FOREWORD

If there's something we need in this world now more than ever, it is empathy.

Without empathy there can be no understanding. It's through stories that we can learn empathy, learn kindness. Stories whether as books, plays or films help us to empathize with the lives and beliefs and histories of ourselves and of others. That way comes understanding.

Everyone is a unique individual - something we should celebrate. When we don't empathize with other people as the individuals they are, we can create stereotypes that aren't true. Stereotypes can lead to misunderstanding people and to conflict. But when we spread empathy, we begin to understand others. It is the same between us and nature. We need to understand and empathize with the environment around us, so we can protect our planet. It is through empathy that we can solve the problems in our world and make it a happier and healthier place for all of us.

Learning at home and school is the best way to encourage empathy. Understanding empathy comes to all of us through our day-to-day life, but most importantly through stories and through the books we read. Stories are the way that most of us first learn about and understand other people. Stories and books can take you all over the world. You can become a sailor, you can become a miner, you can become a mountaineer, you can become anything you want in a book. When you read a story, you live another life in that moment. You go to other places and times, and you meet people you would never normally meet in your daily life. Books really are amazing. If we read as much as we can, and about as many different people as we can, we can find out all about the rest of the world and the wonderful individual people in it. We can spread empathy all around, to people everywhere. If we all do this, I think we can have a much happier and more accepting world.

Books and stories to me are the key to empathy and understanding for everyone. They are the pathway to understanding people as individuals. Read books. Enjoy books. And, most of all, learn from books.

Sir Michael Morpurgo



HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Empathy is an actual, real superpower that can make a big difference in your life, and in the wider world too. And here's the best bit: we **ALL** have it. But we can **SUPERCHARGE** it. **BOOST** it. That's what we'll do with this book.

It's a six-step process, and we'll go through it together.

STEP 1: Know what empathy IS.

STEP 2: Know how empathy WORKS.

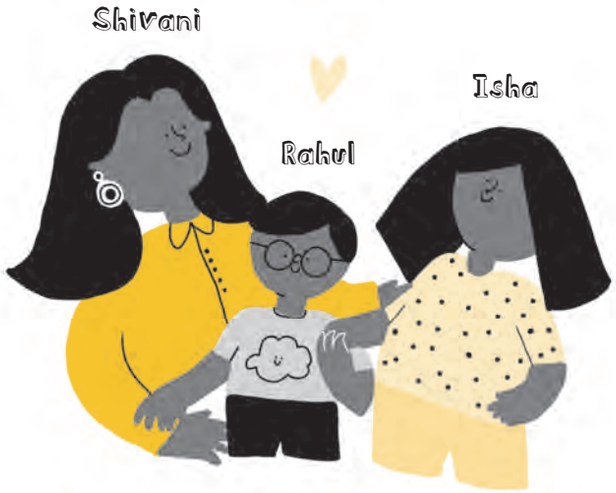
STEP 3: Use your empathy out in the WILD.

STEP 4: Learn to recognize EMOTIONS.

STEP 5: Be a BRILLIANT communicator.

STEP 6: Become the ULTIMATE empathy hero!

Do you know who else is coming on this empathy journey with you? Well, firstly, anyone you can rope in! But **ALSO** this family here. Meet the Sharmas: Shivani and her kids, Isha and Rahul. Just like you, they are well and truly ready to work their empathy muscles and build that empathy **SUPERPOWER!**



Yes, empathy is like a **MUSCLE!** The more you use it, the stronger it gets. It's science! We'll get to that soon, as well as lots of other eye-opening, mind-boggling bits, some of which you'll find in boxes like this:

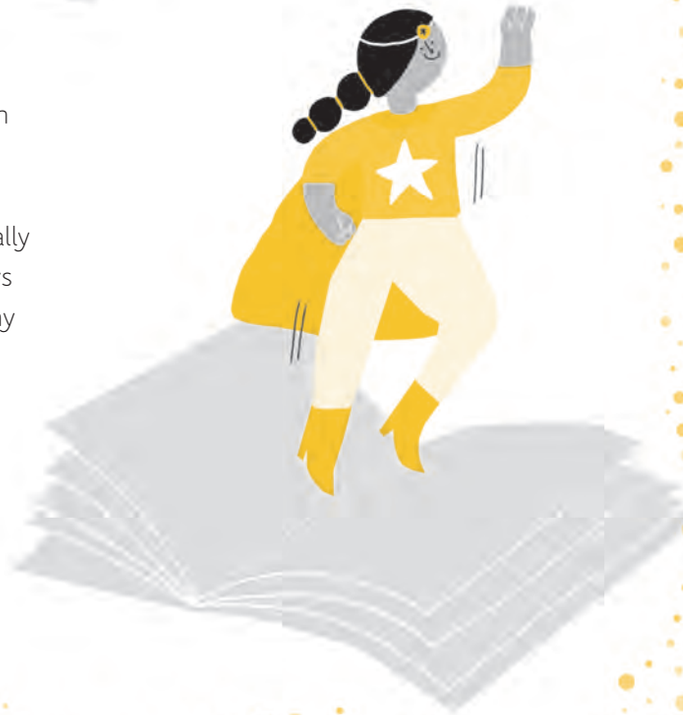
A REALLY interesting fact or something to get you thinking!



You'll also find plenty of activities to help you to understand empathy better, and to give you ideas for how to use it at home, at school and out in the **WILD**.

Finally, you'll spot quotes from some wonderful authors and illustrators dotted about this book because reading is actually one of the most amazing ways you can build up your empathy superpower! More on that very, very soon.

So, that's what we've got in store for you. Let's work through it together, and **POWER UP!**



STEP 1:

KNOW WHAT EMPATHY IS

If we're going to build an empathy superpower, we're going to need to wrap our brains around what empathy actually **IS**. So, here we go:

EMPATHY is being able to experience and understand other people's emotions and feelings and their points of view.

