



# Big Heart World Parent & Caregiver Guide

Empathy

Released August 2021



PRESENTED BY

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IN PARTNERSHIP WITH **noggin**

# What is Big Heart World?



Big Heart World helps families learn together about social and emotional skills — what it means to have a *big heart* and how to grow one. This means:

- ★ Learning about me (self)
- ★ Learning about you (others)
- ★ Learning about us (relationships)

Learning social and emotional skills is *always* important to children's development. From the time babies are born, they are learning about who they are, developing confidence, compassion, and a sense of what is right and what is wrong.

Parents are particularly concerned about their children's social and emotional development now due to transitions and school closures brought about by COVID-19.

If you're wondering how to help your child express their feelings, figure out friendships, share, enter a classroom environment, or learn what makes them special, Big Heart World is for you.

If you're feeling overwhelmed by the pandemic and endless change and transition, Big Heart World is for you.

If you feel like you can't handle one more tantrum and you want to know what your child is really trying to tell you when they act out, Big Heart World is for you.

This guide walks you through what is available on Big Heart World this month and what you can do with it. Learn more:

[www.BigHeartWorld.org](http://www.BigHeartWorld.org)

*Big Heart World is produced by Sparkler Learning with support from Noggin, the Walton Family Foundation, and many non-profit partner organizations.*

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# Empathy:

## The Fifth Unit of Big Heart



Empathy is the ability to understand and share others' feelings. It can take a lifetime to learn — but children can start learning the basics in their earliest years.

Establishing a secure, loving relationship with parents and caregivers is the first step in developing empathy. Feeling accepted and understood, even as a baby, will help children learn how to make others feel accepted and understood as they grow up.

Learning to identify and label feelings helps children develop empathy. You can help children to learn about feelings by using words to talk about feelings and their causes. Try saying things like, "You are angry because we have to leave the playground now," or "We are happy because we get to visit our cousins today!" Your observations about feelings help your child put words to emotions *and* they demonstrate you have empathy for your child.

Before 18-24 months, children don't have the capacity to understand that other people can have thoughts, feelings, and ideas that are separate and different from their own. Once children start noticing others' feelings, parents/caregivers can help them to develop empathy. If your child notices another child crying, you can talk with them about how the child is feeling and what may have caused him or her to cry. For example, you can say, "It looks like they're feeling sad. Maybe they don't want to say goodbye."

With adult support, children will start to understand others' feelings and have enough expressive language skills to start practicing empathy. They will begin to make the connection between how they have felt and how others are feeling. Relating the way that characters in your favorite books feel to real-life experiences will support this developing skill.

Here's a quick framework to help children explore empathy with young children:

1. **Gather Information:** Practice identifying emotional and situational cues. Ask questions to better understand others. Be a careful listener.
2. **Identify Emotions:** Use words to describe how others are feeling, and start to understand that all people have different feelings, even about the same things.
3. **Take Action:** Learn to notice when someone might need help with a big feeling. Help can include noticing, sharing, or resolving an issue, but does not always have to mean "fixing" the feeling. All feelings are okay!

As children grow up, you can look for opportunities to practice everyday empathy. Acts of service, kindness, and generosity toward family, friends, neighbors, strangers, and even plants and animals will help develop children's empathy.



# The Big Heart World Learning Approach



*We started by focusing on “self” — learning about identity and belonging, feelings, and similarities and differences. In July, we start looking at others with a focus on friendship. This month, August, we are starting to learn about Empathy.*



## Identity & Belonging

Our identity makes us who we are. This includes our skills, passions, preferences, physical traits, culture, and language.



## Feelings

Identifying emotions and managing them helps us build relationships and overcome challenges.



## Similarities & Differences

Recognizing similarities and differences helps us appreciate that we have a lot in common and that everyone is unique.



## Friendship

Interacting with others and treating them with kindness helps us form strong relationships.



## Empathy

Walking in others' shoes helps us understand others and form stronger relationships with them.



## Problem Solving

Sharing, listening to others, solving problems together, and taking turns helps us collaborate with others.



## Helping

Being kind, fair, and helping others helps us become great friends, neighbors, and community members.



## Upstanding

When we see something wrong, we can learn to stand up for what's right. Learning to stand up will help children grow up to be change-makers.



