



LESSON

Understanding Empathy

This lesson helps students understand empathy and identify ways to be more understanding toward others.

Grade Level 3-5

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.

MATERIALS

- *How Would You Feel?*

Activities



1. What are some words we could use to describe our feelings? (*Note: Record student answers on the board or chart paper.*)
2. Read *How Would You Feel?* with your class. For each story, think about how you might feel if the story happened to you and write that feeling on the line provided. You may use feeling words that your class brainstormed or your own words.

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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 Mike.
 - 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 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?
4. 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).
 5. Share your rewrites with the class.

Extension Activity

Adapt the stories from *How Would You Feel?* into a skit that you can perform for other classes to teach them how to be more understanding of other people's feelings.

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