



CITIZENS CRIME COMMISSION
OF NEW YORK CITY

Empathy How-to-Guide

Empathy is the ability to experience the emotions and perspective of another person, while still recognizing that these feelings do not originate from you.

Why is empathy important?

- Empathy allows you to understand why others feel and act a certain way.
- Empathy allows you to feel more connected to others.
- People who are good at empathizing have better social skills and psychological development.
- High levels of empathy are associated with lower levels of aggression.
 - o Those who can understand how their actions affect others are less likely to be aggressive.

Emotional Intelligence:

A main component of empathy is the ability to recognize different emotions in others, to understand the importance of emotions, and to experience emotions with others.

- Help the youth to identify the different emotions they feel and discuss why they are both good and bad.
- Encourage the youth to keep track of how their mood changes and what events lead to those changes.
- Encourage youth to identify different emotions in others through their body language.

Perspective Taking:

Empathy also involves the ability to take the perspective of the other person and understand how it might feel to walk in their shoes.

- Remind the participant to be empathic through targeted questioning:
 - o How would you feel if someone said or did this to you?
 - o What if this happened to your friend/brother/sister?
 - o How would you respond to this? What emotions are they probably feeling right now?
 - o How would you feel if your sister/daughter/brother/cousin were talked about this way?
- Find ways to show how the youth and the person they are arguing with are similar or different.

Using Empathy to Prevent Social Media Violence:

- Sometimes, the internet gives youth a false sense of anonymity, which may lead them to respond more aggressively and impulsively than they normally would in person.
- Remind youth that their words and behavior can hurt others.
- Remind youth that pictures with guns may lead to more feelings of anger and fear in others that can place them and their friends and family in danger.
- Promote empathic and emotional expression online by “liking” positive posts and offering support.
- Engage youth in a private message to help mediate arguments:
 - o Problem solve the other person’s perspective.
 - o Focus on the different emotions the youth and the other person are feeling.
 - o Reduce feelings of anger.
 - o Talk about goals and how responding aggressively can hurt those goals.

Example: If you see a taunting post or argument through social media, like the provided example, use the below suggestions as possible ways to respond.

NIGGA LOVE HITIN ME UP SUCKING MY DICK BRIGHT & EARLY
IN THE AM LMAOOOOOOOOO



- Send a private message to Desean (blue text) and try to engage him in a conversation. Try to ask questions that cannot be answered with a simple yes or no. Here are some examples:
 - o I see that Matt (Purple icon) really upset you today. How are you feeling now?
 - o Saying those things to Matt could put you in danger. How are you staying safe?
 - o That Matt seemed really mean, why did you post that conversation online?
 - o Why did Matt say those horrible things?
 - o How did this fight start?
- Once you get Desean engaged in conversation, ask questions that promote empathy
 - o How would you feel if someone disrespected your family? What about someone you lost and were close to?

- How do you think Matt feels that you posted this online?
 - How do you think he will react?
 - What do you think he is feeling?
- How might this fight hurt your family and friends?
- How would you feel if someone called you a “faggot,” “pussy,” “soft ass nigga”, told you to “suck their dick”, or disrespected your dead family members (“dead fam”)? If someone called your friend a “faggot,” “pussy,” “soft ass nigga”, told them to “suck their dick”, or disrespected their dead family members (“dead fam”)?
- Did you know that Matt’s best friend got in a fight yesterday and got really hurt? Maybe that is why he is so angry? How might you feel if you found out your best friend was hurt like that?
- Problem solve how to respond next time
 - This Matt does not seem very nice, why are you friends with him at all?
 - I see you tried to get Matt to stop talking to you, have you thought of blocking him?
 - How might you calm yourself down next time someone provokes you like this?
 - What can you do now to stop the violence?
 - Block Matt?
 - Delete the post?
 - Offer to help mediate an in person or online conversation between them.