

# Developmental Levels of Empathy

## 0-12 months:

Infants feel the emotional states of others and sometimes think others' distress is their own. When one infant starts crying, they all start crying!

## 1-6 years:

Young children begin to separate others' upset from their own. They show concern, but often use unhelpful ways of comforting others. A 4-year-old might recognize her little brother's upset and try to stick a cracker in the crying baby's mouth even though it's clearly upsetting him even more.

## 6-9 years :

Children become better at knowing if their efforts at offering empathy are helpful. A 6-year-old might offer a cracker to a crying baby, but would switch to a pat on the head when the baby rejects the cracker.

## 9-11 years:

Children begin to show concern for the distress of categories of people. These children are eager to support causes that affect groups of people like victims of natural disasters, homelessness and equality issues.

## 11 years and older :

Empathy is based on love and the ability to see from another person's point of view. Mature empathy involves seeing the upset person as capable of handling the situation and the emotions involved. Those with mature empathy listen and provide support without attempting to fix the issue or join in the upset.

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