

Read for Empathy collection 2023

Books to build empathy – for children aged 3–11

#ReadForEmpathy

Why empathy?

Understanding
and sharing
Emotions

Picture Books,
Early Readers,
Poetry, Non-Fiction

Novels and
Graphic Novels

Top tips



Empathy is our ability to understand and share someone else's feelings. It builds stronger, kinder communities. It's a crucial life skill that children need to learn, thrive and make a positive difference.

We're not born with a fixed quantity of empathy – it's a skill we can all learn. Excitingly, research shows that books are a powerful tool to develop it. When children identify with book characters, they learn to see things from other people's point of view. As they read, they are building their empathy skills.



EMPATHY, OUR HUMAN
SUPERPOWER
#READFOREMPATHY

Illustration by Jacinta Read

How does empathy work?

Empathy is made up of three main elements.



The 2023 Read for Empathy collection

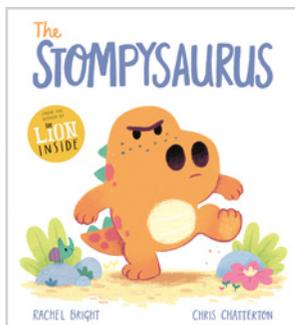
An expert panel has chosen forty wonderful books for children aged 3-11. Each one does a specific empathy-building job, like helping children develop new perspectives or naming and sharing emotions. They celebrate the way empathy underpins the relationships that help us feel seen and safe. They offer powerful insights into different ways of life and how it might feel to be homeless or caught up in war. Please use them to inspire children to turn feelings of empathy into action – in their homes, schools and communities.

This Guide is brought to you by EmpathyLab, in partnership with book supplier Peters. We also have a Guide with books for 12-16-year-olds and a previous Guide with books available in Welsh for 4-16-year-olds. You can use these all year round, and they will be especially useful in the run-up to Empathy Day on 8 June 2023. Please join in!

Register for resources and updates at www.empathylab.uk and follow @EmpathyLabUK

Emotions

If you can't understand your own feelings, it's hard to relate to other people's. Being able to recognise, name and share your emotions is a key empathy skill. This year we have put together a selection of seven glorious picture books that provide a springboard for helping children expand their understanding of, and vocabulary for, emotions.



The Stompysaurus Rachel Bright & Chris Chatterton

A rhyming book for young children, featuring an endearing creature experiencing 'hot and spiky' feelings as life's annoyances mount. A wise bat helps him flip how he experiences these; he is able to breathe, open his heart and say sorry.

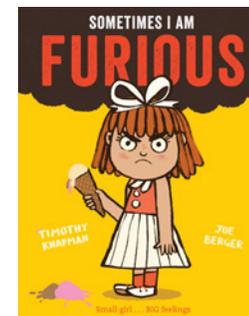
Orchard Books



What If, Pig? Linzie Hunter

Kind Pig has lots of friends, and a birthday coming up. But he scares himself with increasingly florid 'what if' worries – so bad he thinks he'd better cancel his party. A warm-hearted, funny and insightful exploration of anxiety.

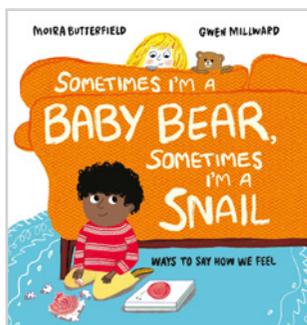
HarperCollins' Children's Books



Sometimes I Am Furious Timothy Knapman & Joe Berger

A small girl finds that her emotions swing hugely through the day. Often she's absolutely furious. Skilful, hilarious illustrations help us understand just how she feels, and how a loving connection with a wise adult helps her handle things.

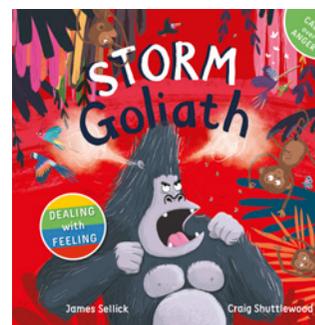
Macmillan Children's Books



Sometimes I'm a Baby Bear, Sometimes I'm a Snail Moira Butterfield & Gwen Millward

A wonderful book that helps children compare their feelings to animals – 'I feel sad like the dog with droopy ears.' It deals with a range of emotions, including positive ones, conveying reassurance that everyone experiences a whole mixture.

