

The Kindness Curriculum Educators notes

Empathy

Empathy is the awareness and understanding of another person's thoughts, feelings, and circumstances. The ability to co-experience the feelings and thoughts of other people, is probably one of the most important skills a person may have. Understanding others' feelings and needs helps people maintain friendships, encourages tolerance and acceptance of others. Empathy promotes good mental health and wellbeing. Being empathetic assists people in building and maintaining strong and healthy relationships with their friends, family, co-workers, and community.

Helping people to develop a strong sense of empathy is beneficial because it promotes social harmony, reduces the likelihood of prejudice, lowers levels of stress and contributes to emotional and social growth. In an ever-changing and diverse world appreciating and being sensitive to others' experiences, backgrounds, and cultures is essential.

Empathy is a key attribute of kindness and makes a powerful contribution to a happy world. Empathy is the ability to step into the shoes of another person, aspiring to understand their feelings and perspectives, and to use that understanding and knowledge to guide a response. Understanding other people's emotions and perspectives is a key skill in day to day engagements in a range of contexts. Empathy can enable us to resolve conflicts, to build more productive teams, and to improve our relationships with friends, family and co-workers. Those with high levels of empathy are skilled at understanding a situation from another person's perspective and reacting with compassion.

In education the benefits of empathy include building inclusivity, optimism, positive classroom culture and community; and preparing students to be leaders. In the workplace empathy is becoming more important! Improving organisational culture starts by improving relations between the people making more authentic relationships. When people feel understood themselves, they're more receptive to others' concerns—and team cohesion and collaboration follow suit. Some signs associated with an empathetic person:

- They often think about and connect with how other people feel.
- They try to help others who are struggling.
- They care deeply about other people.
- They are good a good listener.
- They are highly intuitive.
- They notice non-verbal cues and body language.
- People often share with empathetic people their circumstances and problems.
- They are good at picking up on how other people are feeling.



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The ability to be compassionate, empathise and connect with others is critical to our lives, both personally and professionally. Demonstrating empathy – a key part of emotional intelligence – also improves human interactions in general and can lead to more effective communication and positive outcomes, in school, social, work and home settings. There are many benefits associated with compassion and self-compassion for children, students and adults in a range of contexts:

References

- Riess H. (2017). The Science of Empathy. Journal of patient experience, 4(2), 74–77. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2374373517699267>



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