

# Milwaukee County Birth to 3 Program



## Nurturing Your Child's Empathy

Empathy is the ability to recognize the feelings of others and to react with care and kindness. It is an important skill for your toddler to learn.

Here are some ways you can help your child's empathy grow!

1. Ask your child to notice when one of their peers or siblings is sad or hurt, and ask him or her why they think that is the case. Ask them to think of ways they could make that person feel better. Helping your toddler recognize and respond to pain and sadness with caring and kindness will help them understand the feelings of those around them.
2. Help your toddler recognize feelings. Make faces into a mirror or using felt on a board and ask your toddler what he or she thinks the depicted emotion is.
3. Talk about feelings as you play with your toddler. Let's say, for example, that a toy horse doesn't want to share with a toy elephant. Ask your child what he or she thinks the elephant might be feeling. Then ask what they might say to that silly horse.
4. Model empathetic behavior. By verbally and nonverbally tending to your child's feelings and the feelings of others around you, you'll show your toddler how to respond to others with empathy.
5. Together, do a project for the larger community. Collect coins for a local animal shelter, make blankets for a blanket drive, or donate food to your local food pantry. Teaching your toddler to care about causes and people in the larger world around them will help them recognize the needs of the broader community.

Remember to be patient with your toddler as they are learning how to build empathy. It involves complex skills that take time to learn. By helping your toddler recognize feelings, demonstrating how they can respond to others with kindness, and modelling these behaviors yourself, you'll be helping your toddler grow into an empathetic, caring person.