

Session

3



Responding with Empathy

Link to Junior Cycle SPHE

Learning Outcomes:

Learning Outcome 1.8 Students should be able to reflect on the meaning and importance of empathy, and discuss ways it can be expressed.

Learning Outcome 1.7 Students should be able to communicate in a respectful and effective manner and listen openly and sensitively to the views/feelings of others.

Learning Outcome 1.6 Students should be able to discuss experiences/situations of bias, inequality or exclusion and devise ways to actively create more inclusive environments.

Type of Activity:

Walking Debate.



CHECK-IN:

Learning outside the classroom

Begin by asking students how they got on with the Learning Outside the Classroom task from Session 2 (if applicable).

- How did you practise empathic listening during the week?
- Did you put yourself in the other person's shoes?
- How did you feel?
- What did you learn?

Activity 1 – Walking Debate

This activity will focus on:

Practising perspective-taking and feeling empathy for others in different circumstances.

Materials:

Role-Cards.

This activity is adapted from Barrett, J. & Richardson, F. (2007), 'Giant steps' in Ireland – a level playing pitch? A Transition Unit resource. Combat Poverty Agency, pp. 31-2.

Method:

1 Give each student a Role Card. Ensure that some students are given the same role cards, in order to compare and contrast perspectives at the end. When giving out the Role Cards, be sensitive to the individual circumstances of your class. If you feel that certain students should not receive certain cards, exclude these cards altogether.

2 Ask students to read their Role Card and to enter into their roles. They should think about who they are, where they live, how many are in their family, what kind of life they have, what opportunities they have, and whether they feel as though they belong in their community, school, family etc.

3 Ask students to line up on one side of the room with their backs to the wall. Ensure that they line up in random order, so that each person will move a greater or lesser distance than the person beside them.

4 Explain that you are going to read a series of statements. Students should take a giant step if they can do that

thing quite easily or if the statement fully applies to them. They should take a baby step if they can do it but with difficulty or if it applies to them a little bit. They should not move if the statement does not apply to them.

5 Read the Walking Debate statements to the students (see page 35).



Teacher's Note

Social exclusion is sometimes described as 'a process which pushes people out to the edge of society and distances them further and further from the chance of a job or an adequate income, from social and educational opportunities, from social and community networks and from power and decision-making' (Barrett & Richardson, 2007, p. 8). People can be excluded from society/community groups, or may have more difficulty accessing resources/opportunities/rights because of their gender, socio-economic background, race/ethnicity, or sexuality etc.

For the walking debate, it is important that the students feel comfortable engaging with their role cards. Remind students that they are answering the walking debate questions from the point-of-view of their assigned role card, and that answers do not reflect students' own personal circumstances. You may wish to give students name-tags with the names of the role-card characters, so that they feel more comfortable answering from their character's perspective.

For the class discussion, choose a number of students who moved to the top of the room to talk about their experience – who were they? When and why could they move forward, or when and why did they stay put? Repeat for students in the middle and at the back of the room. Try to compare students who have the same role card if possible (why might there have been a difference in their perspectives?)

Role Cards

SORCHA, 13

You live in Galway in a large house overlooking the sea with your two sisters. Your mother is a solicitor and your father is a doctor. You enjoy school and are good at learning so have asked for a laptop for your birthday to help with your studies. This summer you are hoping to go to Irish College and French College to improve your languages. You went on the school tour to Paris this year and loved it and are hoping to do some more travelling with your family this summer.

Overview: Plans to get a laptop; Plans to go to Irish & French Summer Colleges; Went to Paris; Hopes to do more travelling.

JOHN, 14

You live in Athlone, Co. Westmeath with your two older brothers. Your father and mother run a café in the town, but this year it was flooded for the second time in four years. The family lost lots of money as a result and things are stressful at home and money is tight. One of your older brothers is already in college and the other is hoping to start a degree next year. Your parents are struggling to pay the bills so you help out more in the café after school.

Overview: Parents' café was flooded; Money is tight at home; Helps out in the café.

OWEN, 12

You live with your mother, step-father and three younger siblings in Cork. You're really close with your grandmother. She lives nearby so she usually collects you after school and you stay with her until your mom finishes work. You hate doing homework and spend most of your free time playing Playstation and hanging out with your friends in town. Your mom thinks you spend too much time having fun and that you should work harder at school, and the two of you sometimes fight about this.