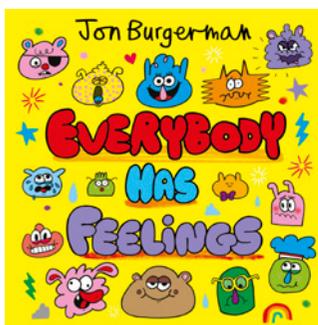
Welbeck Editions



Storm Goliath James Sellick & Craig Shuttlewood

Goliath the gorilla is in a terrible mood. Eventually he finds that taking deep breaths and beating his chest helps ease the turbulence. A great exploration of anger's nuances – made worse by hunger, and mixed in with sadness.

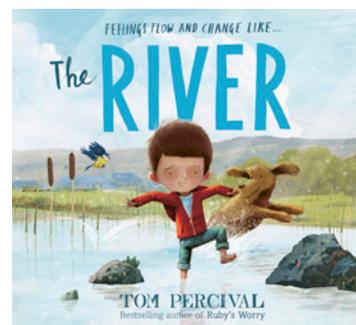
New Frontier Publishing



Everybody Has Feelings Jon Burgerman

Expanding children's vocabulary for feelings has a profound effect, and this book is often recommended by early years practitioners. It covers feeling joyful, anxious, brave, jealous, embarrassed and 17 other emotions. The illustrations help explain how each emotion might look bodily.

Oxford University Press



The River Tom Percival

A subtle, beautiful book, using a river metaphor to mirror Rowan's feelings. By the end he realises that like the river his moods keep changing; he can feel "happy and light, slow and sad... and everything in between". And that's OK.

Simon & Schuster

Picture Books

Nine superb picture books, perfect for empathy-building reading and discussion with children aged 3-11. We believe no child is ever too old for a great picture book.



Our Tower Joseph Coelho & Richard Johnson

This beautifully illustrated story shows how taking a different perspective allows people to open their hearts to each other. A celebration of nature's power to connect people and bring joy even in the shadow of a tower block.

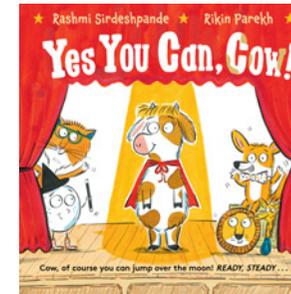
Frances Lincoln Children's Books



That's Nice, Love Owen Gent

A child's imaginative adventures are ignored by an adult engrossed in their phone. Heartbreakingly the child says, 'I know you're right here... but sometimes you feel far away.' Happily the adult notices the child's feelings and joins in the fun.

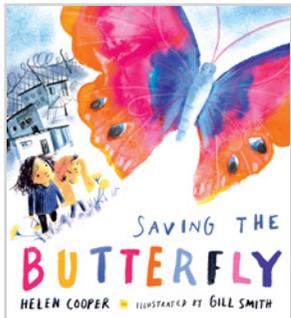
Book Island



Yes You Can, Cow! Rashmi Sirdeshpande & Rikin Parekh

A laugh-out-loud story of courage and empathetic friendship. Cow has to jump over the moon in a performance but loses confidence. Cow's friends gently give encouragement and, after a couple of false starts, Cow succeeds!

Faber & Faber



Saving the Butterfly Helen Cooper & Gill Smith

Two shipwrecked children arrive at a refugee camp. Whilst the younger child adapts, the older child withdraws. A beautiful butterfly helps the child re-engage with the world. An important insight into the trauma refugee children endure and the support needed.

Walker Books



The Queen on Our Corner Lucy Christopher & Nia Tudor

One little girl is curious about the homeless woman sitting on the street corner. The child recognises that the woman is a dignified human being with a story to tell and many life achievements; she treats her with respect and empathy.

