

Dear Family:

Our class has started learning about empathy. *Empathy* means identifying and understanding your own and others' feelings in order to get along better. Below is a list of skills your child will be learning at school, followed by examples of ways you can help your child remember and improve these skills.

Students will be practicing empathy skills by:

- Identifying their own and others' feelings through looking at faces, recognizing body clues, listening to voices, and watching what is happening. (Help your child practice by noticing, "You're smiling," and asking, "Are you happy? Why?")
- Recognizing that people may react differently to different situations. (Help your child practice by saying, "You like to play on the jungle gym, but it scares your friend. What can we do about that?")
- Predicting feelings. (Help your child practice by asking, "How do you think your friend might feel if she asked you a question and you didn't answer?")
- Learning the difference between accidents and things done on purpose. (Help your child practice by asking, "Do you think he meant to knock over your bike?")
- Sharing feelings. (Help your child practice by sharing your own feelings: "I feel happy when you offer to help set the table.")
- Understanding and accepting differences in others. (Help your child practice by saying, "It's okay for your friend to be different from you. You two are alike in some ways too. How?")

In general, simply listening and talking about feelings helps children be more understanding of others. It also helps create a more positive classroom environment.

Please contact me if you have any questions about empathy skills or the *Second Step* program.

Sincerely,

Ellen Reilly

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