



Empathy

Definition

Empathy is the emotional and cognitive ability to perceive, understand, and share the feelings and perspectives of others. It involves not only recognizing another person's emotional state but also responding with care, compassion, or meaningful support. Empathy is distinct from sympathy—it requires a deeper connection and often leads to action or behavioral change. From an emotional perspective, empathy enables individuals to build interpersonal bridges and navigate relationships with greater understanding and respect.

How does it affect teenagers

During adolescence, empathy plays an important role in shaping moral reasoning, peer relationships, and identity development. Teens who practice empathy can better navigate social challenges like peer pressure, exclusion, or bullying. They become more attuned to others' experiences, which improves their communication skills and emotional intelligence. On the other side, a lack of empathy can manifest as indifference, cruelty, or insensitivity, often leading to interpersonal conflicts or social rejection. Empathic teens are more likely to engage in social behaviors, like helping, listening, or supporting classmates.





Empathy and social inclusion

Empathy is foundational for social inclusion. When teens understand and validate each other's experiences, especially those who are different or vulnerable, it reduces stereotypes, prejudice, and exclusion. A classroom rich in empathy creates psychological safety for students to be themselves without fear of ridicule. Lack of empathy contributes to bullying, marginalization, and the perpetuation of social divides. Teaching empathy equips students with tools to build inclusive communities where everyone feels seen, heard, and valued.



How to tackle it?

To build empathy in adolescents, it's essential to provide experiences that open their perspective. This includes using stories or real-life scenarios, encouraging active listening, and creating space for dialogue about feelings and differences. Role-playing and inclusive activities help students connect emotionally with others. Together, these practices nurture compassion and reduce social exclusion.





Warm up questions

- What does it mean to “put yourself in someone else’s shoes”?
- Can you tell when someone is sad or upset without them saying it?
- What do you usually do when a friend is feeling down?
- Is it easy or hard to care about someone else’s problems?



Questions for discussion

- How can empathy improve our community?
- Have you ever felt left out? What helped you feel better?
- How do you show empathy when someone is angry or different from you?
- Can empathy prevent social exclusion or bullying?

Find out more

- Brown, B., 2012. Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead. New York: Gotham Books. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet,
- Goleman, D., 2006. Social Intelligence: The New Science of Human Relationships. New York: Bantam Books.
- [Brené Brown – "The Power of Vulnerability"](#)





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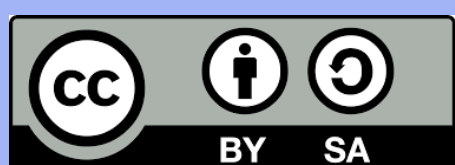
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