Lantana

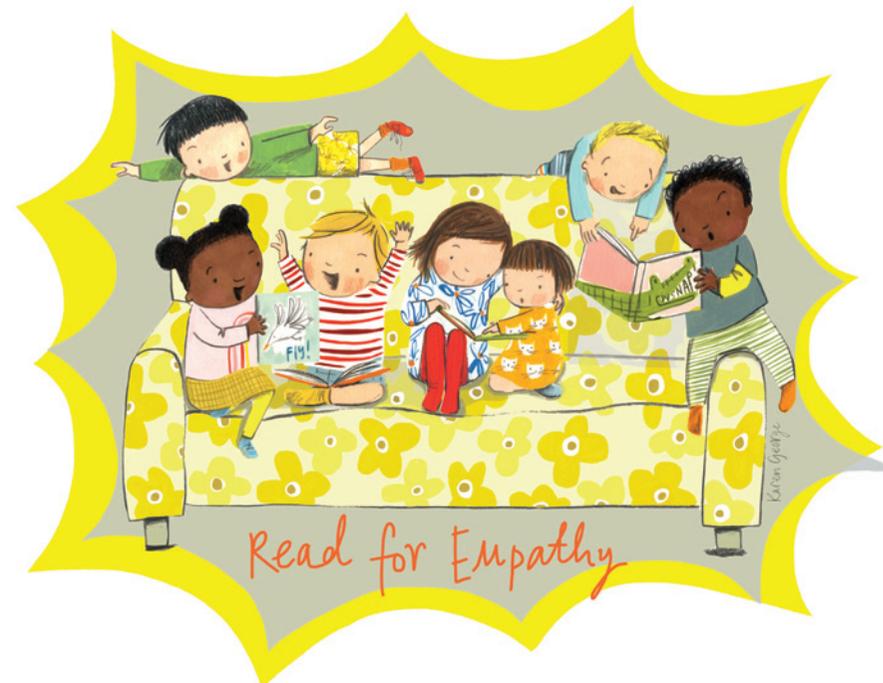
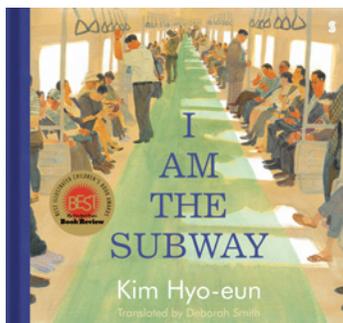


Illustration by Karen George

Picture Books



I Am the Subway **Kim Hyo-eun**

Translator Deborah Smith

A richly illustrated book that imagines the lives of some of the people travelling on the Seoul subway. We experience their individual thoughts, dreams, worries and joys. This amazing book is brilliant for generating discussion and creative perspective-taking activities.

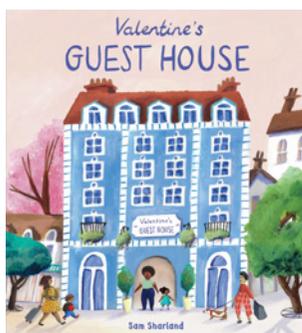
Scribble UK



The Comet **Joe Todd-Stanton**

Nyla and her dad move to a new town. Isolated and homesick, she struggles to settle, but her sensitive dad knows how to help. The story of love between a father and his daughter and how together they make a home.

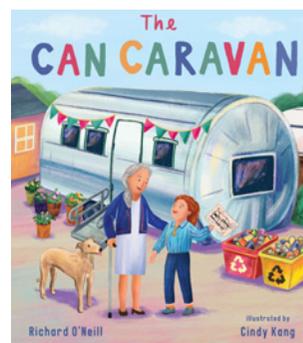
Flying Eye Books



Valentine's Guest House **Sam Sharland**

Valentine and daughter Elsie run a successful hotel... until a tiger arrives and all the guests leave. Eventually many new animal guests arrive, each with their own needs - rabbits needing burrows, camels needing sand beds. A beautiful springboard for exploring different needs and perspectives.

Child's Play



The Can Caravan **Richard O'Neill & Cindy Kang**

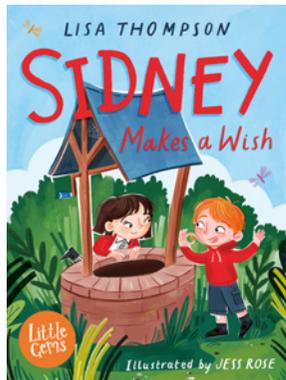
A rare book celebrating the culture of Travellers. Janie's elderly neighbour has a fall and her caravan is unsafe. Janie understands that Mrs Tolen needs to stay among her community. A visit to a recycling plant gives her an idea and she inspires the community to take action.

