

Simply
THE BEST

BARKING ABBEY
PARENTAL NEWSLETTER 10

Parental involvement is consistently associated with pupils' success at school

Your Role Matters...

Put yourself in
THEIR
shoes



Every 2 weeks your child is introduced to a **BEST Learning Habit** at school, please ensure that you:

1. Explain what it means
2. **Show your child how to model the HABIT**
3. Offer plenty of examples of how other members of the family have modelled the HABIT

Newborn babies become distressed when they hear other infants cry, and they pay close attention to our emotional signals.

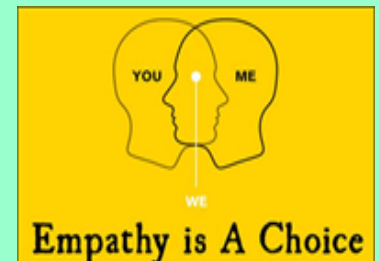
By 12 months, some babies attempt to soothe people who seem distressed or upset. Moreover toddlers show a remarkable degree of sophistication when they try to help us (Martin and Olson 2013).



Here is our fortnightly learning habit and some tips to guide you:

Empathy

Being able to put yourself in somebody else's shoes and appreciate how they are feeling.



Habits that you can develop:

Considering other people's points of view, thinking about others, understanding other people's situation.

Top Tips

Students

Discuss with your friends and family the complexities of their day.

Read a news story and write down the view points of the people involved.

Talk to someone who has different beliefs to you

Think of a time when someone was empathetic towards you
If you observe someone in distress (in real life, on TV, or in a book), think about how that person must feel.

Parents, how can you help at home?

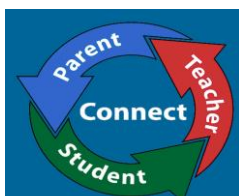
-Look together at news stories and discuss how people in different circumstances might be feeling.

-If you observe someone in distress (in real life/TV/ in a book), talk with your child about how that person must feel.

-Encourage your child to be conscious of what they have in common with others.

-Encourage your child to meet people from different backgrounds, and learn about what life is like in far off places.

-When your child is wrapped up in an emotion, ask them about it. Why are you sad? Why are you cross? Acknowledge their feelings; ask them why they feel the way they do.



The importance of empathy in changing bullying behaviours

Often people bully or unintentionally hurt others because they lack an ability to think about and understand the impact of their actions and words on others. Without empathy and respect for others, it is easy to act in ways that hurt other people. There are many ways your teenager can get what they need without having a negative impact on others, and it is important to help them learn the skills to do this.

How to help your teenager develop empathy

Developing empathy in teenagers is important as it teaches them to reflect, observe and think about their own behaviours. Help them to notice and name feelings and communicate them to others appropriately.

- **Talk often about feelings in life.** Talk about feelings in real-life situations, or examples on television.
- **Ask what they notice.** What do they believe people are feeling, based on their non-verbal communication - facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice? Labelling these feelings will help them think about and understand others.
- **Be a positive role model for connecting with people.** Give full attention to your child, and other people around you often. Turn off the TV or put down devices, and focus your full attention on the person you are with. Encourage your teenager to do the same when talking to you.
- **Help them understand the other person's point of view.** Ask them what they think the subject of their behaviours might be thinking, or how they might see the situation. Ask them what the other person might want to happen and why.
- **Encourage them to come up with ways everyone can get what they need.** Get them to come up with different and interesting ways they could go about it. Help them choose options that work best for everyone and put them into practice.
- **Ask them what they are trying to achieve when they are engaging in behaviours that could be bullying.** Try to work out what their underlying need is, and reflect this back to them.

Help them to problem-solve different situations, a couple of examples of how this could work:

Scenario 1: Your teenager comes home from school and starts telling you about their friend, Sadia, who has been grumpy lately.

You could respond with....

Option A: "Well, you sometimes behave like that too you know". (Hint: Teenager is likely to walk out of the room in a huff.)

Option B: "Well, just leave her alone for a while, she'll get over it." (Hint: Attempting to solve the problem for the teenager is not the response they are looking for. It does not teach them anything and it tells them you are not interested in listening to the full story.)

Option C: ASK QUESTIONS. "Okay, tell me how Sadia has been behaving", "What do you think has been going on with her recently?", "What could make her behave this way?", "Do you think there's anything we can do to help?", "If you were Sadia, what would you like others to do?" (Hint: This option helps your teenager put themselves in Sadia's shoes (cognitive empathy) and think about the best way to respond (affective empathy).)

Scenario 2: Your teenager is refusing to come to their grandmother's birthday party on Saturday night because they want to go to a friend's gathering instead.

You could respond with....

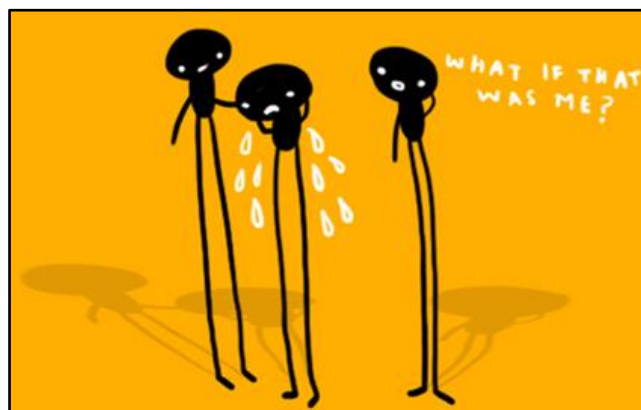
Option A: "Well, you're being really selfish. You have to come and that's just tough luck". (Hint: Teenager is likely to attend the event but spend the whole time sulking and checking their phone.)

Option B: "Fine, don't come. But just remember that your grandmother won't be around forever." (Hint: Your teenager might consider grandma's feelings for a moment but quickly forget and enjoy a lovely Saturday night with their friends. They may feel guilty enough to come but will continue to resent you for making them feel that way.)

Option C: ASK QUESTIONS. "Okay, tell me why it's so important that you go to this gathering?", "What do you think your night will be like if you come to grandma's party?", "What do you think she would like to do/have for her party?", "Do you think she minds if you don't come?", "If you can't come, what do you think you could do to make sure grandma still knows you care about her?" (Hint: Your teenager may or may not end up coming. If they don't come, they should be strongly encouraged to call Grandma themselves to explain.)

Of course, these conversations don't always go as planned. You may get a lot of "dunno" and "whatever" in response to your questions. Pick and choose your moments to have these chats and try your hardest to make your tone of voice sound curious and neutral. One thing teenagers seem good at is picking up on tone of voice. If they suspect that you have an agenda when trying to have a conversation with them, you are not likely to get very far.

Above all, try to remember what it was like when you were a teenager. You probably found it hard to show compassion and understanding towards others as well.



Empathy is not sympathy, nor is it feeling sorry for others. Instead, it is understanding what others are feeling or thinking.