

Lesson Plan - March

What is empathy?

- It's not the exact same thing as sympathy, but they are related, so it's understandable to get them confused sometimes.
- Sympathy is just feeling compassion for another person's situation.
"How sad! My friend dropped her ice cream!"
- Empathy is, essentially, putting yourself in someone else's shoes. If you saw your friend drop her ice cream, you would first imagine yourself dropping your own ice cream, then understand the emotions that your friend must be feeling.

We're not always perfect at empathizing

- The easiest time to empathize is when we've been in the same situation as someone else.
- If you've seen your favorite sports team lose a game, then you understand what it's like for someone else to see their favorite sports team lose a game.
- Empathizing can be challenging if we haven't been in the same situation as someone else, but that's when we use our imagination.
- Our imagination is very powerful, and it helps us understand all the details of someone else's situation.
- If you imagine yourself dropping your ice cream, you might realize that you wouldn't just be sad about losing ice cream. You'd also be worried about cleaning up the spill, and maybe sad that you didn't bring enough money to buy a second ice cream.

Empathy Tips

- Accept the fact that there isn't always an immediate solution to other people's problems.
- Don't focus on helping another person, but rather focus on connecting with them. Even if there is no solution to the problem, the other person will appreciate that you understand their situation and that they are not emotionally alone.
- If you really can't imagine yourself in someone else's shoes, then focus on just listening. Sometimes the best thing to say is nothing at all. Many people like having someone who will simply listen to them.
- You will get better at empathizing the more you practice it! We even get better at it just by living our lives year after year. With more experiences of our own, we gain more situations we can quickly empathize with.



Activity 1 - Picture Yourself

The goal of this activity is to have students practice empathy by picturing themselves (literally!) in the characters' situations.

- Materials: Paper, pencil, and drawing utensils
- Two situations will be provided at first
 - Andrew winning his basketball game
 - Brittany losing her clarinet
 - Contrasting a good situation with a not-so-good situation helps us experience the diverse uses of empathy.
 - Feel free to provide more situations, with varying levels of nuance, to lengthen the activity.
- After students have drawn themselves in the given situation, ask them to turn over their paper to the non-drawn side.
- Students will now write how they believe Andrew (or Brittany) is feeling in their current situation.
 - They are encouraged to think beyond the specific moment
 - Consider what they might have felt like a little beforehand and what they might feel like afterward.
 - Consider who else might be affected by the situation and how Andrew (or Brittany) feels about that.



Activity 2 - A Day in Your Life

The goal of this activity is to have students see how their perceptions of other students' daily lives compare to the reality.

- Materials: Paper, pencil, and drawing utensil
- First, students will divide their paper into 4 equal sections by drawing 4 lines across the page.
 - Title these sections: Morning, Midday, Afternoon, Night
- Each student gets to pick 3 of their peers and write their names down on their paper, leaving room to write a sentence after each one.
- Students are randomly assigned partners, so that everyone is working in pairs (though a group of 3 should be manageable as well).
 - They are given 5-10 minutes to write down what they believe their partner does during each part of the day on a typical Saturday.
 - The students cannot ask each other questions during this time. They must rely on their assumptions.
 - The time can be adjusted to encourage more or less detailed writing.
- Once the time is up, the partners switch papers and "grade" each other's for accuracy.
 - They will take turns telling each other which parts of the schedule were correct, and which parts were not.
 - They will also tell one another which events or activities are missing from their typical Saturday.
- The activity can be repeated with new partners multiple times.
- Ideally, students will gain a better understanding of what a day in the life of their classmates is actually like!





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Andrew & Brock both enjoy going to the art museum.
Draw the painting they are admiring today!

