

Being helpful and empathetic

Objective:- to enhance sense of social responsibility and compassion among students.

Ice breaking :- *An elderly woman and her little grandson, whose face was sprinkled with bright freckles, spent the day at the zoo. Lots of children were waiting in line to get their cheeks painted by a local artist who was decorating them with tiger paws.*

"You've got so many freckles, there's no place to paint!" a girl in the line said to the little fella.

Embarrassed, the little boy dropped his head. His grandmother knelt down next to him. "I love your freckles. When I was a little girl, I always wanted freckles," she said, while tracing her finger across the child's cheek. Freckles are beautiful."

The boy looked up, "Really?"

"Of course," said the grandmother. "Why just name me one thing that's prettier than freckles."

The little boy thought for a moment, peering intently into his grandma's face and softly whispered, "Wrinkles."

Meaning of being helpful and empathetic:-

Empathy is the ability to emotionally understand what other people feel, see things from their point of view, and imagine yourself in their place. Essentially, it is putting yourself in someone else's position and feeling what they must be feeling.

When you see another person suffering, you might be able to instantly envision yourself in the other person's place and feel sympathy for what they are going through.

While people are generally pretty well-attuned to their own feelings and emotions, getting into someone else's head can be a bit more difficult. The ability to feel empathy allows people to "walk a mile in another's shoes," so to speak. It permits people to understand the emotions that others are feeling.

There are mainly three types of empathy that a person may experience:

Affective empathy involves the ability to understand another person's emotions and respond appropriately. Such emotional understanding may lead to someone feeling concerned for another person's well-being, or it may lead to feelings of personal distress.

Somatic empathy involves having a sort of physical reaction in response to what someone else is experiencing. People sometimes physically experience what another person is feeling. When you

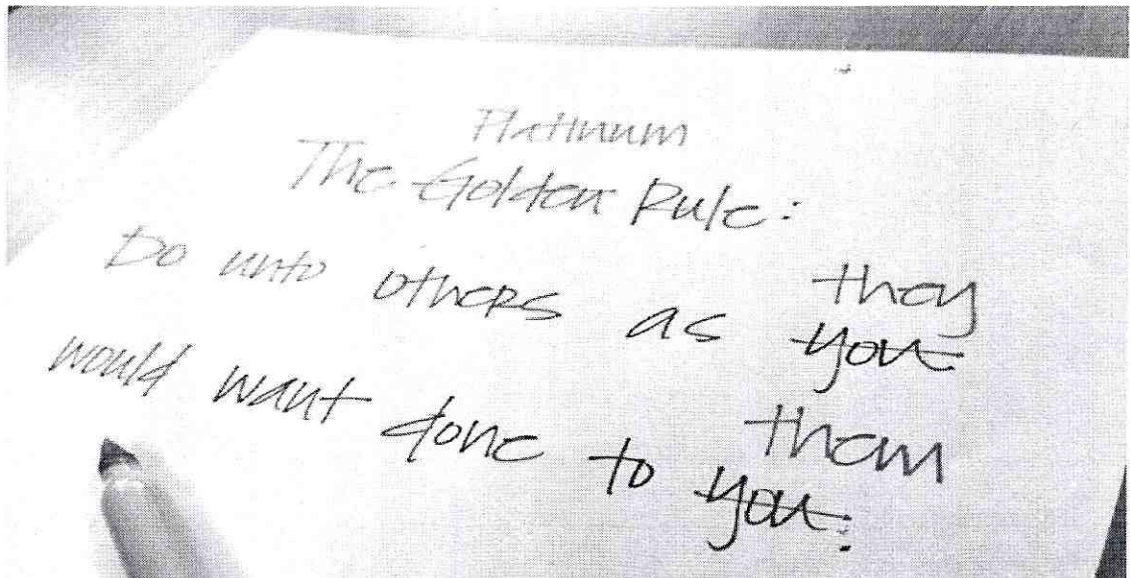
see someone else feeling embarrassed, for example, you might start to blush or have an upset stomach.

Cognitive empathy involves being able to understand another person's mental state and what they might be thinking in response to the situation. This is related to what psychologists refer to as theory of mind, or thinking about what other people are thinking.

Signs of Empathy

There are some signs that show that you tend to be an empathetic person:

- You are good at really listening to what others have to say.
- People often tell you about their problems.
- You are good at picking up on how other people are feeling.
- You often think about how other people feel.
- Other people come to you for advice.
- You often feel overwhelmed by tragic events.
- You try to help others who are suffering.
- You sometimes feel drained or overwhelmed in social situations.
- You care deeply about other people.
- You find it difficult to set boundaries in your relationships with other people.



Tips for Practicing Empathy:-

Fortunately, empathy is a skill that you can learn and strengthen. If you would like to build your empathy skills, there are a few things that you can do:

Learn to recognize facial expressions.

