



The Ultimate Character Development System

**Building a Successful Future
One Student at a Time!!!**



JANUARY 2010 - EMPATHY

Empathy means, "I can imagine how you feel!"

**Empathy means reading, understanding, "feeling"
and responding to other people's feelings.**

EMPATHY: JANUARY 2010

Dear Family,

This month we will focus on the character concept, “empathy.” Therefore, our power-chat discussions and activities will aim to help children understand what empathy means and how we can understand, become sensitive to, and effectively “take a walk in someone else’s shoes” when interacting with others in various areas of our lives.

Starting the year off with a word like “empathy” rather than “goal-setting” is often met with surprise. We assure you it is with good reason that it is placed in the beginning of 2010. While it is imperative that we set goals for ourselves, it is also vital that we incorporate the feelings and needs of others into our resolutions for 2010. Therefore, empathy, the first step of violence prevention and positive social interactions, seems like a perfect starting point. We will follow up empathy with two more such concepts, self control and anger management in February and March, respectively.

Empathy is one’s ability to “take a walk in someone else’s shoes.” Those who have solid empathy skills frequently respond to those around them. Empathy is also a crucial social skill as it allows people to problem solve together as well as make and retain friends. Without the ability to determine the emotions and take the perspective of others, children may choose to act in ways that are wholly self-serving.

While the ability to empathize with others improves with age, new research suggests that empathy starts “on day one” as we see that “a baby cries because it hears another baby cry,” according to Dr. Frans de Waal (WSJ, 9/09). We are “programmed” to empathize. As children get older, they more consciously recognize emotions and causes of emotions. They get better at inferring other people’s feelings. While society tends to emphasize empathy skills for girls more than boys, all humans need empathy to nurture relationships.

The definitions of empathy are as follows:

Young children: “I can imagine how you feel!”

Older children, Teens and Adults: Reading, understanding, “feeling” and responding to other people’s feelings.

During the four weeks of January we will be discussing the following:

- (1) Week 1: What is empathy? How we can read and understand feelings.
- (2) Week 2: What are we feeling? Predicting and communicating emotions.
- (3) Week 3: What’s my impact? Understanding how our actions can affect others.
- (4) Week 4: How can I show you matter? Listening, expressing concern, and putting it all together

Upcoming Powerful Words

February: Self Control

March: Anger Management

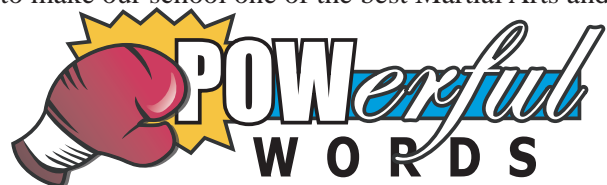
April: Manners

As always, one of the best ways to reinforce Powerful Words is by modeling strength of character ourselves. Demonstrate listening skills, good communication about feelings, and naming emotions around your children.

We thank you for your support. You are pivotal in helping to make our school one of the best Martial Arts and personal development centers in the world.

Best Regards,
Your Motivated and Dedicated Martial Arts Teachers

For More Powerful Parenting Information, go to www.DrRobynsBlog.com



DEAR *Dr. Robyn*

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JANUARY 2010: EMPATHY

(Paraphrased from an internet discussion; with permission)

Hi Dr. Robyn!

My son (10 years old) is a very sensitive, very smart boy. The problem is that when the teacher or myself complain about something he starts crying, and that makes the situation worse. What can I do?

--Julia K, New Brunswick, NJ

Dear Julia,

Your son is clearly a very empathetic boy. And that's a good thing-- a gift--even if sometimes it seems like a major challenge. High sensitivity, something that research shows to be innate in some children, allows children to respond in a heightened way to those around them.

As frustrating as it can be to see, seeing your child cry at the "drop of a hat," imagine if he was completely insensitive and mean? While a very sensitive, empathetic child can present some challenges, it is much easier to help him cope than to build on something that isn't there to begin with in the first place. So first, take a breath.

Here are some ways to help your very empathetic, very sensitive child:

(1) ***Don't shame or trivialize:*** So many children become closed off when we don't validate their feelings. By telling them that they are being "silly," we cut them off and don't allow them to learn productive ways to cope.

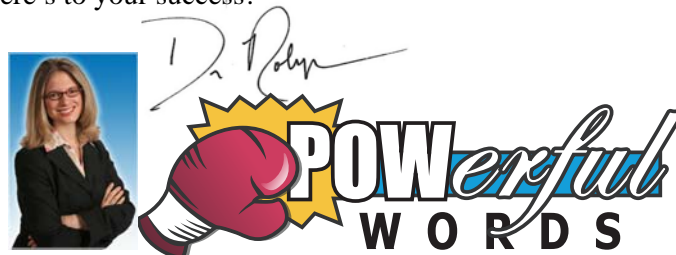
(2) ***Accept your child as he is:*** I often tell people, you can't change anyone else's behavior but your own. This case is no exception. The adjustment must be made on our end which in turn, will influence his actions. Make sure he knows that you love and accept him for who he is even though he doesn't conform to the typical expected or accepted societal standards.

