

## DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS WITH PERSPECTIVE AND EMPATHY

We are social beings, with a need to connect with each other. This ability to connect, feel empathy and understand the perspectives of others is crucial to build positive healthy and fulfilling relationships. We know that for both ourselves and our children to be able to do this we must first understand our own thoughts, feelings and experiences. This happens when we develop a sense of greater self-awareness and an understanding of how we impact others through social awareness. Self and social awareness are key to developing empathy. In order to develop empathy, it is important to first learn how to understand different perspectives.

Having an understanding of the brain gives us a greater ability to understand perspectives. When we are thinking clearly, when the prefrontal cortex is active, we have a greater ability to understand the perspective of another person.

Calm perspective-taking directs incoming information onto the reflective thinking prefrontal cortex instead of the reactive amygdala. When the prefrontal cortex is active, thoughtful decisions are made. Remember also that the prefrontal cortex isn't fully formed until individuals reach emerging adulthood in their mid-twenties. Children don't have the same thinking, reasoning, problem-solving and decision-making skills as we do which makes considering and understanding the perspectives of others more challenging.

When we mindfully practise perspective-taking we get better at considering the opinions of others and are more able to reduce our anxiety, have more control over impulses, and manage our behaviour more effectively. Every time we practise this, we are developing our ability to understand and connect with others.



### Useful Tips For Problem Solving

1. When faced with a problem, calmly walk yourself through everyone's point-of-view.
2. From each perspective ask, "What is this person thinking or feeling in this situation?"
3. Try imagining yourself in the other person's shoes. What does the world look like through their eyes?
4. Identify common ground.
5. Acknowledge and value differences.
6. Then consider some ways to solve this problem while respecting and bearing in mind everyone's needs.