A large part of empathy is recognizing facial expressions, verbal cues like emotional words, and emotional contexts. Learning to identify emotional components in conversations can improve your empathic response. Learn the meaning of emojis, watch actors, observe faces, notice changes in the eyes, observe expressions alongside spoken language. Pay attention to all things that make us human.

Become an active listener.

Empathy requires that we cultivate the trait of active listening. Most people are thinking how they are going to respond while the other person is still speaking. Active listening means being totally focused on what the other person is saying.

Challenge prejudice and stereotypes.

We know that in order to learn and grow we need to push ourselves beyond our comfort zone. One way to do this is to make an effort to know people that are different from us. Find someone who you are somewhat uncomfortable around because they are different than you and make a genuine attempt to get to know them.

See how many things you can find that you have in common, like struggles that you both share. Attend events where the gathering is different from the crowd that you normally hang out with. Find out why they think the way they do.

Develop curiosity about others.

Have you ever tried to know about random people you meet occasionally during your day to day life, E.g; watchman, local vendors, auto-drivers, or the boy in school who rarely talk to anyone etc. about their well-being, feeling, likes and dislikes, problems, joys or anything ?

Many people are curious but few take the time or step out of their comfort zone to ask. Challenge yourself to slowly find out more about these people. You may be quite surprised by what you find out.

Spend some time in other's shoes.

Every single person has lived a different life. Even identical twins who grew up in the same household are going to have different life experiences that give them differing perspectives on events, thoughts, arguments, people, religious beliefs – anything and everything. In whatever the situation, seeing someone else's side is not only necessary to move forward in the conversation you are having with this person, but also necessary to move forward in life. If you only consider your own feelings and perspective, you're leaving out the other seven billion people on this planet and missing out on seven billion other stories.

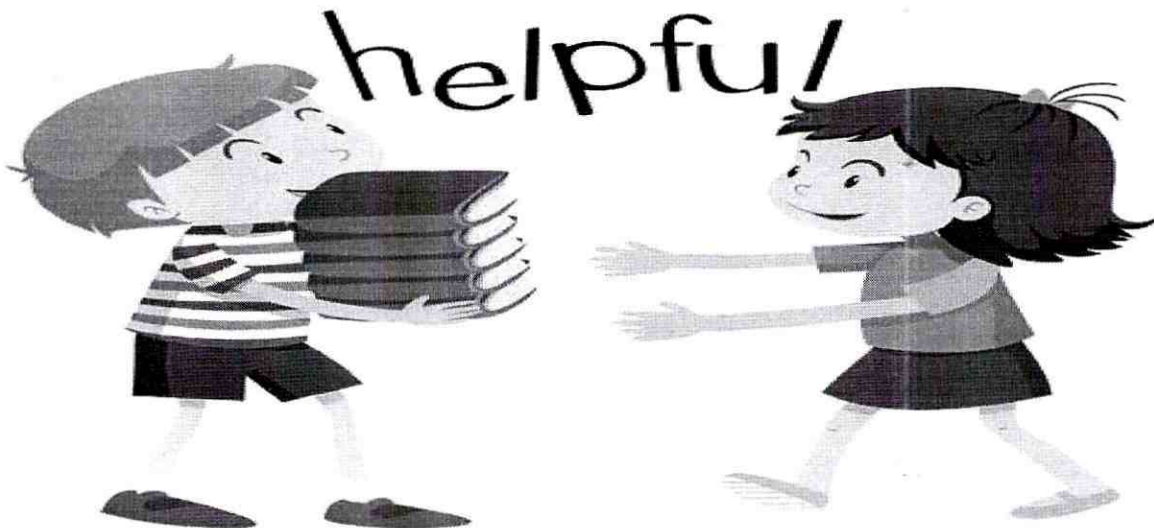
Share yourself with others.

The best way to gain trust and have others open up to you is to share some of your feelings with them. It doesn't mean being the person who shares their whole life story within five minutes of meeting you. What it means is sharing some of your fears as well as your joys and aspirations.

By doing so, you will give others permission to share more of themselves, allowing for deeper conversation. By showing some vulnerability you will come across as more human with all of the joys, sorrows, and struggles that all of us share.

Ways To Become A More Helpful Person:-

Helping others has shown to be beneficial on many levels. Not only do you get the satisfaction of helping someone in need, but you can benefit from an increased sense of purpose in your life. Here are some easy habits that you can take up to become an all-around more helpful person;



Practice Empathy

The easiest way to become more helpful is to start by understanding the plight of those around you. We often get so focused on what we have to do, that we don't spend enough time trying to understand how others are feeling. Once we do, it will become easier to become more helpful.

Build Interpersonal Relationships

Developing interpersonal relationships will build trust and openness, making them more apt to ask for help. So spend some time every day getting to know others — asking open-ended questions that give you a good sense of their immediate and long-term goals. You'll likely learn of various ways you can be a resource for them.

Assess the situation.

Before doing something and attempting to help, stop and examine it from different perspectives, both to see different ways you might be able to help, and whether or not your help is necessary. Dig deeper. What is the source of the problem? The kind of help which should be extended to a person greatly depends on the situation and whether or not there are underlying causes.

