

What Would You Do?

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.

Depending on your students and the time allotted, this activity can be adjusted to suit your needs; students can work in small groups or in large, choosing to talk, write, and present their ideas or use role playing instead. Students could work independently on their responses and then do a think, pair, share. There are many ways to work through the situations presented in the closing worksheet. Note that more time is given to the end of this lesson (Empower and Wrap Up) so plan your time accordingly.

Caring Sub-Concept(s)

Compassion, Empathy, Kindness

Lesson Timeframe

45 minutes

Required Materials

- What is the Kind Thing to Do? Worksheet

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

Compassion and Empathy go hand in hand. When you experience that tug of compassion, you are often able to express empathy simultaneously. Last week we focused on paying closer attention to the frequently forgotten in your community. This week, the challenge goes even deeper. Pick one person in your community to empathize with and place yourself in their shoes for one day. What is their day like? What struggles might they encounter? What might be the highlight of their day? If possible, try and live one day the way they would. If this isn't possible, try visualizing the day or journaling about it. Compassion leads us to feel emotions. However, true empathy allows us to place ourselves squarely in the place of the other person, with their highs and lows, their struggles and their celebrations. This simple exercise can help you practice empathy more readily with all different people both locally and internationally.

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

In our last lesson, we talked about how we can show compassion and care for other people. We wrote letters to ourselves that outline how we might care for others in our community. You'll get those letters back sometime when you do not expect it and I hope they remind you of the impact you can have when you care for other people!

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.



Inspire

3-5 minutes

That was really empowering to hear about all the people who care for us. We just filled the air with the names of people who care! Isn't that cool?

Now, in Lesson #2 where we talked about the things we could do to "Give Five" to someone else, to help someone else cope with stress and to help them work through a problem, I mentioned the word empathy. Does anyone have any idea what this word means?

Invite student response.

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

Ok, now you are going to break up into six different groups. Each group gets one scenario to read and then answer the questions. After all the groups are done, we will come back together as a large group to look at each scenario and your group's response to it. So, you should pick a reader, a note taker, and at least one presenter.

You can have students take notes on notebook paper, on their scenario sheet, or on a large sticky note pad that they can hang up behind them on the board as a mini-visual presentation.

Use the “What is the Kind Thing to Do?” worksheet included below. Give students about 10 minutes to read their scenario and talk through their answers.



Reflect

5 minutes

Take time for each group to present. This can be at the end of the day as part of the wrap-up or exit ticket strategy. Upon presenting, students can earn an exit ticket.

Be sure to highlight empathy in the discussion; each scenario asks students if they have been in a similar situation. Ask, “How did it feel? What made a difference for you?” Open this up to others in the larger group.



Extension Ideas

- Students could role play the ideas on the scenario cards (instead of presenting), or they could role play and then have a student in the group ask questions of the audience or explain their interpretation.
- 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/>

What is the kind thing to do?

Scenario 1:

Melissa, Joe, and Christina don't like to do chores at home. When their parents ask them to take out the trash and take the dog for a walk, they complain and don't want to help.

- How can the children show care and respect to their parents? How would you respond in this situation?
- Sometimes we don't do the right thing even though we know we should. Why not?
- What can you do to respond to your parents in a way that you and they would like?

Scenario 2:

Alicia is really excited about a new skirt. When she wears it to school the next day, some girls make fun of it. Monique is Alicia's best friend, and sees the girls making fun of Alicia.

- How can Monique show care and respect to Alicia?
- How would you respond if you were Monique? If you were Alicia? Have you ever been in this situation?
- What can you do to stand up for your friends in a way that is caring and respectful?

Scenario 3:

Gwen's younger sister, Isabel, wants to play with Gwen all the time. When Gwen's friends come over, Isabel won't leave them alone, and Gwen gets very annoyed.

- How can Gwen be kind to Isabel?
- How would you respond if you were Gwen? If you were Isabel? Have you ever been in this situation?
- How could you be more patient and inclusive with your siblings or with friends?

Scenario 4:

Mrs. Martinez is always doing kind things for the kids in the neighborhood; especially for Josie and her friends. She bakes cookies for them, picks them up after school when their parents are working, and listens when they have a problem.

- How can Josie and her friends show gratitude to Mrs. Martinez?
- Have you ever been in a similar situation as Josie and her friends? What did you do?
- What are some ways that we can be grateful to others when they do kind things for us?

Scenario 5:

Michael is in 4th grade at your school. He constantly pokes and bothers other kids in class, is disrespectful to the teacher, and is a class clown. The students are having a hard time concentrating and want Michael to stop but are afraid of him. Antonio is his best friend and decides to talk to him about the problems.

- What are some respectful ways that Antonio can talk to Michael about the way he is acting?
- How would you respond if you were Antonio? If you were Michael? Have you ever been in this situation?
- It might be tempting to treat Michael the same way he treats others. How can you be kind even when it might difficult to do so?

Scenario 6:

Eric plays on a Little League baseball team and doesn't like all the trash that people leave at the baseball field after the games.

- What can Eric and his friends do to help with the trash problem at the baseball field?
- How would you respond if you were Eric and his friends? Have you ever seen a problem like this and didn't know exactly what to do?
- We don't always take the time to figure out what we can do to solve big problems. What prevents us from doing so?