Overview: Close to grandmother; Hates homework; Likes PlayStation & hanging out with friends; Fights with mom about school.

JAMES, 13

You live on a halting site with your mother, father, brothers and sisters. You like it but it can be difficult sometimes as the facilities aren't great. You go to the local school but you find it hard because there aren't many other young people from the Travelling Community, and you get a lot of hassle all the time so you only hang out with other young people from your community. You've stopped going to school some days and you're not sure how much longer you will bother with it. Your father says there's no point staying on in school as it won't help you get a job because employers all hold being a Traveller against you anyway.

Overview: Lives on a halting site; Part of the Traveller community; Gets hassled at school; Stopped going to school some days

SARAH, 12

Your father lost his job and the landlord raised the rent a year ago. As a result you, your parents and two younger brothers were made homeless and were placed in a hotel room while the council try to find you all a place to live. It takes three buses to cross the city from the hotel to your school, and you are exhausted by the time you arrive. It's really hard to do homework on a hotel bed with your brothers jumping around and you have no space of your own. You are tired and upset much of the time and are losing focus at school. You're also cut off from your friends now that you live so far away.

Overview: Family made homeless; Lives in a hotel room; Takes 3 buses to get to school; Tired & upset a lot; Feels cut off from friends

ELAINE, 13

You have been a wheelchair user for as long as you can remember. You live at home with your parents and older sister, who are all really helpful and supportive. Your family is well off and your house is very wheelchair-friendly. Your parents bring you to lots of places and buy you what you need so you don't feel different. You are going to the local secondary school and have plenty of friends. You miss out on some things like sport, and it's not always as easy for you to get around which can make socialising a problem depending on where your friends want to go. You want to go to college one day but worry about your ability to live on your own away from the support of your family.

Overview: Wheelchair-user; Family is well-off; Plenty of friends; Misses out on some things; Worries about ability to live alone

SHANE, 15

You live with your sister, brother and parents in County Limerick. You realised you were gay two years ago but so far you have only come out to your two best friends, who were very supportive. You love sports and working out and want to be a personal trainer when you're older. You have a hard time in school, with people calling you hurtful names. You can't wait to leave school and get as far away from home as possible.

Overview: Came out as gay to best friends; Loves sports; Has a hard time in school; Can't wait to leave school and get away

LISA, 14

You live in a small town in Donegal with your mother and 10-year-old sister. Your father passed away a year ago and you are all still grieving. You go to the local school near your home. You have ADHD and sometimes you find it hard to concentrate in school, but you love music and art. You like making online music videos with your friends and hope to be able to work in the music industry when you're older.

Overview: Father passed away; Finds it hard to concentrate in school; Likes music and art.

MERCY, 14

Your parents are from Nigeria and moved to Ireland before you were born. You were born in Ireland and are attending a secondary school near where you live. Most of the students at school are friendly, and you have a large group of friends, but you feel that some of the teachers look down on you. You feel that some teachers don't ask for your contribution as often as they do with other students and you think that they assume you don't have any ambitions to go to University.

Overview: Parents are from Nigeria; Most students are friendly; Large group of friends; Feels ignored by teachers

QUINN, 15

You live in rented accommodation in Kerry with your mother and younger brother. You are transgender and sometimes have a hard time in school because of this, but your family is really supportive. You are passionate about advocating for better trans rights and like connecting with other like-minded people online. You don't like going to school and feel that schools should spend more time teaching important life-skills.

Overview: Lives in Kerry; Transgender; Doesn't like school; Thinks schools need to teach more life-skills.

PETER, 14

You are from Canada but are living in Dublin as your parents travel for work. You are attending a private school and are working hard to do well. You find it easy to make friends as you play sports and socialise after school. Your parents give you money each month so you can go out with your friends. You love to travel but wish that you could stay longer than a couple of years in any one city.

Overview: From Canada; Travels a lot; Parents give him money; Likes to socialise with friends; Doesn't like moving house so often.

PHIL, 13

You were recently diagnosed with Autism. Sometimes you feel a bit stressed with group-work in class and your Teacher doesn't always recognise this. You have some really good friends but sometimes you feel that the other students at school don't understand you. You really want to hang out with your classmates more, but it can get a bit overwhelming when there's lots of noise and people around. Your parents do whatever they can to help you get involved in stuff that interests you, and they can afford this because they have well-paid jobs.