(3) ***Catch him being strong and empathetic:*** When he shows that he can be empathetic in a constructive way, such as saying, "I feel sad when you're sad; how can I help?" praise him for making a good, constructive choice. Looking for strengths within the parameters of empathy will teach him how to channel his gift for good.

(4) ***Don't go to extremes:*** Putting your highly sensitive child in situations that you know will stress him out immediately is not a way to make progress. At the same time, coddling him and putting him in a bubble isn't the answer either. Ask yourself; what situations can I put him in that will challenge without overwhelming? So, if he gets stressed in large groups, consider more one-on-one activities in order for him to get his footing, and then, expand.

(5) Teach your child to first take a powerful S.T.E.P.: When faced with choices, teach your child to take a few seconds before he acts. I like to teach a process that I call. S.T.E.P. which means, "Stop, Think, Evaluate, and Proceed." Children learn to take a moment to think through their choice and how it will affect others before acting. What can I do to help? When they consider how their actions will affect others, they're using empathy skills rather than simply showing sensitivity.

Here's to your success!



How am I feeling?

Decide how you think these children are feeling. Then, circle the best answer.



Andy was not invited to Jenna's birthday. How do you think he's feeling?

- (1) Scared
- (2) Happy
- (3) Sad

Ashlyn is going to lunch with her Grandma. How do you think she's feeling?

- (1) Surprised
- (2) Disgusted
- (3) Happy



Sarah can't find her dog, Mosley. How do you think she's feeling?

- (1) Excited
- (2) Scared
- (3) Angry

Mara heard that her Uncle, who lives far away, is coming for a visit. How do you think she is feeling?

- (1) Surprised
- (2) Sad
- (3) Angry



Dane's mother asked him to clean up. He doesn't want to do it. How do you think he's feeling?

- (1) Happy
- (2) Angry
- (3) Scared

Have can you help someone in 2010? Let's set a goal-- tell us one way that you can try to put a smile on someone's face this year!

Send your name and answer to this question to drrobynsblog@gmail.com for a chance to be published on the powerful parenting blog! Please get your parents' permission first!

Take a walk in someone else's shoes!

Read the questions and answer them with your best answer.

(1) Emma and her two friends, Rosie and Felicia, are all in the same class. When the teacher asks people to get into pairs, Rosie and Felicia choose one another. Put yourself in Emma's shoes. How do you think she is feeling? _____

If you were her friend, how might you help her to feel better? _____

(2) Everytime Mike starts playing with a ball during recess, another boy, Ian, takes it away and laughs. Ian thinks it's funny but Mike never laughs with him. Put yourself in Mike's shoes. How do you think Mike is feeling? _____

If this happened to you, what would you do? _____

(3) Molly just moved into the area and she doesn't know anyone. You see her in class and you notice that she keeps looking around with wide eyes. Put yourself in Molly's shoes. How do you think she is feeling? _____

As a leader, how could you help Molly feel better? _____

Name one of your goals for 2010 that will help others as well as yourself. How does it show empathy? _____

Can you find any of our feeling words in here? Circle them!

Look across, down, backwards, forwards and diagonally!



A	F	G	F	E	A	S	C	A	R	E	D	H	A	T	Y	S	D	R	W	Q
N	R	G	I	R	L	A	D	P	V	W	M	I	I	Q	U	I	X	F	W	H
G	W	I	S	I	Z	D	K	H	J	M	N	I	D	R	B	R	O	L	M	U
R	R	E	F	V	C	N	P	A	A	L	M	O	G	E	L	Q	S	A	E	R
Y	D	E	S	I	R	P	R	U	S	P	W	J	I	L	H	K	O	P	M	T
F	R	R	T	E	F	D	Y	T	C	T	P	D	I	S	G	U	S	T	E	D
S	H	Y	R	T	I	R	E	D	F	U	Y	Y	P	Y	Y	O	R	O	B	J

Goal Setting...with others in mind

"You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view... Until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it." --Atticus Finch in Harper Lee's To Kill A Mockingbird

Goal setting is all about ourselves. Yet, as leaders, it's important to think about others, not just ourselves, as we begin 2010. It's those leaders who think of people other than themselves who truly make a difference.

Name one of your goals that demonstrates your empathy for others: _____

How does this demonstrate empathy? _____

What's your plan?

Your deadline: _____

Goals tend to work best when you have someone to whom you can be accountable. Who will be your accountability partner-- the person who knows your plan and your deadline and can help keep you on track. You will that be? _____

What made you decide to set this goal?

What hurdles do you anticipate?

How can you overcome them? Any plans in place?

How will you celebrate once the goal is achieved? _____