## Global Citizenship

Each of us is part of a BIG world: together, we can make the world a better, kinder place.

# Let's Learn Some Big Heart Words!



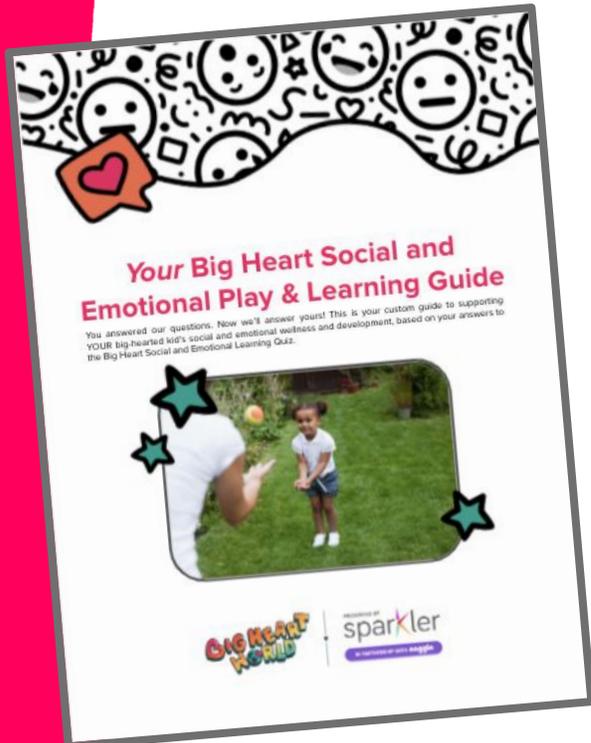
*When you introduce new vocabulary words, you help your child learn the words they'll need to express their feelings and communicate with you and others. Here are some words you can share related to empathy.*

- ★ **Afraid** - feeling fear or anxiety, frightened
- ★ **Angry** - mad
- ★ **Anxious** - uneasy, worried, and fearful about something
- ★ **Brave** - having courage
- ★ **Calm** - not feeling strong emotions
- ★ **Confused** - mixed up
- ★ **Curious** - eager to know or learn
- ★ **Disappointed** - not meeting someone's hope, desire, or expectation
- ★ **Embarrassed** - feeling awkward, self-conscious, or ashamed
- ★ **Emotion** - a deep feeling
- ★ **Empathy** - the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person
- ★ **Energetic** - with a high level of energy
- ★ **Excited** - enthusiastic and eager
- ★ **Feelings** - an emotional state or reaction
- ★ **Frustrated** - feeling or expressing distress and annoyance, especially because of inability to change or achieve something
- ★ **Happy** - glad
- ★ **Hopeful** - feeling optimism about a future event
- ★ **Lonely** - feeling sad because you're without companions
- ★ **Mad** - very angry
- ★ **Nervous** - uneasy
- ★ **Proud** - pleased with yourself
- ★ **Relaxed** - free from tension and anxiety; at ease
- ★ **Sad** - unhappy, feeling sorrow
- ★ **Scared** - feeling afraid
- ★ **Silly** - playfully lighthearted and amusing
- ★ **Surprised** - feeling astonished by something unexpected
- ★ **Upset** - feeling disappointed, unhappy, or worried



# Answer *our* questions and we'll answer yours!

We've all been through A LOT recently! One thing we have learned through this time is the importance of focusing on our kids and on our own emotional well-being. This starts with learning to develop core social and emotional skills, including identifying and understanding our emotions, learning skills to calm our bodies and minds, and building friendship and empathy.



Take our 10-question quiz and get YOUR custom social and emotional play and learning guide, full of fun, creative, off-screen activities that you can play with your child to help them get ready to transition back to your family's version of "normal," and address the areas of need you identified.

Sparkler Learning (the nonprofit organization presenting Big Heart World) and the [Housman Institute](#) created the quiz and guide, in collaboration with other experts who are partnering on the Big Heart World initiative.

Find the Quiz in English or Spanish:  
<https://www.bigheartworld.org/sel-quiz/>





# BIG HEART

## Activities



# Help is On The Way!



Children are drawn to people who make the world a better place — from the Pups of the PAW Patrol to Butterbean. Pretend play is a great way for children to practice helping friends and making the world a better place, too.