Child's Play



Illustration by Abigail Balfe

Early Readers



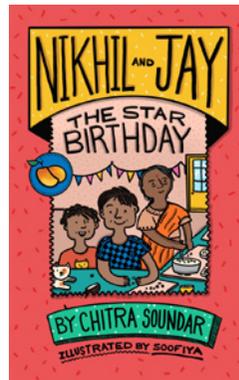
Sidney Makes a Wish

Lisa Thompson

Illustrator Jess Rose

Sidney is having friendship troubles. He keeps making magical wishes for things (like a trampoline) to draw Billy to him, but nothing works. Finally, he realises that Carrie, who has been there all along, is everything he needs in a friend.

Barrington Stoke



**Nikhil and Jay:
The Star Birthday**

Chitra Soundar

To Nikhil and Jay's delight, Granny and Grandad are visiting from Chennai. From them the brothers learn practical things about life in India, like cooking. And the grandparents lovingly pass on wisdom about handling emotions.

Otter-Barry Books

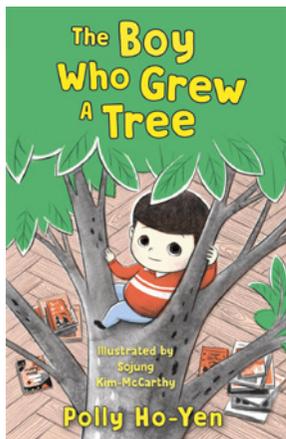


All to Play For
Eve Ainsworth

Illustrator Kirsti Beautyman

Lewis's dad died while playing football, and his mum is still shocked and stuck. It's hard for them both that Lewis's passion is football, which she's scared of him playing. The relationships are beautifully drawn in this short, hopeful, powerful read.

Barrington Stoke



The Boy Who Grew a Tree

Polly Ho-Yen

Timi is experiencing an uncomfortable mix of feelings because his mum is having a baby. But he's brilliant at noticing things and finds a tiny tree in the library which grows and grows... A magical story about personal growth, friendship and community.

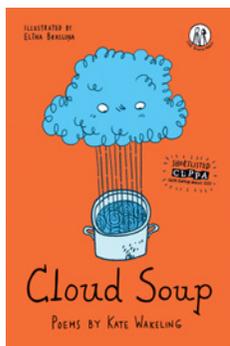
Knights Of



Illustration by Fiona Lumbers

Poetry and Non-Fiction

Poetry

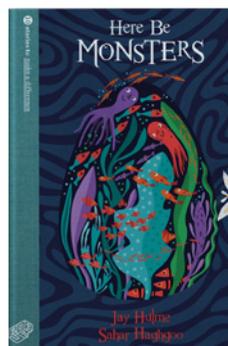


Cloud Soup Kate Wakeling

Illustrator **Elīna Brasliņa**

A gorgeous collection, exemplifying the way poetry helps build empathetic insights. Look out for a beautiful portrait of a tired mum ('the day Mum turned into a lion'). Get a fresh perspective on being a tree or experience Bali's day of silence.

The Emma Press

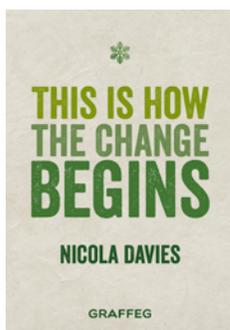


Here Be Monsters Jay Hulme

Illustrator **Sahar Haghgoo**

A mini epic poem, described by Jay Hulme as 'an allegory of the Trans experience'. Washed out to sea, a baby dragon spends years feeling lonely, believing she's a sea creature. The glorious ending sees her in the skies, belonging at last.

Pop-Up Projects



This Is How the Change Begins Nicola Davies

Children feel so strongly about the threats to our planet and its creatures. This extraordinary poetry collection addresses these threats, while describing 'a world that's truly green' and urging hope, action and behaviour change.

Graffeg



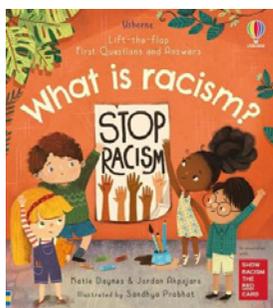
Courage in a Poem Cecilia Knapp, Debjani Chatterjee, Valerie Bloom, Mandy Coe and 16 others

Illustrators: **Annalise Barber, Mariana Roldán,
Masha Manapov, Nabila Adani**

An inspiring collection in which 20 writers explore the experience of being alive from differing perspectives, like being dyslexic or an activist fighting injustice. Look out for 'Unfurling', about migration, and 'Mother's Eyes' about a parent's perspective.

