

## Empathy Education for Schools – 40min In-Class Taster

### Activity 1 – Understanding Empathy (5 mins)

1. Teacher writes the word ‘Empathy’ on the whiteboard and asks students what they understand by this word “empathy”. Teacher creates a word map by noting all keywords on the whiteboard.
2. Teacher provides definitions and examples of empathy to the class.

#### **Definition:**

Empathy is the ability to understand what other people are feeling and thinking, and even to share their feelings. Empathy is very often described as ‘*putting yourself in somebody else’s shoes*’.

#### **Examples:**

*Example 1:* When you watch somebody drop something heavy on their foot, you might wince, lift your own foot off the ground in an involuntary reaction, or maybe even feel a little flash of pain in your own foot.

*Example 2:* When someone tells you about an experience that you yourself have gone through, you may find yourself understanding the other person’s thoughts and feelings in a very clear and profound way.

*Example 3:* When you watch something sad happen in a film or read about something sad happening in a book, you may find yourself becoming upset also.

3. **OPTIONAL:** Ask the students for some examples of empathy. This could be a time when somebody showed empathy to them; an occasion when they showed empathy to another person; or a time they witnessed a display of empathy between other people.

### Activity 2 – Understanding Other People’s Emotions (10 mins)

1. Teacher explains that this activity is like a game of charades - Emotion Charades - designed to help students practice reading people’s emotions through their body language.
2. Teacher asks for volunteers to come to the top of the room and pull an Emotion Card (see below) out of a hat. Students must act out the emotion using *body language only*. They may use props if they like. Other students must guess what emotion they are showing. **NOTE:** This activity can also be carried out in pairs/small groups.

#### **Emotion Cards:**

Sadness	Disappointment	Excitement	Concern
Hurt	Irritation	Pride	Pity
Nervousness	Anger	Impatience	Shock
Fear	Guilt	Loneliness	Shame
Boredom	Happiness	Frustration	Confusion

### Activity 3 – Understanding Other People’s Perspectives (15 mins)

1. Teacher explains to students that they are going to take part in a perspective-taking activity (i.e. trying to see things from another person’s point of view).

2. Teacher separates students into small groups of 4 or 5 students and provides each student with a photograph. Students in the same group are provided with a different photograph.
3. The teacher asks each student to look at their photograph and explains to students that they are going to try to step into that person's shoes and tell their story from a first person perspective (e.g. 'My name is...', 'I am...', 'I feel'...).
4. Each student is asked to take a few moments to look at the photograph and to think about their story (e.g. *What is their life like?; How do they feel?; What do they want? etc.*).
5. Students are then asked to tell their story to the rest of the group. Students are asked to hold the picture facing outwards while they are telling the story so that the rest of the group can see it.
6. Once students have shared their stories in their groups, the teacher involves all students in a class discussion. **Sample class discussion questions:** *Was it difficult to put yourself in that person's shoes? Did you feel empathy when telling the story? Did you feel empathy when listening to others' stories?*

**Sample Photographs:**





#### **Activity 4 – Showing empathy (10 mins)**

1. Teacher reads out a scenario to the class (sample scenario cards provided below).
2. Teacher asks students to describe how they might respond with empathy to the situation they have been given. Ask them to list out the actions they would perform or 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. Seek multiple perspectives from different students.

**NOTE:** This activity can also be carried out in pairs/small groups, giving each group/pair a different scenario to discuss.

**Scenario Cards:**

A new student joins your school and seems shy. You see him/her eating lunch by themselves.

You and your friends are walking down the street and you see a woman trip and drop her handbag.

When you go into the bathroom at school you bump into another student. You notice that he or she appears upset and it looks like he/she has been crying.

You have just seen your friend lose an important match, where he or she did not perform their best. You meet them leaving the venue afterwards.

Your sister/brother arrives home very upset and tells you that she/he has just broken up with their boyfriend/girlfriend.