



the family values toolkit

For Children Ages 3 to 4

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:

Increase your child's consciousness of different kinds of feelings and of himself as an active helper.

Children this age are spending more time with other kids--in day care, at preschool, or on the playground. Through these interactions, they learn how actions affect others--for example, that sharing can make others happy, while refusing to take turns can make them angry or sad. They also start to recognize individual differences in the need for comfort. Whereas a toddler might have pulled his mother over to comfort a crying child in the playground, a preschooler realizes that the boy wants his own mommy.

Parents of children this age can help their kids be empathetic by posing questions like: "Look at Tanya's face. See how sad she is? Can you think of anything that would help her feel better?" Here are some other great ideas.

Next, Take Action! Try These Activities:

- ✓ **Make an "Empathy Collage."** *Materials: Old magazines, heavy paper, glue, scissors, pens.* First, look through magazines with your child and identify together how people in the photographs are feeling. Next, help your child cut the pictures out and glue them on heavy paper. Then, help your child label the feeling under each picture. Last, talk about a time you experienced one of the feelings shown.
- ✓ **Develop a "feelings" vocabulary,** building on the "feeling faces" that your child can already recognize (from the activities guide for ages 0-2). Expand their vocabulary to include more subtle words like "disappointed," "hurt," "excited," and "proud." Encourage your children to use words to describe their feelings and the feelings of others as often as possible.
- ✓ **When your child plays with dolls, teach him or her to attend to the doll's "boo-boos."** Cooing to the doll while bandaging an imaginary cut teaches your child a rudimentary lesson about helping comfort someone in pain.

Then, Report Back!

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