Tell me about a time when you did not feel understood. What was that like?**

**Tell your child about a situation in your life that involved empathy and discuss what happened.**

**While reading a book or watching a movie, pause to talk about how different characters may feel. Discuss a time when you or your child had that feeling.**

**Consider having your child walk in your shoes, literally if possible, and share ideas about what he/she thinks your day is like. Then hold his/her shoes and tell your thoughts about what life is like for your child. Discuss how close each of you were.**

**Read Romans 12:15 together - “Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.” Discuss what this could mean in your child’s life.**