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WHAT IS EMPATHY?

OBJECTIVES:

At the end of this lesson students will be able to:

- Define and describe the concept of empathy
- Differentiate empathic responses from nonempathic responses
- Identify the benefits of empathy

RATIONALE:

Many children will not have heard the term empathy. Having a name for a concept and understanding its meaning is an important first step to beginning a dialogue about the issue. Unless there is a definition of a term up-front, no two people can really talk about the same thing. Students need a clear understanding of the definition of empathy as well as examples of empathy in order to know what it is that they will be working on over the next few weeks. In defining empathy, students will also identify why empathy is an important life skill. Understanding the value of a skill helps to enhance engagement and motivation.

MATERIALS:

Biographies of famous empathic persons, poster boards or pieces of butcher paper, markers, masking tape, and newspaper and/or magazine stories

SCRIPT:

Can you think of a time that you got hurt and you went to your mother or grandmother or some other person because you knew that they would not only help you but would be sad with you? Well, that's empathy. Its about sharing feelings. Over the next few weeks we will be learning about empathy – what some people call the “social emotion.” Empathy is actually the ability to read and understand another person’s thoughts and feelings, and to let that person know in a positive way that you understand. Empathy helps us to have better relationships with others, to make good choices about our behavior and to feel positive about ourselves. The three (3) steps of empathy which we will be learning more about include:

- Recognize or “read” the other person’s feelings
- Allow yourself to share in those feelings (feel them too)
- Give a supportive response (say or do something that lets the other person know you share their feelings)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Can you think of time that you saw how someone was feeling and you said or did something that showed her/him that you cared?
- How do you think this person thought/felt about you showing empathy?
- How did you feel about yourself when you showed empathy?
- Why do you think that empathy is important?
- Who is the most empathic person you know? What does having empathy do for this person?

DEFINITIONS OF EMPATHY

DIRECTIONS: Listed below are several definitions of empathy. Circle the one that you like the most and then draw a picture below of yourself showing this to another person.

1. The ability to “put yourself in someone else’s shoes”
2. The ability to understand other people’s feelings even though your feelings are different
3. The ability to be sensitive to others’ feelings
4. The ability to experience other people’s feelings
5. The ability to show caring behaviors towards others

THIS IS ME SHOWING EMPATHY



WHAT EMPATHY LOOKS LIKE (AND DOESN'T LOOK LIKE!)

DIRECTIONS: Look at the children below. Decide which ones are considering other people's feelings and which ones are not. Write the names of the empathic people at the bottom of the page. Then write why you think they are showing empathy.



List the names of the people who are showing empathy and how they are doing it:

_____ :

_____ :

_____ :

EMPATHY GRADE CARD

DIRECTIONS: Put an X in a box to the right of each statement that best describes how well you do each one.

| | EXCELLENT | GOOD | SO-SO | POOR |
|--|-----------|------|-------|------|
| I ask people about their feelings | | | | |
| I can tell what other people are feeling by the look on their face. | | | | |
| I can tell what other people are feeling by the tone of their voice. | | | | |
| I try to help people feel better when I see that they are sad. | | | | |
| I congratulate others on their successes. | | | | |
| I can "put myself in someone else's shoes." | | | | |
| I like to do nice things for others. | | | | |
| I like to hear others' point of view. | | | | |