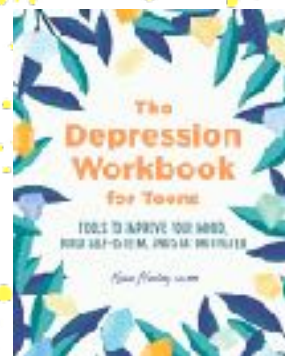


HOW TO BE A GOOD FRIEND

Helping Your Child Develop Healthy Peer Relationships

Katie Hurley, LCSW



“The only way we will survive is by being kind. The only way we can get by in this world is through the help we receive from others. No one can do it alone, no matter how great the machines are.”

— Amy Poehler, *Yes Please*

*ON
KINDNESS*

BULLYING AMONG TWEENS & TEENS

Pew Research on Cyberbullying (2018)

- 59% of US teens have been bullied or harassed online
- 42% offensive name calling
- 32% false rumors
- 25% receive explicit messages
- 21% feel stalked
- 16% physical threats
- 7% explicit images sent

StopBullying.gov National Statistics on Bullying

- 20% of 12-18 year old students report experiencing bullying
- 30% admit to bullying others
- 70.6% of students have witnessed bullying
- 70.4% of staff have witnessed bullying
- Relational aggression is most common

WHAT IS RELATIONAL AGGRESSION?

- Pattern of behavior
- Imbalance of power
- Intent to cause emotional distress
- Hidden behavior

- Name calling, teasing, taunting
- Stealing or hiding property
- Gossip, rumors, notes
- Exclusion
- Alliances
- Public humiliation
- Cyberbullying (text, social, email)

BEHAVIORS

CONSEQUENCES OF RELATIONAL AGGRESSION

- School absences
- Depression
- Anxiety***
- Suicidal thoughts
- Psychosomatic complaints
- Poor academic performance
- Behavioral problems
- Eating disorders
- Substance abuse

SIGNS CHILD IS BEING BULLIED

- Anxious or nervous behaviors, including regressed behavior
- Frequent psychosomatic complaints
- Often reports being alone at lunch/recess
- Appears withdrawn
- Changes in academic performance
- Acts out in school or at home, might turn the tables and bully others
- Talks about being hated or having no friends
- Talks about death or engages in self-harm
- Sleep disturbance
- Changes in eating habits

SIGNS A CHILD IS THE BULLY

- Overly controlling
- Forms groups and excludes others (more than once)
- Uses threats to control friends or siblings
- Secretive
- Relies on “JK” or “just joking” after dishing out insults
- Focused on popularity/status
- Frequently changes BFFs
- Lacks respect for adults
- Entitled/blames others often
- Has a Finsta/slime account or other secret social media accounts
- Hyper-competitive with other kids
- KIDS SWITCH ROLES!

WHAT'S IN A FRIEND?

6 Friendship Qualities That Matter

- Trust
- Honesty
- Supportiveness
- Empathy
- Good listening skills
- Reciprocity

HOW DO WE BUILD FRIENDSHIP SKILLS?

Never underestimate the power of soft skills.



GOOGLE STUDY

- Results show 7 top characteristics of successful employees include “soft skills”
- Being a good coach
- Communication and listening skills
- Perspective taking – having insights into others
- Empathy
- Critical thinking skills
- Problem solving skills
- Making connections across complex ideas
- STEM skills = dead last in importance!

MAKING CARING COMMON

- The Harvard University Graduate School of Education surveyed 10,000 students
- 80% say achievement or happiness is their top priority
- 20% saying caring for others is their top priority
- 96% of parents say that moral character in children is “very important, if not essential”
- But 81% of youth think that achievement or happiness is their parents’ top priority

The logo of the University of Michigan, featuring a yellow shield with a black border. The text "UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN" is written in black, bold, italicized capital letters across the shield.

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Institute for Social Research

**College kids today
demonstrate 40% less
empathy than their
counterparts of 20 or 30
years ago.**

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DON'T PUT EMPATHY FIRST?

- 30% of middle school students report being bullied
- 50% of girls, grades 7-12, reported at least one episode of sexual harassment in 2010-2011
- 50% of high school students admit to cheating
- 57% of high school students agree with the following statement: “In the real world, successful people do what they have to do to win, even if others consider it cheating.”**
- 48% of students are regularly exposed to relational aggression
- Kids ages 11-15 are exposed to 33 acts of Relational Aggression per week

MYTHS & FACTS

About Empathy

01

Myth: Empathic kids are not assertive with their peers.

Fact: Empathic kids are more likely to stand up to bullying.

03

Myth: Empathy is focused on emotion.

Fact: Cognitive empathy is taking perspective without assuming emotions of others.

02

Myth: Empathic kids are overly emotional and overreact.

Fact: Empathic kids are better at reading emotions & problem solving.

04

Myth: Empathy is a sign of weakness.

Fact: The willingness to acknowledge that there are other ideas and issues beyond self = strength.

COGNITIVE VS EMOTIONAL EMPATHY

Cognitive empathy:

- Taking another person's perspective.
- Imagining what it's like in another person's shoes.
- Identifying and understanding someone's feelings.
- Skill that can be taught.

