# Two-Minute Tips

## This Week's Topic: Empathy

Empathy is the ability to think about things from another's perspective, recognize emotion in others, and appropriately respond to others' emotions. Research shows empathy begins developing during childhood and continues through adolescence and into our early twenties. Empathy is an important skill because it helps us navigate social problem-solving, manage our own and others' emotions, and avoid unnecessary conflict. Developing empathy is important not only in the social realm; it supports overall happiness, as well as our academic and job performance.[1]

## Practice Tips

Here are a few quick tips to integrate empathy activities into your program.

### Help Participants See What They Have in Common

People have more empathy for others when they can relate to each other. Ask questions that highlight common experience.

Example: "What do you think the character in the book is feeling? Scared? When is a time you've felt scared?"

### Encourage Connection

Create a space where participants reflect on their own experiences, perspectives, community, and culture and encourage sharing with peers.

Example: "Turn to a partner and share a time when you've felt scared."

### Community Representation

People have less empathy when they have little to no contact with people from cultural groups that are not their own. Make sure your program is representative of the families and community it serves, but also representative of diverse communities outside your program.

Example: "Here are some recommended books that have diverse representation."

### Inclusive Climate

When your program is inclusive, respectful, and celebrates diversity it fosters empathy in participants.

Encourage sharing and make sure to integrate knowledge from your participants into how you deliver programming.

Example: "If the character was your friend, how could you help her feel less scared?"

The CASEL site has numerous activities you can use to develop empathy skills. Feel free to adapt them to best suit your participant's needs.

### Tips in Action!

Watch staff at Village Theatre lead an activity that promotes empathy with other participants and the characters that the participants will be playing.

### Want more two-minute tips?

Check out:
https://depts.washington.edu/cqel/expanded-learning-opportunities/

There you will find the latest tip, an archive of past tips, and a discussion board to connect with peers!

[1]Melbourne Child Psychology & School Psychology Services. (n.d.) *How to help teenagers develop empathy.* Port Melbourne, Australia:Child Psychology Services Pty Ltd. Retrieved from https://www.melbournechildpsychology.com.au/blog/help-teenagers-develop-empathy/