



Mountview Road School



Counselor's Corner: December 2020

Character Education Theme of the Month is: **CARING**



"Resolve to be tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, and tolerant of the weak and the wrong. Sometime in life you will have been all of these."

— George Washington Carver

Building Empathy in Children

1. Empathize with your child and model empathy for others. Children learn empathy both from watching us and from experiencing our empathy for them. When we empathize with our children they develop trusting, secure attachments with us. Those attachments are key to their wanting to adopt our values and to model our behavior, and therefore to building their empathy for others.

2. Make caring for others a priority and set high ethical expectations. If children are to value others' perspectives and show compassion for them, it's very important that they hear from their parents that caring about others is a top priority, and that it is just as important as their own happiness. Even though most parents say that raising caring children is a top priority, often children aren't hearing that message.

3. Provide opportunities for children to practice empathy. Children are born with the capacity for empathy, but it needs to be nurtured throughout their lives. Learning empathy is in certain respects like learning a language or a sport. It requires practice and guidance. Regularly considering other people's perspectives and circumstances helps make empathy a natural reflex and, through trial and error, helps children get better at tuning into others' feelings and perspectives.

4. Expand your child's circle of concern. For most of us, it's not hard to have empathy for our family members and close friends. It's also human nature to have empathy for people who are like us in some way. But the real issue is whether children (and adults) have empathy

outside that circle. As adults, it's important that we model appreciation for many types of people. It's important that we guide children in understanding and caring for many kinds of people who are different from them and who may be facing challenges very different from their own challenges.

5. Help children develop self-control and manage feelings effectively. Often when children don't express empathy it's not because they don't have it. It's because some feeling or image is blocking their empathy. Often the ability to care for others is overwhelmed, for example, by anger, shame, envy, or other negative feelings. Helping children manage these negative feelings as well as stereotypes and prejudices about others is often what "releases" their empathy.

For more in depth information and tips on how to encourage empathy at home, please visit the following link: <https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/resources-for-families/5-tips-cultivating-empathy>



Did you know: People who are in the habit of expressing gratitude are more likely to be helpful, generous, compassionate, and forgiving—and they're also more likely to be happy and healthy.

Important December Dates/Events!

- December 23: Early Dismissal
- December 24-January 01: Winter Recess

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