

Lesson

WHAT IS EMPATHY?

This lesson explicitly teaches students to be more conscious of other people's feelings to create a more accepting and respectful school community.

Grade Level K-2

Topic: Bullying & Bias

Subject: Reading & Language Arts, SEL, ELL / ESL

Social Justice Domain: Action

OBJECTIVES

Activities will help students:

- understand empathy
- identify ways to be more understanding toward others

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What does it mean to put yourself in someone else's shoes?
- What kinds of behaviors show that you understand someone's feelings?

VOCABULARY

empathy [em-*puh*-thee] (noun) the understanding of or the ability to identify with another person's feelings or experiences

OVERVIEW

When we put ourselves in another person's shoes, we are often more sensitive to what that person is experiencing and are less likely to tease or bully them. By explicitly teaching students to be more conscious of other people's feelings, we can create a more accepting and respectful school community.

- Feelings Faces (Note: Cut out faces so that every student has several of each feeling.)
- How Would You Feel?

ACTIVITIES

1. Sometimes the look on our faces can show how we're feeling. Look at the four different types of smiley faces. Which feeling(s) do you think each face shows? (*Note: Help students reach consensus, for example, happy, sad, proud, angry.*)

2. (*Note: Read aloud How Would You Feel?*) For each story, choose the smiley face that shows how you would feel if the story happened to you, and place the smiley on the line provided.

Discuss each story with your class:

- Finn thinks Jacob is bragging, but if he stopped to think about how he might feel in Jacob's situation, what might he realize about how Jacob is feeling? When we try to understand other people's feelings, we're putting ourselves in that person's shoes. If Finn was really listening to Jacob, he might have better understood that Jacob is proud to have gotten his first A+ after having studied all weekend.
- Durrell thinks that Mike is being mean to him, but if Durrell put himself in Mike's place, what might he realize? If you got into trouble for something a friend did, you might be angry. The same is probably true for Durrell.
- Does Tina show Suri any understanding? What might have been a better way to talk to Suri? If Tina had thought about how she would feel if her best friend had moved, maybe she would have realized that Suri was feeling sad and she would have treated her more nicely.
- Valerie gets annoyed with Meegan because she is acting silly. If Valerie had thought about how Meegan might be feeling about her trip, she might have realized what was causing Meegan's "weird" behavior. Why do you think Meegan was acting that way? Would you be happy and excited if you were the one going on vacation?

5. Now choose a partner and pick your favorite of the four stories you just read. Rewrite the story so that it illustrates being understanding of someone else's feelings (e.g., if you're rewriting story #1, you will change how Finn acts so that he is showing understanding toward Jacob). You may write the story in any format you wish (e.g., comic strip, skit script, short story).

6. Share your rewrites with the class.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Thinking about your story, make a poster that shows how to be more understanding. Hang the posters around school to teach others about being understanding of other people's feelings.