Emotional empathy:

- Sharing an emotional experience.
- Feeling distress in response to someone's pain.
- Feeling a willingness to help others.
- Showing compassion for others.

01 Good listening skills + perspective taking = trust between friends.

02 Willingness to help, support, and show compassion increases connection.

03 Feeling together decreases loneliness and increases reciprocity.

04 Positive communication = honesty.

***EMPATHY BUILDS
FRIENDSHIPS***

BARRIERS TO EMPATHY

- Cancel culture
- Poor conflict resolution skills - ghosting, revenge, lack of resilience
- Social engineering
- Achievement pressure
- Toxic competition
- Success driven culture
- Fast-tracking of childhood & adolescence
- Insufficient downtime
- Messages at home, in the media, in the community
- STRESS AND ANXIETY

STRESS & ANXIETY

- Stress and anxiety are on the rise among youth
- 2.6 million American children & adolescents diagnosed with anxiety and/or depression (Journal of Dev & Beh Ped, 2018)
- 31.9% of 13-18-year-olds have mild to moderate anxiety (National Institute of Mental Health)
- Girls (38%) are more likely to be diagnosed with anxiety than boys (26%)
- Median age of onset = 11 years old

- 80% Never get help = TREATMENT GAP

01 Stress and anxiety can cloud our ability to connect, empathize, and reciprocate.

02 Isolation can leave friends feeling left out or hurt.

03 Irritability can fracture communication skills .

04 Poor coping skills can result in blame, avoidance, or resentment.

IMPACT ON FRIENDSHIPS

HOW TO BUILD HEALTHY FRIENDSHIPS

- Promote kindness
- Prioritize empathy
- Teach social skills
- Teach conflict resolution skills
- Talk about emotional regulation
- Build resilience and coping skills



***PRACTICE
DELIBERATE
ACTS OF
KINDNESS***

Expect kindness

Show it.

Talk about it.

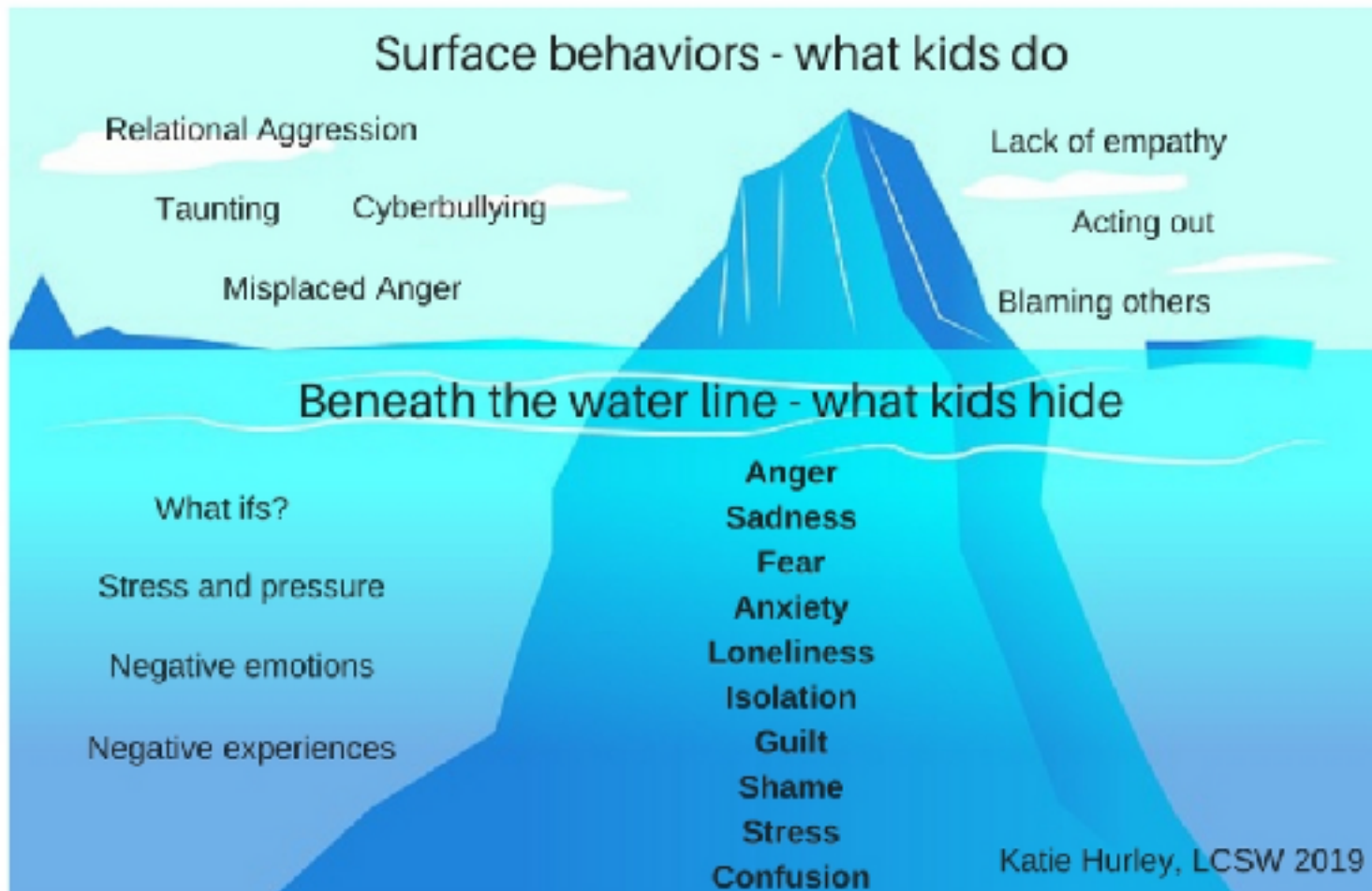
Point it out.

