



BRIGHT HORIZON ACADEMY

## Character Education

# All About Empathy

## Why Is It Important?

Developing empathy in children means providing a set of social skills that allow them to better understand themselves and others, in order to build relationships, be mindful of what others may be thinking and feeling, and then be ready to react to those feelings appropriately. It encourages sharing and understanding of others in a way that is perceived as more sincere and genuine. Empathetic children can also understand shyness and aggression better, as they seem to be more socially sensitive. Through empathy, they can better understand the reasons behind their own behaviors and the behaviors of others which leads to shaping more meaningful connections with others.

## Islamic Corner:

The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) encouraged us to feel empathy for each other.

Nu'man bin Bashir reported he said:

"The believers in their mutual kindness, compassion and sympathy are just like one body. When one of the limbs suffers, the whole body responds to it with wakefulness and fever."

[Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

Reference : Riyadh as-Salihin 224

## Practice It!

Use role play to help your child develop empathy for others.

You can blindfold your child to help them understand how a blind person may be feeling.

Put your child's arm in a sling or wrap to help them develop empathy for a friend with a broken arm. Or use the opportunity of fasting to show what it feels like for a person who doesn't have enough food to eat.

## Model It!

Children are astute observers and will notice how you treat others. Children learn empathy by watching your every move. As you treat others with respect and compassion, your child will do the same. Language choice is important. Be mindful of labeling and describing others in a way that is shaming and judgmental when you talk to your child. For example:

"She's having a hard time sharing her toys today" is more empathetic than "She's being selfish."

or

"Excluding friends from a conversation hurts their feelings" is more helpful than "That person is being mean."

## Talk About It!

Here are some points to help you talk about empathy with your child:

- What does it mean to be empathetic and why is it important?
  - Is it easy or difficult to have empathy for others?
- Tell me about a time when you were empathetic towards someone else
- Tell me about a time when someone else was empathetic towards you.