Little Tiger

Non-Fiction

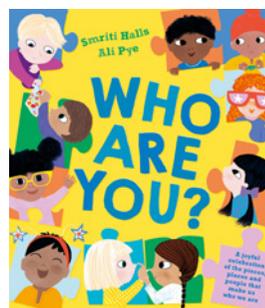


What Is Racism? Katie Daynes & Jordan Akpojaro

Illustrator **Sandhya Prabhat**

Eradicating the blight of racism is key to building a more empathetic society. This excellent lift-the-flap book helps young children learn more. It offers straightforward, sensitive answers to questions like 'Why are people racist?' and 'How can we stop racism?'

Usborne



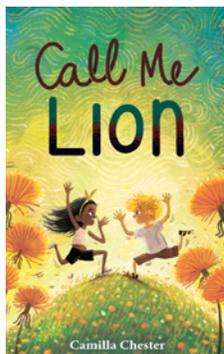
Who Are You? Smriti Halls & Ali Pye

An exuberant, inclusive picture book that offers a lovely springboard for perspective-taking discussions about what makes up each child's identity. It explores and celebrates the different ways we live our lives, while emphasising the things we have in common.

Red Shed

Novels

Eleven wonderful stories to help children immerse themselves in other people's lives. Perfect for 7-11-year-olds. This symbol* indicates books that are a demanding read, suitable for emotionally mature readers. They may have themes and language that need flagging. Please read them in order to decide which children they're appropriate for.

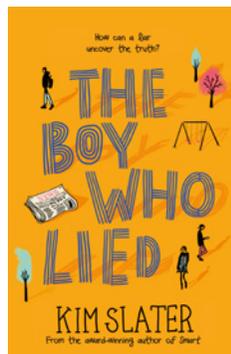


Call Me Lion Camilla Chester

Illustrator Irina Avgustinovich

A wonderful book, giving us a visceral empathetic insight into Leo's selective mutism. He finds it hard to make friends, until Richa moves in next door. We share his agonies and triumphs as with her support he breaks into a whole new world.

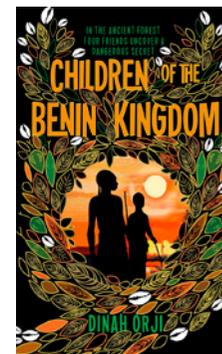
Firefly Press



The Boy Who Lied* Kim Slater

Ed lies to disguise the food poverty his family faces. So when little brother Sam goes missing, no one believes that Ed can't remember what happened. A gripping mystery, superb characterisation and a perfect empathy read when so many face economic hardship.

Macmillan Children's Books



Children of the Benin Kingdom Dinah Orji

Set in the twelfth-century Edo kingdom of Benin, this immersive novel yields powerful insights into a fascinating West African civilisation. We follow Ada on an epic adventure with her friend Mbe as they try to heal the divisions in the kingdom.

Dinosaur Books

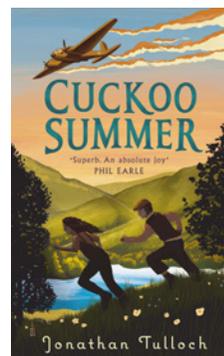


The Last Firefox Lee Newbery

Illustrator Laura Catalán

Faced with school bullies and changes at home, Charlie is having to be brave. Then he's put in charge of a vulnerable, flammable firefox, the only one in the world! A rollicking magical adventure, led by a character we really care about.

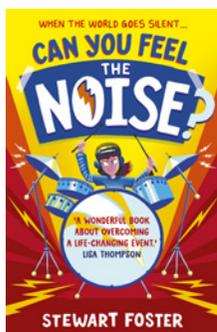
Puffin Books



Cuckoo Summer Jonathan Tulloch

Identifying with fictional characters' feelings helps build real-life empathy. Set in 1940, this superb adventure story follows Tommy and Sally's discovery of a wounded enemy airman in the woods. Beautifully drawn characters; totally absorbing and very moving.

Andersen Press



Can You Feel the Noise? Stewart Foster

Sophie's hearing problems escalate dramatically when she wakes up one morning to total silence. This powerful novel gives the reader deep empathetic insights into the experience of deafness, and we follow Sophie's discovery of musical vibrations with trepidation and hope.

