

# COUNSELOR'S CORNER

# NEWSLETTER



## Empathy and Gratitude

### What is Empathy and Is It Teachable?

Empathy is not an inherent trait that you either have or don't, it is a skill that must be learned and practiced. It is connecting with the emotion someone is feeling, saying, "I've felt that way too", and simply sitting with them.

#### This learned skill:

- Reduces bullying behavior
- Strengthens communication skills
- Increases engagement
- Strengthens relationships
- Fuels connection

#### There are 4 Qualities of Empathy

- Perspective taking
- Staying out of judgment
- Recognizing emotion in other people
- Communicating that recognition



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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Ewvgu369Jw>



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There are so many things in the world that could be invisible to the material eye, and when you take a moment to stop, to pause, to be present and notice them—that's gratitude.

JAY SHETTY

### Practicing Empathy and Gratitude During the Holidays

- Model and Teach Gratitude to Your Children
- Volunteer Together
- Be Thankful
- Bake and Share
- Make Gifts for Others
- Writing/Sending Thank You Cards
- If you are religious, incorporate gratitude in prayer

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## Empathy and Gratitude

### FIVE PRACTICAL TIPS TO TEACH EMPATHY AND GRATITUDE TO YOUR CHILDREN

Written by Dr. Karyn Gordon

Most parents admit they want their children to be more empathic, compassionate and appreciative. Not only are these virtues cornerstones of Emotional Intelligence (EQ), but they are also critical for the development of other important skills such as conflict resolution, effective communication and leadership. So, how do parents teach these critical values to their children when we live in a culture of overindulgence? Here are five practical tips parents can use to build empathy and gratitude within their children.

**1. Fill their emotional bucket.** Research tells us that when a child feels that their parents understand their feelings, they are more likely to open up and share things. Modeling these virtues for your children will not only help them feel loved but will increase their sense of security and their trust with you. Ask yourself, the last time your child was upset, angry or hurt, how did you respond? Did you tell them to brush it off, or did you get defensive? Or did you try to see things from their perspective and empathize with how they were feeling?

**2. Try to understand.** Whether your child is upset with you or with a friend, take time to understand what they are going through. Try and use the phrase, "Can you help me understand how you are feeling?" The goal is to try and see things from your child's perspective. When children feel understood, they're more willing to listen to other people's point of view.

**3. Ask, don't tell.** A common mistake for parents to make when their child is upset is to tell them how they feel instead of asking them. Try and avoid statements like, "I know how you feel." Instead, ask your child, "How do you feel?" If they can't explain it, give them some options. For example, you can ask them, "Are you angry, sad or upset?" When children are given options, they are better equipped to articulate how they feel.

**4. Switch roles.** The next time you have a disagreement with your child, wait until you are both calm and then try to switch places and role-play with one another. This can be a powerful way to help people see things from another person's perspective. Remember there is no reality - only perception.

**5. Make gratitude part of your family culture.** When teaching gratitude to your children, remember to say, "Please" and "Thank you" at restaurants, to neighbors, to strangers and to each other. When families say thank you regularly, it creates a culture of appreciation. It makes others feel good, but also helps to build empathy and models desirable behavior in your children. Even children as young as two can be trained to say, "Thank you," after meals and reading stories.

For more information on empathy and gratitude and her book, *Dr. Karyn's Guide to the Teen Years*, visit [www.drkaryn.com](http://www.drkaryn.com).



Here are a few books to read to help promote empathy and compassion:

***Stone Soup*** by Jon J. Muth

How does sharing and giving change a community?

***Thank You, Omu!*** by Oge Mora

Can you think of three people you would like to write a thank you letter to?

Who are they, and what would you say? *If you have time, write those letters!*

***Have You Filled a Bucket Today?*** by Carol McCloud

How can you spot an empty bucket? What can you do to fill it up?

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Focusing on one thing that you are grateful for increases the energy of gratitude and rises the joy inside yourself.”

OPRAH WINFREY

**empathy** noun \ 'em-pe-thē\  
the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experiences fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner;

Merriam-Webster Dictionary