



the family values toolkit

For Children Ages 14 to 18

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:

Continue guiding your teen toward the mature form of empathy--seeing his own in another's good.

Adolescents are capable of great empathy and humanitarianism. Their self-involvement, however, can get in the way. Some teenagers are very concerned with people's feelings; others seem more worried about sports or academics or simply what to wear. Some want to cure social ills like poverty or injustice; others are solely concerned about their own circle of friends. But their self-absorption decreases as they reach the older end of the spectrum.

Because friends are still influential, teens are likely to want to address suffering collectively. Kids who belong to a religious group, for example, or who become involved in a community project can make remarkable progress in reaching mature levels of empathy. Parents should encourage these and other activities like the ones below.

Next, Take Action! Try These Activities:

- ✓ **Play "Emotional Charades."** *Materials: Strips of paper, pen, paper bag.* First, together, write down all the emotions you can think of. Cut the list into strips, one emotion per strip. Then take turns drawing strips out of a paper bag, and act out the feeling while others try to guess what it is. Afterward, ask everyone to tell about a time they experienced one of the emotions portrayed.
- ✓ **Volunteer together at a homeless shelter in your area.** Ask your child to talk to some of the people who are there, and discuss later what he or she learned from the homeless person.
- ✓ **Take your child to visit a sick friend or relative.** Talk to your child about how to speak empathetically to a person who is ill, and encourage him or her to pick out a book or inexpensive present that might make the person feel better.

Then, Report Back!

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

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