Overview: Has Autism; Finds lots of noise and people overwhelming; Has some really good friends; Would like to hang out with classmates more.

Walking Debate Statements

- You will do well in school.
- You will easily get a part time job.
- You will go to third level (college, university) when you finish school.
- Your basic needs for food, drink and medicine are met.
- You feel physically safe.
- You have your own bedroom.
- You can get most of the things you ask for like clothes, spending money etc.
- You are happy at school.
- You have a secure and happy home life.
- You like living where you do.
- You have plenty of friends.
- You can easily go out and socialise with friends.
- You have enough money to go on holidays each year.
- You can join in the life of your school and community easily.
- You get extra help and support when you need it.
- You are confident you will reach your full potential in life.
- You don't feel isolated.
- You have various skills and talents.
- You probably won't suffer from mental health problems.
- You can go to the shop easily on your own.
- You have access to social media.
- You are able to read and write.
- You feel accepted and valued in the community where you live.
- You can be yourself without being bullied or made to feel different.
- You are looking forward to the future which is pretty secure.
- You can easily access facilities in your town such as restaurants and cinema etc.
- You are happy.



Class Discussion:

1

For those who could take most of the steps, why was this the case?

How did that feel?

What statements could you move on?

What statements made you stay put?

2

For those who were left behind, why was this the case?

How did that feel?

What statements could you move on?

What statements made you stay put?

3

How did you feel when others beside you were moving ahead or being left behind?

4

How could those who stayed behind be helped to move forward?

5

What practical things can we do to support people who have less access to resources, or don't have the same opportunities as others?

Activity 2 – Acting with Empathy

This activity will focus on:

Describing ways we can respond with empathy in different situations.

Type of Activity:

Group work, Role play, Scenarios

Materials:

Situation Cards

Method:

- 1 Divide the students into groups and give each group a different Situation Card (page 38-41).
- 2 Explain that each group should write down how they would respond with empathy to the situation they have been given. Ask them to write out the actions they would perform and the words they might use. They can give a few different responses if they like. Remind them to consider things from the point of view of the person at the centre of the scenario.
- 3 Ask the groups to prepare a role play to act out the scenario.
- 4 Walk amongst the class prompting and helping if necessary.
- 5 Ask some or all of the groups to role-play the scenario to the rest of the class. After each role play has been performed, ask the other groups if they can come up with any other ways of responding with empathy in that situation.



Class Discussion:

1

Is it sometimes difficult to know how to respond with empathy or kindness? Why/In what ways is it difficult?

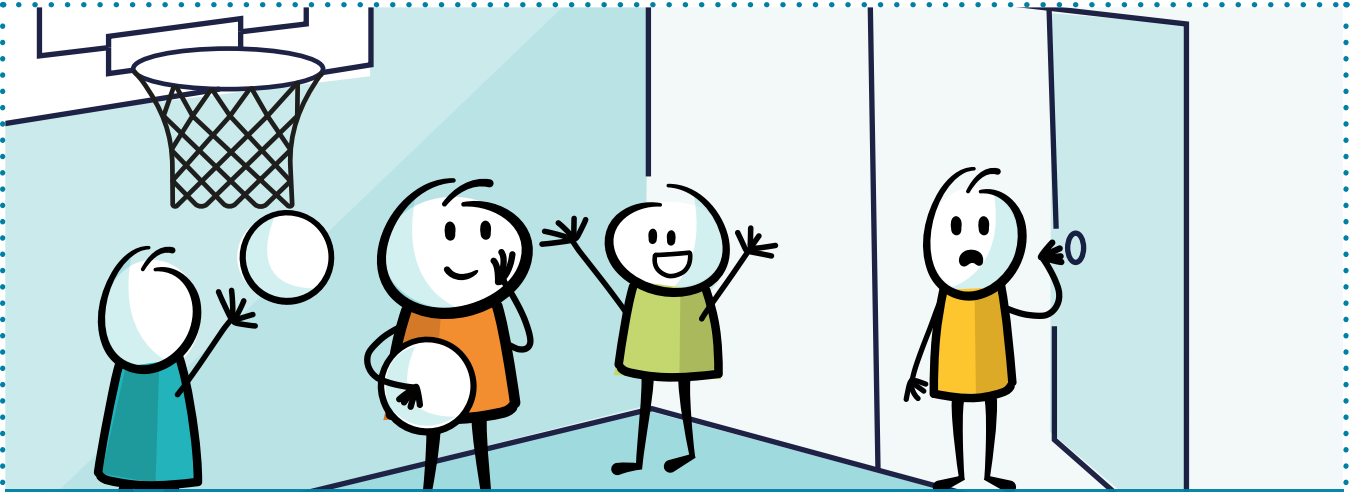
2

What are the potential consequences of showing empathy to others?