Use positive language to reinforce, not to discourage.

Positivity is one of the most helpful things you can offer others. Encouraging people helps to inspire confidence, and saying positive things helps to make people feel better about themselves. Try to be the person who makes the extra effort to stay positive, even when things seem tough, and others will value your presence as a helpful contributing factor to the group. Aim for encouragement.

Make time to be helpful.

Being around is one of the underrated requirements of being a helpful person. If you want to be helpful for your friends and family, you've got to be available to be helpful and give them the gift of your time. Try to make time for the important people in your life and be willing to do things you might not normally want to do, to be as helpful as possible.

Ask how you can help.

Want to know if you can be of some assistance? Ask. The best way to figure out quickly and efficiently if and what you can do to help out is to just ask, flat-out. See your dad struggling with a lawnmower? "Hey Dad, need a hand?" See your friend looking down in the dumps after being embarrassed in gym class? "Hey man, sorry about that. Want to talk about it?"

Anticipate unspoken needs.

Pay attention to the signs other people are giving you to find out how to help without having to be asked. Think about the ways you might want to ask for help, then apply that to other people. For example, when you're cooking it's nice to have one person chop vegetables while the other person makes the sauce, making the whole operation faster.

Get your hands dirty.

Sometimes, the best course of action is just to hop in and start helping. Don't wait to be asked for help, just volunteer. This is especially true for big jobs, like garage cleanings, or yard work, things that nobody is especially excited to do, but just need to be done. Instead of waiting around and debating, just hop in and volunteer to get started.

Keep your help quiet

Sometimes, receiving help can be a little embarrassing, so try to put yourself in the shoes of the person you're helping and not make a big deal out of it. This is especially true if you're doing

something like lend money, or get someone out of a pickle that might have been somewhat embarrassing.

Help because you want to.

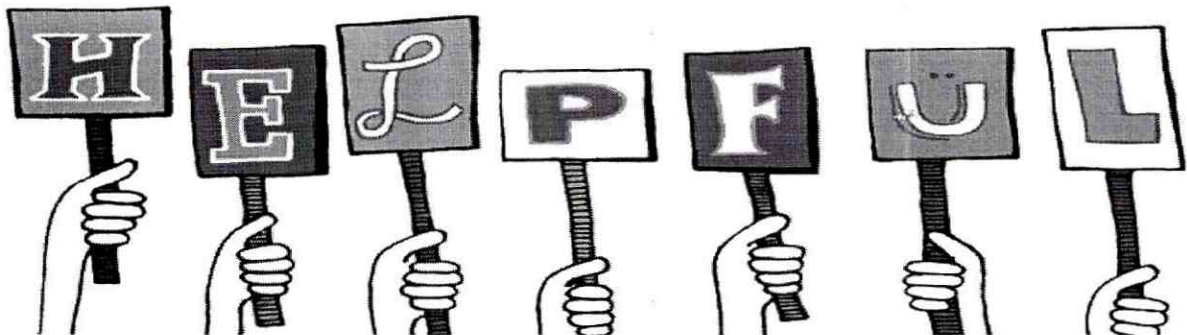
If you want to be really and truly helpful to others, you need to act from the goodness of your heart, not because you want something in return. This will only lead to disappointment, resentment, and manipulative behavior, making you bitter in the long run. Acting from a place of ulterior motives only makes you less helpful in the long run.

Follow up.

Invariably you will encounter a problem that requires some heavy lifting on your part. This could be taken literally, as when you're asking to help someone move, or figuratively, as when you're asked to help someone kick a drinking habit, or get through a break-up. Either way it does require some effort or investment on your part. If you are committed to helping, you may need to open your wallet, your home, your heart or your mind. None of which is easy but may be entirely necessary.

Be careful.

There are people out there who will take advantage of your generosity. The joy you derive from helping your fellow man is worth the risk, but such risk should be mitigated wherever possible. Use common sense. Understand your own limitations and bless you for helping.



Activities:-

Empathy Map

Empathy maps can be a powerful tool to build deeper understanding of how our words and actions connect to our thoughts and feelings. Empathy maps are divided into four sections: Think, Feel, Say, Do. Lead students through an example, using yourself as a model. (Ex: When I feel nervous, I might

think I'm making mistakes. When I feel this way, I apologize a lot (say) and often take a deep breath (do).)

On a whiteboard or bulletin, draw a circle at the center and label it "our class". Then divide the board into four quadrants, labeled: Think, Feel, Say, Do. Each student receives four post-it notes. Ask students to write down one emotion they sometimes feel, a thought they connect to that emotion, an action they take when they have that feeling, and something they might say. Each student takes turns posting on the board. Set the tone at the start of the activity to ensure active, compassionate listening.

Video links:-

<https://youtu.be/ltp21tly8nM> (about meaning of empathy)

https://youtu.be/_mtF0EphPHY (a inspirational story about empathy)

References:-

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