Simon & Schuster



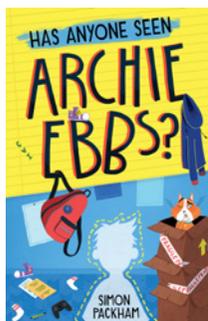
Keep Dancing, Lizzie Chu Maisie Chan

Young carer Lizzie is increasingly worried about Wai Gong, her recently bereaved grandfather. She dreams up a crazy plan to rekindle Blackpool memories of dancing with his wife. A funny, moving story with endearing characters, positive friendships and insights into British Chinese culture.

Piccadilly Press

Novels and Graphic Novels

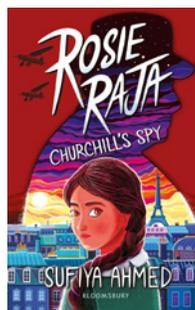
Novels continued



Has Anyone Seen Archie Ebbs? Simon Packham

Archie's comfortable life is upended when his family falls on hard times and they lose their home. Life is grim in a homeless hostel and gradually he becomes strangely invisible. Humour is skilfully woven into this lovely, empathetic novel.

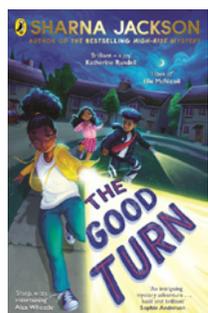
Firefly Press



Rosie Raja: Churchill's Spy* Sufiya Ahmed

A WWII adventure with a hugely characterful Muslim heroine. Discovering that her father is a British government spy, Rosie stows away in his plane and finds herself in occupied France, struggling against the Nazis. Powerful insights into wartime terrors and choices.

Bloomsbury



The Good Turn Sharna Jackson

Brimming with good-hearted characters, this pacy adventure focuses on how children can make a difference in the world. Josie, Margot and Wesley form a troop called the Copeys and set about challenging racism and social injustice in their community.

Puffin Books



The Tide Singer Eloise Williams

Illustrator August Ro

On a stormy night, Morwenna's father rescues a strange Tide Singer who can calm storms. Locals believe these magical creatures are evil, but Morwenna finds the strength to challenge their hostility. A wonderfully atmospheric read with an empathetic activist central character.

Barrington Stoke

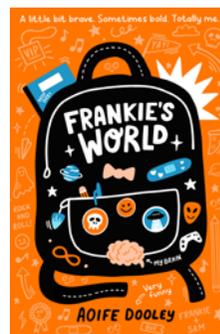
Graphic novels



City of Dragons: The Awakening Storm Jaimal Yogis & Vivian Truong

Mourning her father and new to Hong Kong, Grace and her new friends unwittingly become entangled in a dark and dangerous scientific plot. It requires deep courage and friendship to uncover the truth, save humanity and protect a mythical baby dragon.

Scholastic



Frankie's World Aoife Dooley

We meet Frankie, who is autistic, as she tries to work out if she's an alien and why her dad left when she was a baby. A funny, dynamic read full of warmth and heart; a realistic representation of neurodivergence.

Scholastic



Saving Sorya: Chang and the Sun Bear Trang Nguyen & Jeet Zdung

Full of empathy for earth's creatures, a wonderful graphic novel based on the author's real-life experience. Chang determines to do everything she can to return Sorya, a small sun bear, to freedom and the rainforest. Will fire up young conservationists!

Macmillan Children's Books

Six Top Tips

Help recognise feelings Use lots of different emotion words when discussing stories. Use our author-led emotion-recognition exercise – Joseph Coelho’s Empathy Charades <https://bit.ly/2JPPEnm>

Talk about characters Instead of discussing the plot, focus on the characters and their feelings. Which was most interesting? What are they afraid of? What might they do next?

Don’t forget the pictures Illustrations are especially good for ‘reading’ other people – can you tell from the picture how the character feels?

Share diverse books Introduce children to stories set in other countries and with characters of different races, religions and experiences. Inspire them to imagine life for people in different situations from their own.

Listen 100% Listening is a crucial part of empathy. Listen carefully as children explore what they’ve learnt about other people. Use our fun Listening Switch exercise: <https://bit.ly/3754Jdz>

Put empathy into action Has a book helped children see the world differently? Do they feel inspired to do something to help others or to combat hatred? Can you act on this as a community, or a family?