PROMPT: *Does it differ depending on the situation you are in or the person you are with?*

3

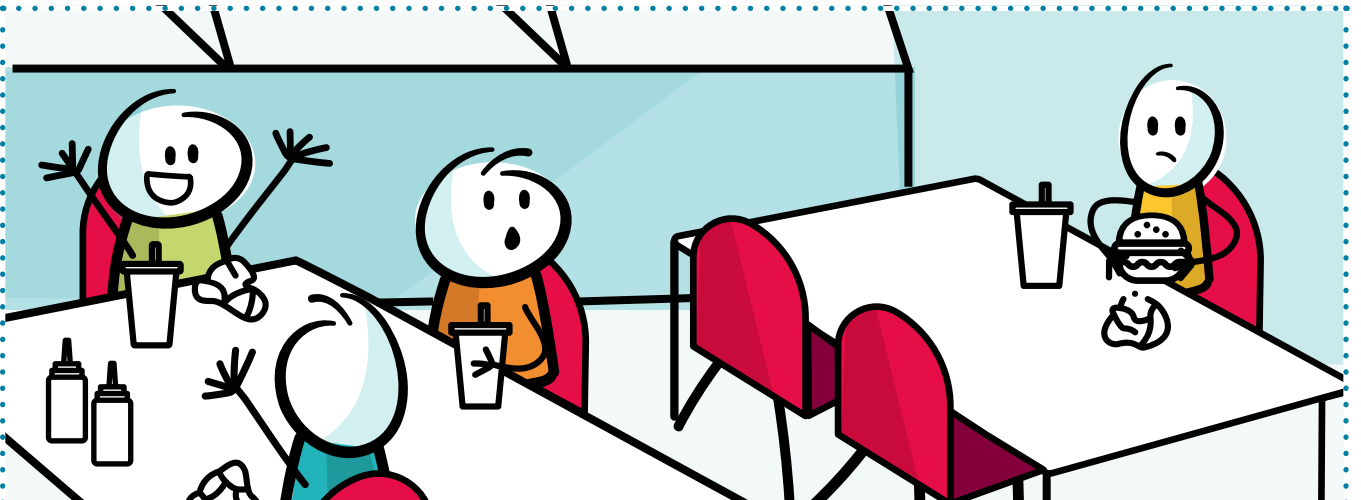
Can you think of some everyday examples where you are called on to respond with empathy or kindness? How might you respond in these cases?



Situation Card - Responding with Empathy

A new person arrives to join your sports club or youth club and seems shy. They hang back by the door and seem afraid to come into the room.

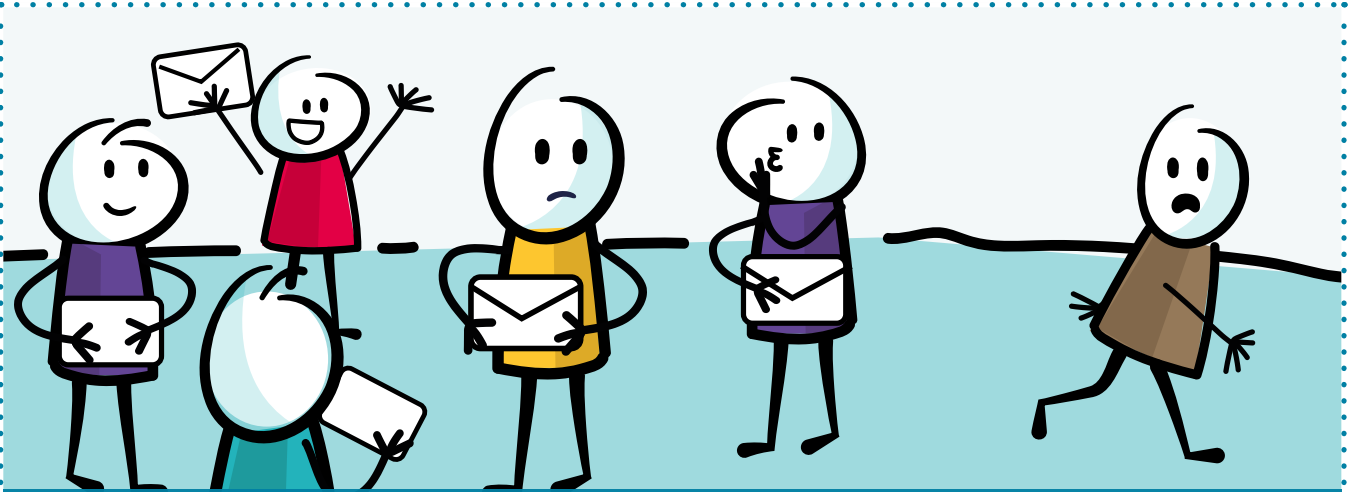
How would you respond?



