

In Her Shoes

This lesson helps students understand empathy and how to activate it during everyday situations both at school and at home through a scenario discussion activity.

Caring Sub-Concept(s)

Compassion, Empathy, Kindness

Lesson Timeframe

45 minutes

Required Materials

- ☐ What is the Kind Thing to Do? Worksheet (see below)

Standards Map

This lesson aligns with CASEL Competencies, National Health Education Standards, and Common Core State Standards. Please refer to the [Standards Map](#) for more information.



**DESIGNATED BY CASEL
AS A RECOMMENDED PROGRAM
FOR SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING.**
See last page for details.

Lesson Objective

Students will:

- Understand the definition of empathy.
- Reflect on hypothetical situations that trigger empathy and formulate a response.

Teacher Connection/Self-Care

Pick one person in your community to empathize with and place yourself in their shoes for one day. Break it down by different locations and times. Compassion and empathy can only develop through practice

Tips for Diverse Learners

- Taking notes or making a presentation might be challenging for some students; to ensure that all students are in a situation where they can maximize their participation and engagement, you may want to pre-arrange the groups.
- Read each scenario out loud first before breaking up the groups to ensure they are heard correctly and clearly.
- Circulate the room as groups work to help ensure inclusion of all members.



Share

3-5 minutes

Have the students close their eyes and put their heads on their desks.

Think for a minute about who cares for you. Call out the name of someone who cares for you; go!

This gets a bit loud and chaotic but it's fun to fill the air with the sound of kids acknowledging those who care for them. If it will be a problem to regain control after about 30 seconds to 1-minute of call-outs, have students do this in a more organized way.

Listen to all those names we heard just now. Knowing that someone cares for you helps you in turn to show compassion for others.



Inspire

3-5 minutes

Walk across the front of the room and pretend to trip before catching yourself. Act embarrassed and stand up and say "I can't believe I just tripped, I feel so embarrassed."

- Ask the class if they've ever also had an experience like this?
- Explain that their ability to understand how you felt is called Empathy

Empathy means we are able to understand another person's feelings or point of view because we have had the same or a similar experience. So, for example, if one of you breaks your arm, I can empathize or understand your pain and frustration because I, too, have broken my arm. Feel free to modify this example so that it is true for you.

When we have empathy for another person, we are able to genuinely respond to their emotions and feelings in a way that makes that person feel heard and understood.

Empathy can work in times of excitement and joy, too! If you are going on a special trip to Disney World, for example, I can empathize or understand your excitement because I have been to Disney World, and I know how amazing it is. I can feel excited for you because I know all the fun you are going to have.

Empathy is a really powerful emotion.



Empower

7-10 minutes

Divide the class into pairs and have them go over the following scenario in the handout below (project it on your smartboard if desired as well).

Scenario:

Jewel is new to the school this year. She moved here from the other side of the country and is living with her grandfather. She has a little brother in kindergarten who she walks home with every afternoon and babysits until her grandfather gets home from work. Her grandfather has very strict rules about staying inside while he is gone so they stay safe. She's very quiet in class and prefers to sketch during recess.

Use the "In Her Shoes" worksheet included below. Give students about 10 minutes to read the scenario again and talk through their answers.



Reflect

5 minutes

Go over the scenario as a group, encouraging pairs to share what they wrote down.

Be sure to highlight empathy in the discussion; What part of this scenario was the easiest for you to empathize with? What was harder to understand?



Extension Ideas

- Students could write other scenarios that they see or have experienced and you can save them for future role plays, journal prompts, and general concept reinforcement.
- The Share section could be converted into a “Web of Caring” where, instead of everyone shouting out at once, students stand in a circle, one person holding a ball of yarn. When that student says the name of a person who cares for him/her, he/she tosses the yarn to another person who says the name of someone who cares for them. They hold their piece of the yarn and then toss it to another person who does the same thing. This continues until everyone has spoken and there is a big web of caring left!



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AND EMOTIONAL
LEARNING.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (**CASEL**) has been reviewing evidence-based SEL programs since 2003. Kindness in the Classroom® meets CASEL's SElect Program and is included in the [CASEL Guide to Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs](#).

Kindness in the Classroom® met or exceeded all of CASEL's criteria for high-quality SEL programming. Kindness in the Classroom® received CASEL's highest designation for high-quality SEL programming.

<https://casel.org/guide/kindness-in-the-classroom/>

In Her Shoes

Read the following scenario:

Jewel is new to the school this year. She moved here from the other side of the country and is living with her grandfather. She has a little brother in kindergarten who she walks home with every afternoon and babysits until her grandfather gets home from work. Her grandfather has very strict rules about staying inside while he is gone so they stay safe. She's very quiet in class and prefers to sketch during recess.

Answer the following questions:

1. What part of this scenario is like your life? Examples might include having a sibling, living with someone other than mom/dad, enjoying art, etc.)

2. What part of this scenario is different from your life? Examples might include you don't stay home alone, you don't walk to school, you don't have any brothers or sisters, etc.

3. How can you use empathy to understand how Jewel feels?

4. How can you use empathy to make her feel better?