## Big Rescue

**Ages:** Little Kids and Toddlers

**Skills:** Empathy, Fine Motor, Focus

### Vocabulary Words:

- Rescue - to save from danger
- Stuck - unable to move
- Worried - anxious or troubled
- Proud - pleased with self



**Materials:** Toy animals, sand, dirt, or ice, spoons or shovels

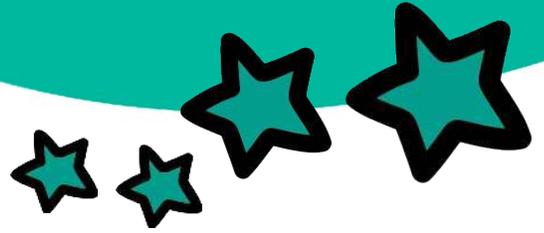
### Recipe for Play:

1. Oh no! Your animals are stuck in the sand (or dirt, or frozen in a block of ice)! How do you think they're feeling? Worried? Scared? Lonely?
2. Quick! They need your help to get out. Can you rescue them? How does it feel to save the animals? Does it make you feel proud? Strong? Kind?
3. How do you think the animals feel after being rescued? Do they need any bandages or medicine? What a relief to be rescued at last!

Find this and other Big Heart World play and learning activities online: <https://bigheartworld.org/big-heart-playroom>



# For the Birds



When Peppa Pig is feeling hungry, she loves to eat ice lollies. Blue loves to eat crackers and apples! Everyone loves a snack, even the birds in the park. Helping to take care of living things, like feeding birds in the park, helps children to develop skills that will lead to empathy — like learning how their actions affect others and imagining how others feel.

## Feed the Birds

**Skills:** Empathy, Fine Motor, Independence

### Vocabulary Words:

- Snack - a light meal
- Feed - to give food to
- Hunger - the feeling of wanting or needing food

**Materials:** berries, nuts, or grains, string or wire

### For Babies/Toddlers:

1. Let's bring a cereal snack with us on a walk or to the park.
2. Let's look for some birds. Do you think they're hungry? Are you hungry, too?
3. Let's share your cereal with the birds. You can toss a handful and watch the birds eat. You can eat some, too!
4. How do you feel after your snack? How do you think the birds feel? Did our snack make them happy?

### For Little Kids/Big Kids:

1. Have you ever felt REALLY hungry? What do you love to eat when you're hungry?
2. Every living thing needs to eat — even birds. Let's make a bird feeder to help the birds find food.
3. Let's string small pieces of fruit like grapes, raisins, berries, and grains like cereal or popcorn onto a piece of string or wire.
4. Let's tie our bird feeder into a circle and hang it from a tree outside.
5. Let's watch for birds to come and have a snack. How do you think they feel to find such yummy food? Have you ever felt that way? How do you think they feel after they've eaten?





# Little Kids, Big Hearts Podcast



*Little Kids, Big Hearts is a podcast that helps families and educators introduce big topics in social and emotional learning to children.*

Little Kids, Big Hearts was recently featured in the **Wall Street Journal's family & tech** newsletter. The report said, "As post-pandemic playdates return, it might be helpful for little ones to freshen their social emotional skills. Little Kids, Big Hearts is a new podcast that aims to teach children ages 3 to 8 what it means to be a good friend and how to stand up for what's right."

Our "Friendship" episode is coming out in July! Listen on Apple, Spotify, wherever you find your podcasts. Find discussion guides and more at [www.BigHeartWorld.org/podcast](http://www.BigHeartWorld.org/podcast).



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# Expert Tips & Opinions



“One of the greatest ways we can show that our children are worthy of love and care is by meeting them where they are, sharing in things they seem curious about, and letting them know that their feelings—all their feelings—matter (here’s a great feelings song to sing together).”

— Jane Park, *Parenting with a Big Heart: Growing Empathy*



“Parents can teach young children empathy by being the example. Show empathy daily to your children, family, and others in your community. When you show empathy, talk it through with your child and be attentive to their feelings. Use language like: “I know that was hard for you, you seemed sad but you’re safe and loved.” This language will help children become aware of their own emotions and feelings and it will help them become empathetic to others.”

