

Tatjana Gjurković & Tea Knežević

I understand you and offer you my help

Illustrations:
Jelena Brezovec

COGNITIVE EMPATHY

+
Advice for parents
and caregivers





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Razumijem te i nudim ti pomoć

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Cognitive empathy in a relationship

Empathy is defined as understanding or feeling the emotional experience of another. Experts mostly describe empathy as a partly inherited trait and partly the result of nurture, upbringing, and early life experiences. They also agree that upbringing focused on empathy should start from the earliest age. Children learn from adults, they observe us and react to our direct incentives, so it is of great importance to give empathy an important role in children's upbringing.

When we think about empathy, our first conception may be its emotional component. But many people, when faced with an uncomfortable feeling of a person dear to them, also react with their thoughts, i.e., they want to understand the source of the emotional pain and offer very specific advice and solutions.

That type of empathy is called cognitive empathy, and it is very important to us because it helps us to better understand the perspective of another. With cognitive empathy, we express the capacity for logical reasoning regarding another's state, but we remain rational and focused on the next steps or solution, because we are not significantly emotionally aroused.

Cognitive empathy is important to us because it can also induce emotional empathy. When we understand another person's behaviour and feelings, it will be easier for us to appropriately manage our own reactions to the other person.

In this picture book, children will meet an empathetic little girl Enni, and her friend Evan, who fell and hurt his knee. In the heat of the game, Enni didn't pay attention to his pain and thought one short hug would solve the problem. But Evan rejected her and pushed her away. He needed something else. First, he needed Enni to be with him for a moment, without offering him ideas of how to solve his problem.

At the end of the book, you can find advice for adults where we provide guidelines for how to act when a child's cognitive empathy is overly expressed without its emotional aspect, and how to act when we notice that child's cognitive empathy is not expressed enough.

Reading to a child, your soothing voice, attention, and the closeness you establish with the child you are reading to, play a big and important part in developing empathy.

Enjoy those moments together. ♥

”

Hi! I am Enni and I love playing in the park with my friend Evan.
But yesterday something bad happened.

Evan fell and hurt his knee. I wanted to hug him because I thought that hug would help him ease the pain and he could forget about it as soon as possible. But Evan got mad at me, and I was left feeling sad and confused. I only wanted to help him. Then a little bee taught me that it's important to first listen to someone who is having a hard time, and hear about what had happened, and only then offer them help.

Make yourself comfy and listen to my story...



– Wow! Woohoo! Look at meee – Evan shouted happily while playing in the park. Today he had a lot of fun swinging, then going on the slide for a bit, climbing it from the right side, and then a little from the wrong side. And after he mastered climbing the slide from all directions, he decided to join his friend Enni who was spinning on the carousel.

– Enni, I want to go on the carousel with you! – he shouted and ran towards his friend.



As he was running with excitement, he didn't notice the roots of a large tree, tripped over a root, and fell.

Seeing that, Enni quickly ran to him.

– Oh my, what happened? – she asked him with worry in her voice.

– I fell and hurt my knee – Evan said sadly and a little angry. – Look, I'm bleeding too. Enni looked at the wound and saw that Evan had only scratched his knee and that the wound was not deep nor dangerous.

– Don't worry, it will go away soon – Enni replied, quite sure that everything would be fine.

– But it hurts a lot now – Evan kept complaining.

– You won't even feel it in a moment. You've fallen like that many times and it was nothing serious – Enni tried to convince and remind him and then she continued: – Here, now you probably need a big hug and then you'll feel much better.

Enni spread her arms and started to hug Evan, but Evan started frowning, became all stiff, and rejected the hug.

– No, I don't, just leave me alone – he said as if trying to defend himself.



Enni was confused. She sat down on the grass a little further away and thought:

„Well, I was good to him and just wanted to help him. I thought he would like my ideas. I always like a hug when I hurt myself. I suggested everything that would help me and I'm sure that the wound is not that serious and that it will heal quickly. What did I do wrong that Evan would rather be alone than with me right now?“



Evan remained silent and looked at his wound. This fall really surprised him, and it's true, the wound does not hurt so bad and it's not that serious, It still made him angry, why he fell in the first place.

When Enni said that it was nothing, that really bothered him because he was also angry and scared and everything seemed wrong, difficult and ugly.