Situation Card - Responding with Empathy

You are in the chipper with your friends at the weekend when you notice another classmate eating alone. They look embarrassed to see you.

How would you respond?



Situation Card - Responding with Empathy

Your friend is organising their birthday party. You find out that they invited everyone in the class, apart from one person, and you think your friend left that person out on purpose.

How would you respond?



Situation Card - Responding with Empathy

In the hallway at school, you see that some older students have grabbed another student's phone and are looking through their social media, laughing and making comments. The student seems upset.

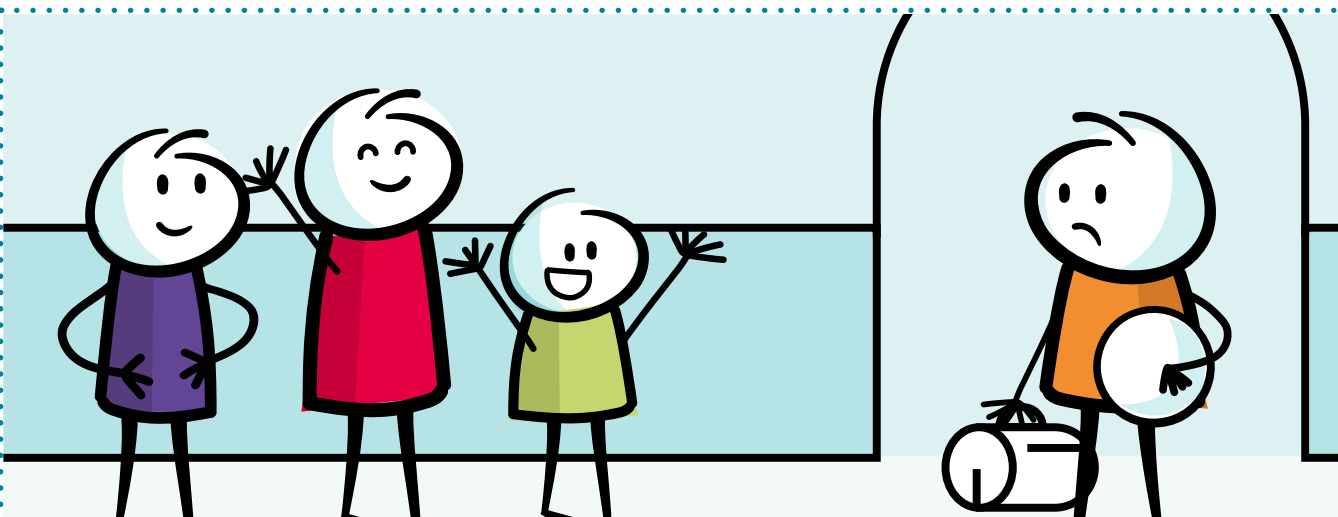
How would you respond?



Situation Card - Responding with Empathy

You were recently sent a photo of a student in your class. The whole class is talking about the image and the student seems pretty bothered about it.

