

Show Empathy (Elementary)

Have you ever had a disagreement with your friend, and you couldn't understand why they were mad at you? Do you have a hard time understanding how others feel, especially if they feel different than you? When it's hard to understand another person's ideas or feelings, use the strategy **show empathy** to help you. **Showing empathy** means that you stop and think about how someone else may feel. You might even think about a time when you were in a similar situation and how you felt. We are showing the other person that we respect them when we try to understand how they feel.

You can use clues from their facial expressions and body language. You can also ask the other person questions about how they are feeling. And then you can say something to communicate that you have thought about their ideas or feelings, like "It seems like you might be feeling ... "

I used the strategy **show empathy** to help me understand why my friend Ana didn't want to be in the school play. Earlier in the year, we had talked about how fun it would be to dress up in costumes and perform in front of our friends, but when the teacher said we would have to try out for the play by reading a few lines, Ana didn't want to do it anymore. Her face looked disappointed, and her shoulders were sagging. I asked her, "Why have you changed your mind about being in the play?" After a few minutes, she explained to me that she was struggling with reading. She was afraid she wouldn't be able to read the lines during tryouts.

I thought about how Ana was feeling. To **show empathy**, I said, "It sounds like you still want to try out for the play but you don't want to read the lines without practicing first." We were able to get a copy of the lines before tryouts so she could practice reading them ahead of time.

The next time you don't understand how someone is feeling, use clues from their facial expressions and body language. Ask questions to help understand their thoughts or feelings and **show empathy** by communicating that you understand them.