



the family values toolkit

For Children Ages 11 to 13

This Month's Featured Value Is: **Empathy**

Empathy is the quality that underlies love, caring, and compassion. When you empathize with others, you put yourself in their place and recognize them as human beings with feelings just like you, allowing you to act toward them as you would have them act in return.

What Can Parents Do to Nurture This Important Value?



First, Set Goals:

Show kids they are capable of doing something to alleviate others' suffering.

As children enter adolescence, their world continues to expand through exposure to books, school subjects, movies, internet and TV. They start to empathize with people who are suffering, even those they have never met. Their reactions may be intense, causing them to be greatly troubled by news accounts of war or crime. Closer to home, though, peer pressure may cause them to behave in hurtful ways to kids their age. Parents can help modulate these conflicting impulses and keep preteens traveling smoothly on the path toward becoming empathetic adults. Here are some great ways to keep cultivating this important value in growing kids.

Next, Take Action! Try These Activities:

- ✓ **Play "Silent TV" with your family. Here's how:** Watch a favorite sit-com together with the volume turned down. As you watch, take turns guessing from the actors' facial expressions and body language what they are feeling--and why. The guesses can range from realistic to outrageous!
- ✓ **Encourage kids to volunteer for things**, such as meals-on-wheels or working at a hospital. Have a "debriefing session" afterward to discuss their feelings about their experience with volunteering.
- ✓ **Keep reminding your child of the Golden Rule**, even if you don't see it sinking in yet.
- ✓ **Don't hesitate to seek treatment if you sense a problem developing.** Preteens who are violent and able to shut off feelings for victims (by saying, for instance, "they deserved it") may need professional help to develop empathy properly.

Then, Report Back!

Share your stories of success, your challenges, and overall experiences with others in our community @

responsibilityproject.com/familyvalues