

COUNSELING CORNER

Monthly School Newsletter from Lutheran Counseling Services

Car Conversations

In the car, classroom or dinner table, try some of these ideas to build this trait in yourself, your family or your class.



- When playing with young children with dolls, figures, or puppets, have them pause and swap characters with them. Talk about how different the new character's perspectives, actions, thoughts, etc. are. Model using your character to reflect what the other character may be feeling.
- Many of us have heard the comparison of empathy to walking in someone else's shoes. Parents can have their children walk in each other's shoes and discuss what life might be like for other family members. What do they think it's like to put



Empathy

Defined by psychotherapist Alfred Adler, "Empathy is seeing with the eyes of another, listening with the ears of another and feeling with the heart of another." Touted as a leadership strategy that leads to higher job satisfaction and decreases employee turnover (EY 2021), it is a skill in high demand in businesses. Similarly, teachers and parents hope to see this skill emerge in classrooms, playgrounds, living rooms and backyards as children engage with one another. Beginning as infants learning to recognize other's facial features and emotions, this skill can continue to develop and can be taught and strengthened.

Inquiring teachers, parents and people in all walks of life want to know how to boost this trait. Here are some tips and tricks to do just that:

- Speak openly about emotions to build a vocabulary to identify a range of emotions that we and others may feel.
- Support positive ways to manage emotions by adults modeling it, and by helping kids identify ways they can manage a range of emotions.
- Find opportunities to guess how others might be feeling in a range of situations, across a lot of different emotions, and across cultural differences. Notice any similarities or differences in emotions between people.
- Discuss that all emotions are OK. We often can't control how we are feeling, and our emotions typically make sense when we look into our experiences in the past, and how we experience something in the moment.
- Teachers and parents can model showing empathy to others in daily life in big or small ways, highlighting how others may feel, and how to respond.

Research on our brains has helped identify that we possess neurons that react when we see someone else experiencing

on dress shoes and go to work? How do parents think elementary or high school is for their children? The challenge is to try to guess the experience from the other person’s perspective, not how we would experience each situation.

- When watching a movie together pause periodically to consider how different characters may feel in a situation. What clues can we find about how each might feel? How might we each feel if we were in this movie? How is each experience different? Similar?

- Play a game of Mirror Mirror. Have two people stand silently facing each other and one person takes a pose to show an emotion. The other person mirrors by getting into the same pose and guesses the emotion portrayed. Discuss how close or far the guess was from the intended emotion. Talk about clues to how the person felt. Movie or book characters can be used as inspiration.

Images courtesy of [Pexels.com](https://www.pexels.com)

something, often pain. If you have ever winced watching someone fall, your “mirror neurons” were likely activated. Our brains are wired to allow us to understand how others may feel.

What parents, teachers, kids and much of society wants is for that understanding of others to translate into supporting others. This requires self-awareness of our own emotions, positive ways to self-regulate and then social skills to reach out or a drive to mobilize ourselves to make a difference in others lives. See the activities in this newsletter to start building this trait in your classroom or family today!

References:

EY Consulting (2021). *Empathy in Business Survey Available [here](#).*
Dewar, G. (2020). *Teaching Empathy: Evidence-based tips for fostering empathic awareness in children.* Parenting Science.
Dewar, G. (2014). *Empathy and the Brain.* Parenting Science.

2022-2023 Monthly Words

- August- Empathy**
- September- Respect**
- October- Responsibility**
- November – Cooperation**
- December- Generosity**
- January- Acceptance**
- February- Kindness**
- March- Trustworthiness**
- April- Courageous**
- May- Perseverance**

Our Words Matter Program uses character education and values to promote mental health and support positive parenting and teaching strategies. Each month, the Words Matter campaign will promote a word and activities to encourage development of these qualities. One word a month, let’s focus on how Words Matter!



Students, parents or school staff can sign up online for counseling services at school.

Sign Up!

MISS A MONTH?
Find previous [newsletters here](#).

Support our program!
How to Help



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