



# Quality ChildCare

For Registered Home-Based Providers

LEARNING TO GROW ★ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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## 10 Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

- ★ Build trusting relationships
- ★ Provide consistent care
- ★ Support children's health
- ★ Provide a safe environment
- ★ **Provide positive guidance**
- ★ Provide a language-rich environment
- ★ Foster curiosity and development through play
- ★ Individualize care and learning activities
- ★ Partner with parents
- ★ Pursue personal and professional growth

## This Month's Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

Provide Positive Guidance

### Why Empathy Matters

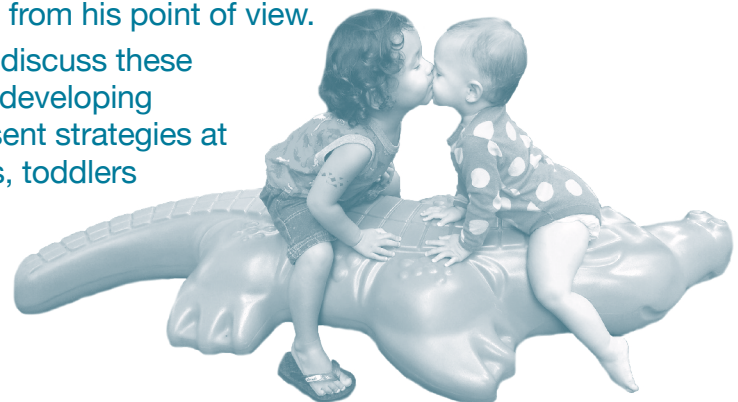
We all want the children we care for to grow up to be happy, healthy, well-adjusted adults. According to recent research, *empathy* plays a big role in affecting children's future health, authentic happiness, relationship satisfaction, and ability to bounce back from adversity. Studies have shown that children who are empathetic are better adjusted emotionally, well-liked, more compassionate, physically healthier and score higher academically than those without empathy.

**Empathy** is defined by *Zero to Three* as "the ability to imagine how someone else is feeling in a particular situation and respond with care." According to educational psychologist Dr. Michelle Borba, "In today's world, empathy equals success...the Empathy Advantage will give our children the edge they need to live meaningful, productive, and happy lives and thrive in a complex new world." In addition, according to Mary Gordon, founder and president of *Roots of Empathy*, empathy is a key ingredient to ending the bullying epidemic that we face in our world today.

So how do we go about raising children who are empathetic?

- **Infants** - establish a secure, strong, loving relationship with baby and respond to his needs with care.
- **Toddlers** - teach *emotional literacy* — the ability to identify, understand and express emotions.
- **Preschoolers** – develop *perspective taking* skill, the ability to put oneself in another person's position and imagine what the other person may be feeling and thinking from his point of view.

This newsletter will discuss these foundational pieces to developing **empathy**, and will present strategies at each age level—infants, toddlers and preschoolers.



## Infants

The seeds of empathy are planted in infancy by how adults relate to and respond to babies. By lovingly responding to the baby's emotional needs, he learns that he can count on you and trust you, and a bond is formed. When a child feels accepted and understood by the adults in his life, he learns how to accept and understand others as he grows.

An infant uses his care providers as a gauge as he learns about emotions. Around six months of age, babies use something called “social referencing” — a baby will start to look to a parent or other care provider to assess his or her reaction to a person or situation. Your angry or sad face will affect how he reacts. For example, if you respond warmly to a visitor, baby will be reassured that the visitor is good and safe. The opposite is true if the care provider responds with distress. This is why parents are encouraged to be upbeat and reassuring – not anxiously hover – when saying good-bye to their child when left with a care provider. It sends baby the message that “this is a good place” and “you will be okay.”

Here are some strategies for establishing a secure, strong, loving relationship with infants:

- Smile, laugh, talk, sing and read together every day.
- Play face-to-face games, like peek-a-boo, with baby. Keep your face about 8-18 inches from baby's face.



- Provide *responsive care* – match your caregiving to what baby needs. For example, if a 9-month old starts kicking and grabbing at the spoon while you are feeding him to show he wants to hold the spoon, you give him the baby spoon to hold in his hands while you continue to feed him with another spoon.
- Pay attention to baby's emotional expressions and respond to them. For example, *“Maddie, you are crying. You must be hungry. Let's warm a bottle. It is hard to wait.”*

## Toddlers

During the toddler years, children start to gain the awareness that they are individuals and that others may have beliefs, desires, and feelings that differ from their own. Once children reach this level of self-awareness, they experience more complex emotions like embarrassment, frustration, and disappointment.