— Monica Guthrie Purchase, *How to Raise an Empathetic Child: Tips from a Mother, Grandmother, and Educator*

# Books to Spark Big Heart-to-Heart Conversations



Big Heart World partner organizations **First Book** and **School Library Journal** have shared beautiful lists of book recommendations that help parents, caregivers, and educators talk with children about empathy. See all the recommendations at [www.bigheartworld.org/the-big-heart-book-list](http://www.bigheartworld.org/the-big-heart-book-list).

- ★ **We Don't Eat Our Classmates by Ryan T. Higgins**  
It's the first day of school for Penelope Rex and she can't wait to meet her classmates. But it's hard to make human friends when they're so darn delicious! That is, until Penelope gets a taste of her own medicine and finds she may not be at the top of the food chain after all.



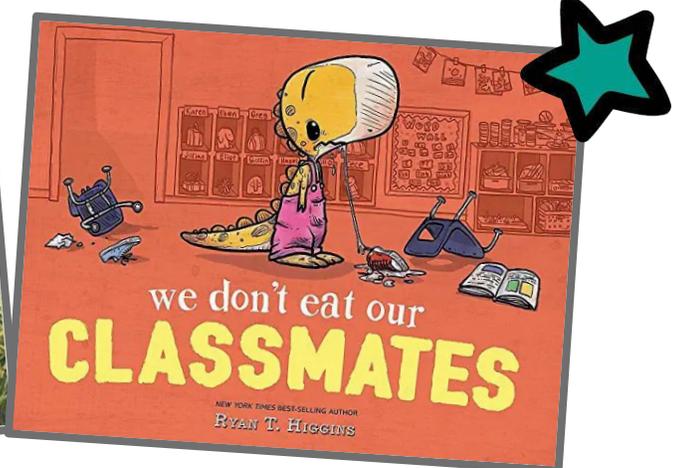
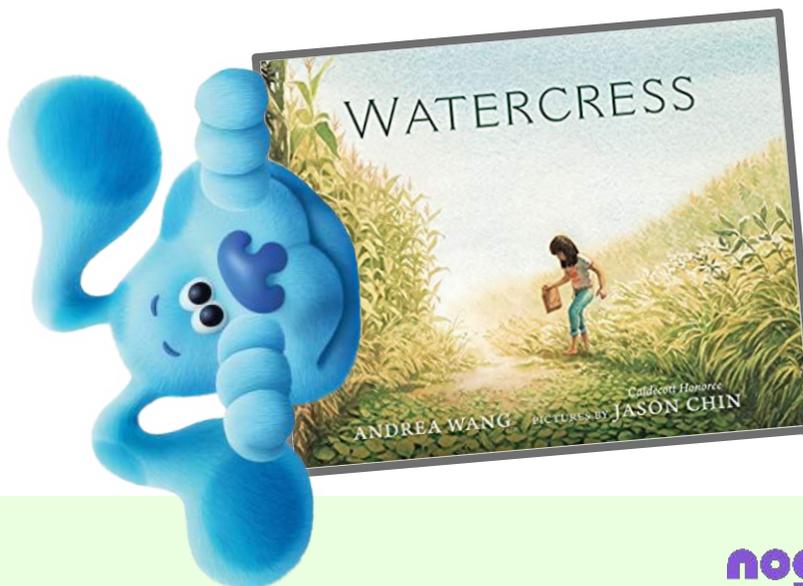
*For Discussion:* What helps Penelope realize how she's making her classmates feel? Have you ever experienced something similar?

- ★ **Watercress by Andrea Wang and Jason Chin**

A powerful story sure to awaken empathy and curiosity: Who else has left behind a homeland, and at what cost? Simple text and beautiful illustrations pack a strong emotional punch in this picture book about love and loss, and the lessons of leaving other people behind.



*For Discussion:* Have you ever had to move far away? What did you gain? What did you lose? How do you think the characters in the book feel?





# How wonderful would it be if we lived in a Big Heart World?

Join us!★



For more tools and resources, please visit us  
online at [www.BigHeartWorld.org](http://www.BigHeartWorld.org)