

## Wellness Articles

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If you would like to be added to the distribution list for these articles, please email: [Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca](mailto:Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca). You will receive a monthly email containing articles for the upcoming four weeks.

An archive of past wellness articles is available at <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/9966.asp>

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## Help your child develop empathy

Empathy is the ability to recognize and understand what someone else might think and feel, and be able to respond in a caring way. Empathy is important because it helps us build close and caring relationships with other people.

One of the best ways you can teach your child empathy is by modelling it. To model empathy:

- Be kind and thoughtful toward others. Hold open doors, say hello, and say please and thank you when dealing with others.
- Be present. Stop what you are doing – looking at your phone, for instance – and focus on your child.
- Go to your child's level. Kneel or sit next to them, shoulder to shoulder, on the couch.
- Look at the expression on your child's face and their body language, to get a sense of what they're feeling.
- Help your child name their feelings.
- Use your own body language to communicate with your child. Try nodding when you're listening or agreeing with your child. Smile when they're talking about a happy event.
- Ask your child what would help them feel better and comfort them.
- Use empathy to guide helping and giving. Before helping someone or getting them a gift, ask your child to think about what they know about the person and what they think the person might need or like.

More tips to encourage empathy in your child:



- Guide your child. Help your child learn to consider what other children are feeling. For example, “Your brother feels sad because you took his toy truck. Please give it back. You can play with this toy when it’s your turn.”
- Notice kind acts. When your child shows kindness, comment on it. For example, “You gave your sister a toy when she was sad. That was a nice thing to do.”
- Show empathy to others. Help your child learn to show care for all people. Be friendly, hold doors open, and ask questions about the well-being of others.

If you and your family are looking for empathy, wellness and mental health support, please reach out. Talk with your family doctor or healthcare professionals in your area. You may also wish to call the free Mental Health Helpline 1-877-303-2642 or visit [www.ahs.ca/helpintoughtimes](http://www.ahs.ca/helpintoughtimes).