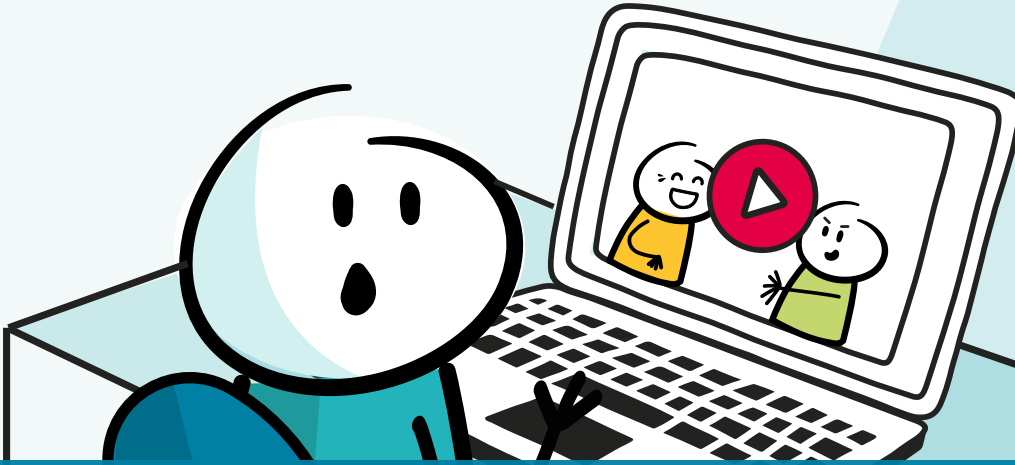
How would you respond?



Situation Card - Responding with Empathy

You and your pals have just seen your other friend lose an important match, where they did not perform their best. You meet them leaving the venue afterwards.

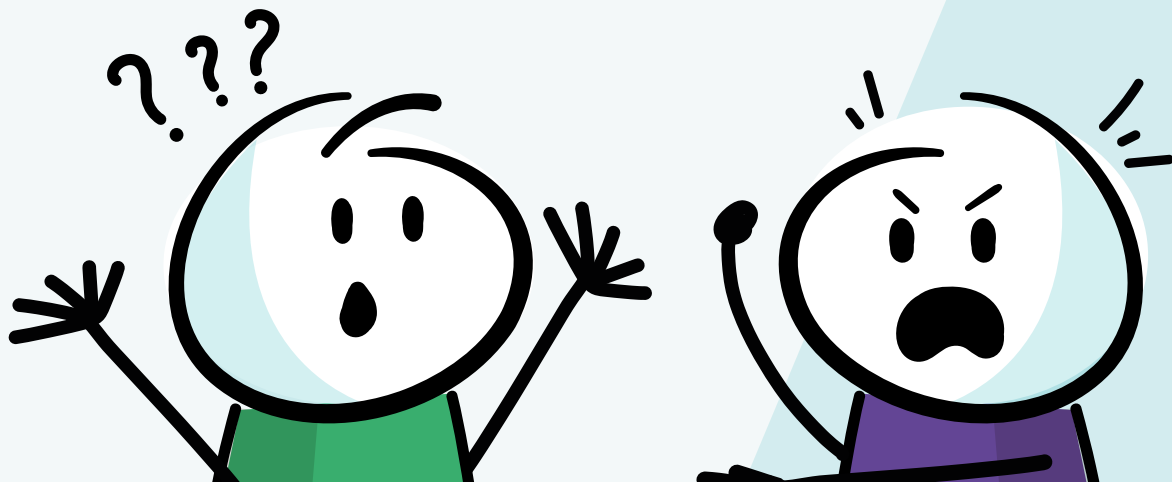
How would you respond?



Situation Card - Responding with Empathy

You're watching videos online and you see a video that some students in your class uploaded making fun of another student. You don't know that student very well, but get the feeling most people don't like them.

How would you respond?



Situation Card - Responding with Empathy

One of your closest friends has been acting off with you recently. They have lashed out at you a few times for what seems like no reason at all.

How would you respond?



Session 3 Reflection

Allow the class a few minutes to reflect on their learning from the session. Ask students to think about what they learned in the session and whether their opinions about how to show empathy changed. Ask students to write-down three things they learned or feel different about, after taking part in the session.



Learning outside the classroom

Ask students to keep note of how they show empathy to others during the week and ask them for examples at the start of the next session.

Finished with the ASE lessons? We would love to hear your feedback.



Please follow the QR code or click the link below to complete a short (2-3 minute) feedback form:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ASEFEEDBACK1>

