

# CAPACITY BUILDING OF FAMILIES HAVING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

SERIES-4

## EMPATHY DEVELOPMENT



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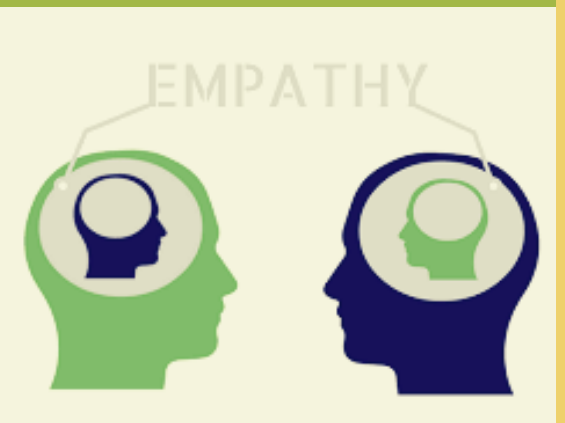
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# EMPATHY DEVELOPMENT OF FAMILIES HAVING PWDS

COVID-19 pandemic is making us to aware of the fact that “We are all one”, in spite of the richness in diversity across gender, race, religion, region, ethnicity and socio-economic status. COVID-19 lockdown leads to sweeping changes and disruptions in every aspect of the daily life of everyone especially PWDs and their families. These changes may make them feel overwhelmed by our own anxiety. So, it is important to practice empathy not only for the welfare of PwDs but for their family members as well.

## What empathy is?

Empathy is the ability to understand others state of mind or in others words; it is the capacity to recognize the emotion or feelings from their point of view. It is often characterized as “the ability to put oneself into another’s shoes”.



**Psychologists Daniel Goleman and Paul Ekman categorized empathy into three categories:**

- 1. Cognitive empathy:** It is the ability to understand the thoughts and feelings of others. It helps us to communicate better and relay information in a way that best reaches the other person.
- 2. Emotional empathy:** It is the ability to share the feelings of another person and helps us to build emotional connections with others.
- 3. Compassionate empathy:** helps us to take action to help others. It goes beyond simply understanding others and sharing their feelings.

# Empathy vs. Sympathy

Empathy and sympathy is still confusing for many people. Empathy helps us to understand how it would feel to walk a mile in someone else's shoes. Sympathy is simply a feeling of pity or compassion when someone else suffers. Sympathy is good, but empathy is more all-encompassing. Without empathy, it would be extremely difficult to maintain a healthy relationship with others.



## WAYS TO BUILD EMPATHY

There are plenty of ways that we can do to cultivate our own empathy skills. It is an emotional skill that can be learned. Listening to others, engaging in acts of service, observing the actions of others, and imagining yourself in another person's situation are all some of the strategies that can help us to build empathy. Some of them are given below:

### 1. STAY CONNECTED

During this pandemic time, people around the world are practising social distancing, self-isolation, and quarantine, it may lead to loneliness. etc., caring others are one of the best ways to fight feelings of isolation or loneliness. While keeping your physical distance from others to prevent the spread of the virus, it doesn't mean you need to be emotionally distant. Show concern and stay connected to your loved ones.

### Benefits of practising empathy during pandemic

1. Empathizing others helps us to feel less lonely and more connected.
2. It increases the tendency to help others when they are needed.
3. It boosts social connectedness
4. Empathizing others improves the ability to regulate emotions during times of stress.
5. Empathy helps u to manage the anxiety better.

### 2. BE AWARE

Be aware of how the pandemic has affected your life and think about how others will answer for the same depending on their situation and circumstances. Many people have no choice but to continue working from home, many people lost their jobs and are out of work. Many people are worried about how they are going to pay for basic necessities.

Empathy is a critical part of compassion and, more importantly, action. Think about others and look for the possible ways that you can help.

## HELP OTHERS

Helping others will provide a sense of control and empowerment. The present situation of the world is unpredictable and chaotic, finding tangible ways to do well and make things better for someone else is the source of comfort.

- If you are financially wealthy and can stay home safely, then look for ways that how you can support others who are struggling.
- Try to help your neighbours who may not be able to leave home to get the things that they need.
- Donate non-perishable goods to food pantries.

## BE CONSIDERATE

At times we may criticize others quickly without making the effort to understand their situations. It is easy to lob criticism at others in the time of crisis, particularly those who don't take the situation seriously. Remember that everyone copes differently.

Sometimes we cannot control others behave, but we can control our own actions by considering their situation.

## BE KIND

Managing kids is a struggle for the parents/family of disabilities and working parents while they are at some other work. They may become angry, anxious and may lose kindness. It's ok if your kids are watching a little too much TV or you couldn't keep up on your usual routines. Be kind to yourself and others to cope up with stress or anxiety. Practice self-compassion.

# Helping the child with special needs to develop empathy

Expectation of every parent is to see their children grow up to be as happy, successful, and productive as possible. But even more important to most of the parent is to see their kids including those with special needs is to develop empathy for others. Empathy is what helps children understand and recognizes the feelings of other people.

## **COURAGE**

Children who possess empathy also find more courage. They are able to do things like stand up for children who are being picked on.

## **HAPPINESS**

Empathetic people are able to form a stronger interpersonal relationship.

## **PROBLEM-SOLVING**

Empathy improves better problem-solving skill and allows better cognitive collaboration in order to help others.

## **CREATIVITY**

Fascinating studies have identified empathy as an essential part of creativity.

# INSTILLING EMPATHY

Empathy is so important, how can we instil empathy in our children? Whether your child has special needs or is more typically developing. Here are a few simple ideas to encourage empathy.

## 1. Talk about feelings

Encourage your child to step back from he/she is feeling to consider how the other person feels when conflicts arise between friends or family members. Help your child to understand the “golden rule” of treating others in the way he/she wants to be treated.

## 2. Read together:

Reading stories together promotes the feelings of empathy towards characters in the book. Through books, kids essentially learn to see the world with empathy.

## 3. Make face-time a priority:

Components of emotional literacy, like empathy, can be developed and enhanced in part by the interpretation of facial expressions, tone of voice, and other things that can only get through real, human interaction.

As a parent, you can help your child to develop a healthy ability to empathize with others. Even children with special needs can learn and empathize others to some extent. Empathy helps to strengthen relationships, enhance learning, and improve their overall quality of life.

# Reference

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STAY SAFE :-)***

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