Teaching children emotional literacy by helping them learn the words for various emotions is important because, over time, it gives them the ability to talk about their feelings instead of acting them out through tantrums. Help toddlers make sense of their feelings by using words to describe emotions, for example, *“You are feeling sad and upset that Brianna got the cupcake with the butterfly on it. I know that's hard, but now you can choose the blue or pink cupcake.”*

Here are some additional strategies to help toddlers identify emotions:

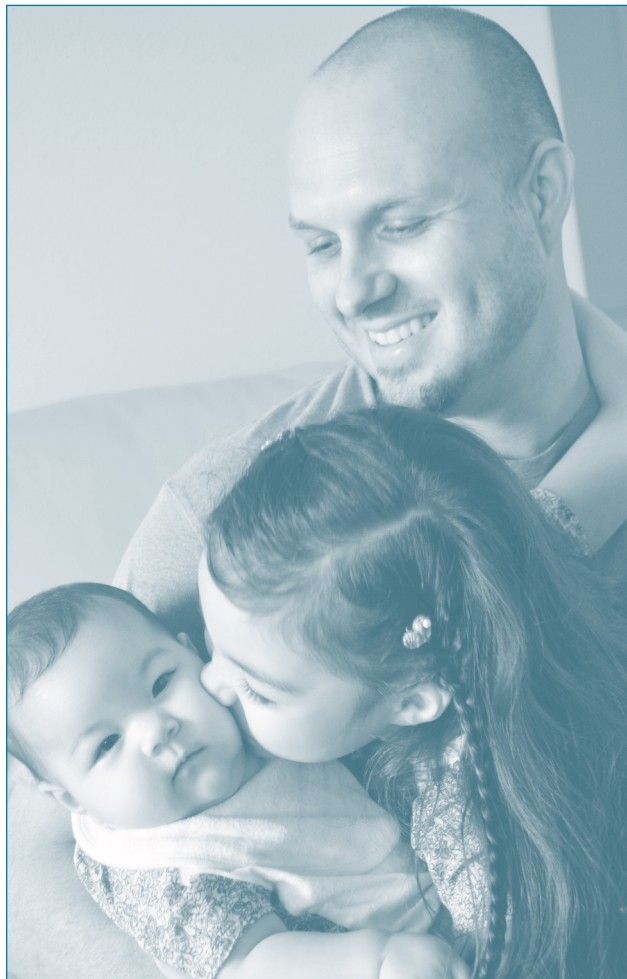
- Talk about the feelings of others. For example say, *“Noah is feeling sad because you took the ball he was playing with. Please give Noah back that ball and then you choose another one to play with.”*
- Play games to help children identify emotions, such as the feelings face matching game included in this packet. By playing this game, children learn to identify emotions by tuning in to faces. This fun game not only promotes dialogue around the identification of feelings; it also promotes math skills such as matching.



# Preschoolers

Preschoolers may soon exhibit the skill of *perspective taking*. Perspective taking builds upon emotional literacy, as it requires us to put ourselves in another person's position and imagine what the other person may be feeling and thinking from his point of view. This is important because when we are able to imagine a situation from someone else's perspective, we gain a better understanding of their motives, and if applicable –we are able to change our own behavior so we don't offend them.

At this stage, children still often confuse their own perspective with others. For example, the preschooler may think that giving his favorite toy to another child who is crying would cheer her up since that cheers him up. With experience, he will gain the ability to understand that other people may have perspectives that differ from his own.



Here are some strategies to nurture perspective taking, in preschoolers:

- Share with the children an emotional experience you've had, such as a time your dog was lost. Include details such as how that made you and others feel. For example, *"I cried and cried, but my friend Jan didn't feel as sad as I did because it wasn't her dog."*
- Read books and talk about the characters in the story. Ask questions such as, *"How is the character feeling?" "How do you know he/she is feeling that way?" "What did the character do when he/she felt \_\_\_\_?"*
- Help the children problem-solve situations to make someone feel better. Give them ideas like going to get an ice pack, helping another child up off the ground, or finding something fun for the child to do.
- Engage preschoolers often in conversations about an infant in your family child care -- talk about why the infant may be crying, and what can be done to comfort the baby. According to Mary Gordon, *Roots of Empathy* founder, when children are given opportunities to observe and discuss an infant's development and emotions, it fosters empathy within children.



## Reflection Sheet, Award Book, and Training Certificates

- Providers who fill out the caregiver's reflection sheet and return it by the posted deadline to the Learning to Grow Program are *guaranteed* a children's book in return. A postage-paid envelop is provided.
- Providers who thoughtfully complete the reflection sheet **question #5** can be awarded a certificate indicating one hour of training completed. Training hours will align with the topic areas required to meet DHS requirements.
- Reflection sheets do not need to be returned by the due date in order to earn the certificate. However, the supply of award books is limited and after the due date, award books will be sent only as available.
- Indicate on Question #8 if you would like to receive free technical assistance or support related to a child care issue.

### Citations:

Borba, Michele. (2016). *Unselfie: Why Empathetic Kids Succeed in Our All-About-Me World*. New York: Touchstone. [www.micheleborba.com](http://www.micheleborba.com)

Gordon, Mary. (2009). *Roots of Empathy: Changing the World Child by Child*. New York: The Experiment, LLC. [www.rootsofempathy.org](http://www.rootsofempathy.org)

Zero to Three Parenting Resources. (Feb. 1, 2016). *How to Help Your Child Develop Empathy*. Retrieved from <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/5-how-to-help-your-child-develop-empathy>



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