Wow, there's a lot in there, isn't there? Let's break it down.

EMOTIONS AND FEELINGS

(we'll talk about these on page 61)

POINTS OF VIEW

how other people see things

The first thing you might notice is that empathy is not about **YOU**. It's about **OTHER PEOPLE**. You're looking outwards, focusing on and caring about someone else. That's very different from just thinking, "Me, me, me!" all the time. Empathy is not about how *you* feel about something, or how *you* see the world. Instead, it's about turning your attention to other people's feelings and points of view.



What do we mean by points of view? **WELL**, two people can see or experience the exact same thing completely differently. In the fairy tale about Little Red Riding Hood, **YOU** might look at Red Riding Hood and think, **"What a sweet little girl,"** but the **WOLF** might think,

"MMM, LUNCH!"

(Or maybe even, "AAAAARRRGH! SCARY HUMAN!")



See? Different points of view!

Or imagine this:

The Sharmas are about to go out. They've got their coats and shoes on, and they're all set, but suddenly it starts **CHUCKING** it down with rain. Isha's jacket has the biggest hood in the whole entire world, so she doesn't really mind. Rahul, the littlest member of the family, is delighted. He can't wait to stomp in puddles and feel the cool rain on his face. Meanwhile, his mum, Shivani, is not so excited. In fact, she's the opposite of excited.

Can you guess why that might be? What if I told you that she **JUST** got her hair done and she has an **EXTREMELY** important meeting today? She might not be too keen to get soaked, right?

Rahul and Shivani are both looking at the same rain pouring down outside, but their feelings about it are so different. From Rahul's point of view, it's a **"YAY!"** moment. From Shivani's, it's a big **"OH NOOOOOOO"**.

When you use your empathy superpower, you can understand another person's point of view **EVEN IF** it's completely different from your own. Yep. It's amazing. Like climbing inside someone else's brain!





OK, let's **PAUSE** for a second.

Empathy doesn't just mean understanding other people's emotions and feelings and their points of view. There was something else in there too. Do you remember what it was? Without peeking?

OK, now you can peek! Did you see it?

Empathy is being able to EXPERIENCE and understand other people's emotions and feelings and their points of view. That means that sometimes we feel WITH them. It's as if we are INSIDE their body and their head, feeling the things they feel.



FEELING WITH CHARACTERS IN BOOKS

Reading books is an incredible way to work that empathy muscle. If you're reading a really gripping and suspenseful book, you might find your heart beating hard when the characters are racing against the clock. **BADOOM! BADOOM! BADOOM!** You might find yourself turning the pages faster and faster to see what happens and make sure the characters are **OK**.



Or, if you read a book where the main character feels really sad about something, you might start to feel some sadness in your heart too. And, when something good happens in their life, you'll probably feel really happy for them, just as you would if they were an actual, real friend. Have you ever noticed this?

When this happens, you're feeling *with* the characters. When you read, you step into the characters' worlds, and experience what they experience. **THIS** is **EMPATHY**. You're imagining what it's like to be another person, and you're feeling what they feel.

Books are a kind of **TRAINING GROUND** for getting to know others. Even if you are completely different from a character in every single way imaginable, you can still experience the world the way they do and understand how they feel. That's the power of empathy!

Your heart is big enough. It really is. And you can always open that heart even wider. Reading helps so much.

"Reading allows us to view the world – and ourselves – through another's eyes and to walk in their shoes for a while, developing understanding. This is the very essence of connecting and communicating effectively with others.

Reading is such a wonderful way to bring people together in a world that increasingly seeks to build walls and barriers between us."

MALORIE BLACKMAN

So, that's what empathy **IS!** Easy, right? Well, **HOLD ON THERE... NOT SO FAST!** There is a little bit more to it than that. You now understand what the word empathy means, but it's also important to know that there are some things out there that might seem like empathy but are actually not quite the same thing. Let's take a look at them now.

EMPATHY IS DIFFERENT FROM SYMPATHY

Imagine you're on the monkey bars with your friend, and they fall down onto the soggy woodchips below. **SYMPATHY** would be shouting down to them, while you hang from the bars above, "Oh no! Poor you! You're all muddy!" **EMPATHY** would be getting down onto the woodchips with them, and seeing things from their point of view.



Sympathy is feeling **FOR** someone.
Empathy is feeling **WITH** them.

Sympathy is very "me" and "them" – it keeps us apart. Empathy is connecting with someone. It brings us closer together.

There's something extra-specially lovely about that, isn't there?

EMPATHY IS DIFFERENT FROM RUSHING TO FIX THINGS

You know when someone shares something very personal with you? Maybe that they're feeling down or lonely? Well, you're a good human, right? So maybe the first thing you want to do is try to fix it as fast as you can? To talk about the bright side and make it all better?

That would be like telling your friend who just fell, "Well, look, at least it was only a little fall!" or, "It's lucky you fell down, because it's actually much more fun down there than it is up here on these monkey bars. So that's good... right?"

This desire to help comes from a good place. You don't want someone to be hurt or unhappy, and you want to fix their problems for them. But empathy isn't about immediately jumping in to help or to fix stuff.

When you show empathy, you don't need to say or do anything. You just need to be there for someone else. You can be quiet, or you might say something like, ***"I can see you're feeling hurt. I am here for you."*** That's enough.

Sometimes, showing that you're there for someone and that you get it – you really do – ***sometimes that is the most important thing.*** It's about building a connection. Words are powerful, but they aren't always the thing that makes people feel better. Not in the way a deep and genuine connection can. That's empathy for you. See why we call it a superpower?

