

The Importance of Empathy

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Jacob has a pet that he loves very much. Last week, his pet ran away and now Jacob is very sad. A sympathetic person would care about Jacob and would want Jacob to be happy. An empathetic person would not only care that Jacob is sad, but would be able to put himself in Jacob's shoes, and might feel sad with Jacob.

What is Empathy?

Sympathy, empathy, and compassion are similar concepts, but they are not interchangeable. Sympathy is caring about other people. Empathy goes beyond sympathy. It is the ability to experience the feelings of others. It usually occurs when a person has been through a similar situation. Compassion is a person's response to someone's difficulties. It is the action a person takes to help someone that he/she feels sympathy or empathy towards.

Psychologists have divided "empathy" into several different types. The three main kinds of empathy are:

- **Cognitive Empathy** – Cognitive empathy involves perspective. It is a person's ability to put him/herself in someone else's shoes and see a situation from that person's perspective.
- **Emotional Empathy** – Emotional empathy is when you feel the emotions that another person is experiencing.
- **Compassionate Empathy** – Compassionate empathy is when a person understands the difficulty that another person is facing and tries to help them solve the problem.

Why is Empathy Important?

Our ability to be sympathetic and/or empathetic is important because...

- **Empathy brings people closer together.** People are social creatures. We interact and communicate with other people every day. When we are better able to understand one another, we are more likely to treat each other with kindness, and more likely to enjoy one another's company.
- **Empathy enables us to cooperate and negotiate with others.** If we look at situations from other people's viewpoints, it makes it easier to resolve conflict and make decisions that everyone can agree to.
- **Empathy helps us to work together more effectively as a team.** Effective teamwork is dependent on our ability to communicate and understand one another.



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- **Empathy causes us to be more helpful.** When we are able to experience the feelings that others have, we tend to be more compassionate and want to help ease others' suffering.
- **Empathy can provide us with opportunities for learning.** As we look at situations from other people's viewpoints, we open ourselves up to other thoughts and ideas.

Research has suggested that empathetic people often have better relationships with other people. This can lead to a greater satisfaction with life in general. While it may not always be easy to empathize with others, if we practice looking at situations from another person's point of view, we can learn to be more empathetic towards others.

Resources:

"Empathy Vs Sympathy," accessed April 8, 2019, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/hide-and-peek/201505/empathy-vs-sympathy>

"What is Empathy?" accessed April 8, 2019, <https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/empathy.html>

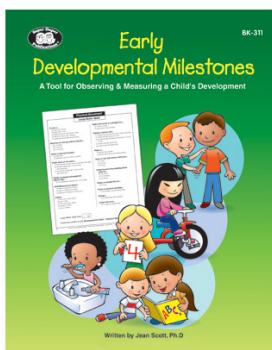
"Why Is Empathy So Important?" accessed April 8, 2019, <https://www.lifehack.org/402899/why-is-empathy-so-important>

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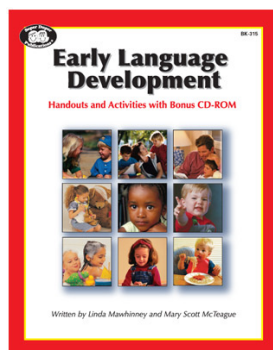
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