

## Wellness Works: this month is EMPATHY

Hello parents, guardians and families!

This month we are exploring the theme of EMPATHY with students as a part of their mental health skill building. Empathy is about being able to consider what someone else may be going through and imagining how they might be feeling or thinking. It is about walking in another person's shoes - about listening to another perspective non-judgmentally. It's about voicing our understanding of their emotions and validating them. It's about recognizing the humanity of others and challenging ourselves to be present. Empathy is often the first step towards compassionate action and helping others.

Empathy is important because with empathy we:

- Are more likely to treat people the way they wish you would treat them
- Are better able to understand the needs of people around you
- Are able to more clearly understand the perception you create in others with **your** words and actions
- Are able to better understand other people's needs

Here are some activities you can do at home to reflect and build on EMPATHY:

- Help younger children understand how to recognize emotions so they are better able to understand how others may be feeling. You can draw "feeling faces" or take pictures of family members with different feeling faces. Or take turns role-playing different emotions (what would you look like if someone knocked down your Lego? Found a puppy? Etc.)
- You can take turns coming up with situations or scenarios and have each family member share how that would make them feel. It's important for all of us to remember that how we may feel is not always how other's feel
- Encourage your child/ren to consider how other's may experience certain situations. For instance, if they came home excited about a presentation, they really felt good about - celebrate with them and then ask them to consider how the student who didn't present so well may be feeling. Or how the "new" student in the class may feel? Help your child understand that people have specific and unique identities, and these identities mean that different things are available to them, they have different experiences in the world, different interests, and different struggles.
- Help your child understand that different people have different things available to them, different experiences in the world, different interests and different struggles.
- If you are reading to your child, stop and ask how different characters may be feeling in the story. How do the character's different behaviours and choices tell us information about how they may be feeling?
- Designate a wall to share ideas/thoughts/pictures about empathy as a family and reflect on it together

Jenny Marino, Mental Health and Addictions Lead, in collaboration with the Wellness Works Team at UGDSB.