



the family values toolkit

For Children Ages 5 to 7

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:

Teach children to appreciate that there may be other reasons for feelings than those they directly witness.

In the early school years, children need rules in order to work well in groups. Kids may prefer to play with one best friend and may exclude other children from games because they have trouble relating to more than one playmate at a time. As their friendships deepen, children learn that the causes and cures of sad feelings can be complex. Subtle slights, such as sitting with someone else at lunch, can hurt a friend's feelings, and simple solutions (such as handing him or her a toy) no longer work.

Parents can help by suggesting that children put themselves in another's place when figuring out what might make the other child feel better. It also helps to explain the unseen reasons why a child or sibling might be upset. Here are some further actions to try with your kids.

Next, Take Action! Try These Activities:

- ✓ **Play "Take a Walk in My Shoes."** First, put everybody's shoes on the floor, and have each person try on another family member's shoes. Then, have each person make up a story about what "their" day was like from the perspective of the family member whose shoes they're in. How did they feel when something bad or good happened?
- ✓ **If you have more than one child, get in the habit of pointing out why a sibling feels happy, sad, angry, etc.**--for example, "Sam is sad because his soccer game was cancelled and he was really looking forward to it." This lets kids see that there are deeper reasons for feelings than those they directly witness.
- ✓ **Ask your kids to sacrifice something of their choosing**--desserts, allowance, a treasured toy--for a given period of time and talk about how they would feel if they always had to go without the item. This uses their imagination to apply current feelings to future situations.

Then, Report Back!

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