EMPATHY DAY Thursday 8 June 2023

- Join in: our **FIVE Mission Empathy activities** will help you develop your empathy superpower and change the world
- Look out for the free **Family Activity Pack** and toolkits for schools and libraries
- Get ready for **Empathy Day Live!** – a superb free online festival led by amazing authors and illustrators



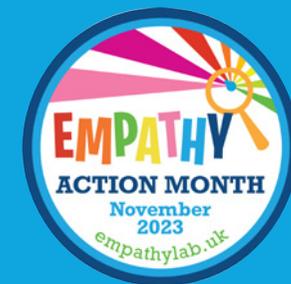
How to Get Involved

From March, find tips and templates at empathylab.uk to help children, families and classes complete these empathy-boosting activities, in the run-up to Empathy Day. We’d love to see children’s responses – please share your work and activities on social media using [@EmpathyLabUK](https://twitter.com/EmpathyLabUK) [#EmpathyDay](https://twitter.com/EmpathyLabUK)



Join us for Empathy Action Month in November

Make every day an Empathy Day by revisiting your Empathy Resolutions and putting empathy into action throughout November. Look out for free new resources and inspiring reading ideas at empathylab.uk





Develop your superpower. Change the world.

Complete your mission by trying all FIVE activities



1. Empathy Power Reads

This isn't reading as you know it, this is reading for empathy.



- JOIN our crowd-sourced book recommendation activity
- CHOOSE and READ an empathy-boosting book – use the brilliant Empathy Collection for inspiration
- SHARE and DISCUSS your chosen book
- WEAR a pair of empathy superpower glasses to help you see the story from the character's point-of-view
- STRIKE a power pose with your book and share it safely on social media

2. Empathy 360°

See the world through the eyes of others.



- SWITCH ON your empathy superpower
- LOOK right around you – just stand still or go on an empathy walk
- NOTICE how the world might seem to someone you encounter
- REFLECT on your new 360° perspective
- DECIDE what YOU can do to make a difference

3. Empathy Exchange

Step out of your normal bubble & connect with someone you don't know well.



- MAKE TIME to get to know someone better
- USE our conversation prompts to help you
- HAVE a friendly, open conversation
- LISTEN with 100% of your attention
- CHECK you've understood what they have told you

4. Empathy Emotions Map

Empathy is about understanding, naming and sharing feelings.



- GET creative as a class!
- MAKE a mind map – as a class or individuals – when children record their emotions throughout the day by writing and drawing on the map
- WORK TOGETHER to make a list of emotions to start you off e.g. excited, anxious, inspired, nervous, proud, valued
- VISIT our Illustration Gallery for inspiration – see maps by your favourite illustrators
- SHARE and DISCUSS the maps – safely – no names

5. Make an Empathy Resolution

How can YOU change things for the better through empathy?



- THINK about what would make your home, school, community a happier, more caring place – where would more empathy help?
- DECIDE what you will do to make a difference
- WATCH how your favourite authors and illustrators plan to use empathy to change things for the better
- MAKE and SHARE your resolution with your class, friends and family
- START acting on your resolution now!

 **FROM MARCH** Download everything you need at empathylab.uk 

Empathy is a beacon of hope.

Join our 2023 programme

EmpathyLab offers training and Empathy Day toolkits for families, schools, libraries and early years providers. Join us in our mission to reach over 1 million children a year by 2026. Find out more and register for resources at empathylab.uk. Training enquiries to info@empathylab.uk.

How to order the books in this Guide

To buy the Read for Empathy book collection, please contact your local independent bookshop or Peters, to explore how you can develop empathy through the power of books or via the Empathy Lab page at bookshop.org

- Independent booksellers: find your local shop here booksellers.org.uk/bookshopsearch or order online via bookshop.org
- Peters: peters.co.uk/empathycollection2023. If you have any queries do not hesitate to contact Peters on **0121 666 6646** or email empathy@peters.co.uk
- You can also borrow the books from your local library

Thank you to everyone who has helped with this Guide

- Selection Panel: Jon Biddle, Richard Charlesworth, Kevin Cobane, Teresa Cremin, Scott Evans, Paul Harris, Miranda McKearney, Sarah Mears, Shaheen Mogradia, Sarah Smith, Sonia Thompson, Dawn Woods
- Our partners at Peters and the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education
- Publicity: Kirsten Grant, Deborah Goodman PR
- Leaflet editing: Talya Baker
- Read for Empathy illustrators: Abigail Balfe, Karen George, Chie Kutsuwada, Fiona Lumbers, Jacinta Read

Supported by players of



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Illustration by Chie Kutsuwada