

Title: From Sympathy to Empathy
By Jordan Hattar



After speaking at the Anglo American School in Moscow, Russia, this girl told me to wait a few minutes. Minutes later she arrived with a handful of bank note and coins for me to give to Syrian refugees, money that she and her friends had saved during the entire school-year.

Over the past year, the words which have resonated with me the most are from my good friend, [Saria Samakie](#), a native of Aleppo, Syria. When I sought his opinion as to what the average person can do in regards to helping Syrian refugees and refugees in general, he responded:

“We must move from sympathy to empathy.”

This coincides with the advice that [Carl Wilkens](#), my mentor, often alludes to-- that in order to change the world, we must first reflect and then change our thinking, beliefs, skill sets, and actions.

Instead of talking about empathy, I thought it would be best to share some examples of empathy that I've recently witnessed:

Alex, a six-year-old boy, wrote this letter to President Obama after seeing the devastating image of Omran, the 4-year-old boy in the back of an ambulance in Aleppo: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F6r1kbQH8hI>

As I visited schools around the world, I began to share the above video that 6-year-old Alex made. Students wanted to take action and share a similar message about refugees. Here is a video that shares what students are thinking on the issue: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z8JBG0NqsD4>

Following my visit to St. Mary's Calne, an all girls boarding school in the United Kingdom, the girls raised \$7,000 to fund a midwife and nursing program with the Syrian American Medical Society:

http://www.gazetteandherald.co.uk/news/15579279.Girls_raise_money_for_refugees/

On the last visit to my hometown of Templeton, California, a rural country town of 7,000 people, Mike, a friendly middle-aged neighbor shouted as I was carrying my suitcase to the car, “The world needs you more than ever.”

I feel as though Mike is right; the world needs us to stand up for our brothers and sisters wherever they may be. As my good friend Reed Taylor, a Holocaust Resource Center board member always says, *Tikkun Olam* (a Jewish salute meaning, “to repair the world”).

To me, moving from sympathy to empathy can take many forms. Whether it be taking the time to learn a new word in a different language or asking someone their name and responding with a smile. Most of all, empathy for me means seeing a bit of ourselves in all people, no matter our differences.

With empathy for others, it is then that we are enabled to make a difference and as Mrs. Obama says “Lead by example, with hope.”