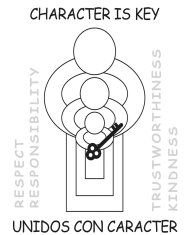


BUILDING EMPATHY



Empathy is being able to understand and acknowledge another’s feelings and needs. The first step to building empathy is being able to put yourself in someone else’s shoes and feel what that person is feeling. Before children can identify with the feelings of another person they need to first **learn about feelings in general and their own feelings in particular**. Only then are children able to **predict the feelings of others**.

What can parents do?

1. Help your child learn about many different feelings like surprised, proud, jealous, and nervous. Reading and discussing books is a great way to do this.
2. Teach your child how to identify and understand their own feelings by asking them guiding questions.
 - ◆ How are you feeling?
 - ◆ How do you know you are feeling this way? What signs on your body tell you that you are feeling this way?
 - ◆ How does your body feel on the inside when you have this feeling? (rapid heartbeat, face feels hot, shoulders feel tight, etc.)
 - ◆ What happened to make you feel this way?
 - ◆ What do you like to do when you have this feeling?
 - ◆ What do you like others to do when you are feeling this way?
3. Teach your child how to read and predict the feelings of others.
 - ◆ Listen to others’ words and voices/tones and look at faces, body language, and what is going on around them. Encourage your child to be a feelings detective.
 - ◆ Think about how they would feel in similar situations. This is what we commonly refer to as putting oneself in the shoes of another.
 - ◆ Recognize that people feel differently in similar situations and that feelings may change. We need to understand different feelings in others.



Empathy and RESPONSIBILITY: Just as children have a personal responsibility to take care of their belongings, they have a social responsibility to show empathy toward others. Responsible people think before they act and consider the feelings of others. They also consider consequences and how their actions will help or hurt others.