Ask about it.

WHEN DOES EMPATHY EMERGE?

- Age two: soothe you by bringing you a favorite toy or blanket
- Preschoolers might become upset when another child or an adult is upset or want to save every animal
- School age children begin to understand the feelings around them and want to help
- Tweens and teens stand up for others

Iceberg of Empathy



HOW TO TEACH EMPATHY

Model it.
Talk about it.
Expect it.

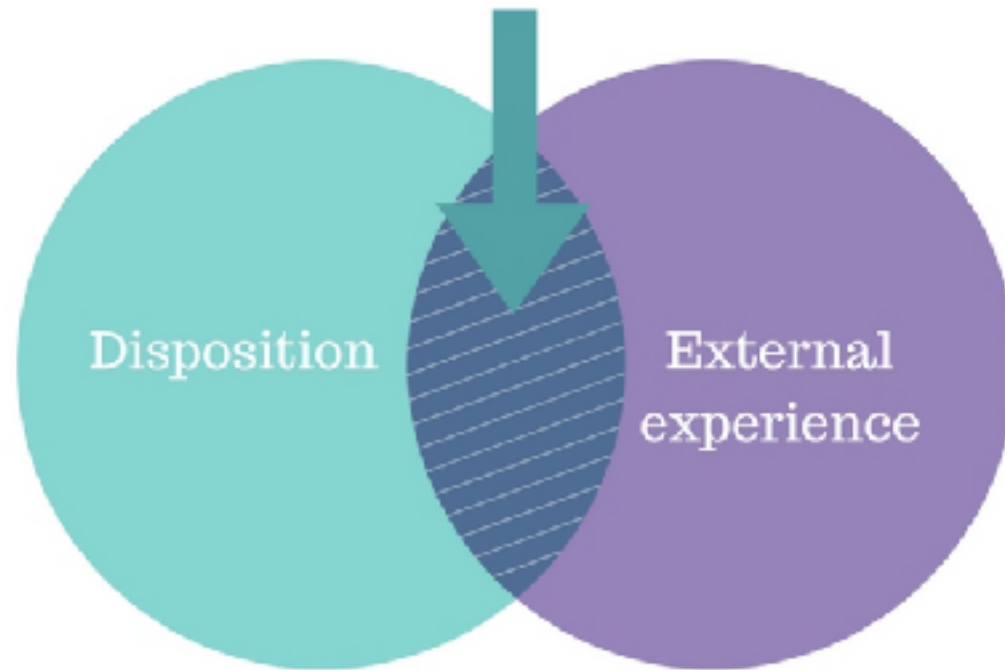
Nurture empathy at home:

- Sportscaster
- Gratitude jar/notes
- Parent/child journal
- Family community service
- Change makers
- Play social detectives

WHAT IS RESILIENCE?

- Resilience is the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties.
- Research shows that kids can thrive despite facing adversity.

What makes kids resilient?



- Positive Relationships
- Adaptive capacities
- Positive experiences

HOW TO BUILD RESILIENCE

- Empathize
- Listen more than you speak
- Ask questions about fun stuff
- Stop achievement praise
- Spend time together
- Stop focusing on grades, sports scores, and other evaluations
- Tell stories about when you were young
- Highlight your failures and missteps

RESIST THE URGE TO FIX!

01 Deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, mindfulness, journaling, find your anchors

02 Conflict resolution: I statements, state the problem from all sides, brainstorm solutions, meet in the middle, own your 2%

03 Back to basics: eat, sleep, downtime, repeat

04 Emotional regulation: name it, describe it, flip it

BUILD COPING SKILLS

PRACTICE CARING

- Homework helper
- Mother's helper
- Read to little kids
- Pet/read to animals at a shelter
- Carry groceries for a neighbor
- Visit an elderly friend or neighbor
- Help a friend or sibling with chores
- Use active listening skills

BRING BACK KINDNESS

- Kindness should be deliberate, not random
- Small acts of kindness build kindness muscles
- Model kindness - talk about how you handle conflict with friends
- Encourage relationships with grandparents, aunts & uncles, and faraway friends
- Pick up the phone, write letters, make gifts

ME BEFORE WE

Promotes unhealthy competition
Can contribute to relational aggression
Negatively affects friendships
Results in poor coping skills and low resilience

Promotes empathy
Builds reciprocal relationships
Increases trust
Improves coping skills and increases
resilience

WE BEFORE ME

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