

Caring

This is the 3rd week in the caring unit. Students will focus on empathy and finding common ground with others regardless of background and location.

Begin the unit with the whole class lesson and then aim to complete at least two of the mini lessons with your students throughout the week. Each mini lesson is designed to present elements of the main lesson in new and engaging ways.

Main Lesson

Whole Class Lesson
30 minutes



Find Your Empathy

Students will challenge themselves to find empathy within a variety of scenarios. They must explain their common ground or search for it through group discussion. (See page 2 for lesson details.)

Mini Lessons

For Small Groups
15 minutes



Similar Struggles

Divide the class into groups of 4-6. Have each group brainstorm one common problem 6th graders face in school on a daily basis. Brainstorm 2-3 possible solutions for each struggle. Share your struggle and solutions with the class.

For Partners
15 minutes



Common Ground

With a partner, create a list of 3-5 experiences you have in common. Move beyond physical attributes and personal preferences. If time permits, share at least one common experience aloud with the class.

For Individuals
15 minutes



Inspirational Cards

Create an uplifting card for a child currently in the hospital. How might it feel to be away from your parents or family, working on yourself with only visits? Design your card to bring them joy and peace.

Technology-Focused
15 minutes



Awareness Expanded

Divide the class up into groups of 4-6. Have each group brainstorm at least one national and one international problem they have heard about. How has technology helped you learn about these events? How has technology helped you empathize with people that live far away and may not have anything obviously in common with you?

Find Your Empathy

Students will challenge themselves to find empathy within a variety of scenarios. They must explain their common ground or search for it through group discussion.

Lesson Timeframe

30 minutes

Required Materials

- No materials are required for this lesson.

Standards Map

This lesson aligns with CASEL Competencies, National Health Education Standards, International Society for Technology in Education Standards, when applicable, and Common Core State Standards. Please refer to the [Standards Map](#) for more information.

Lesson Objective

Students will:

- Explore the difference between sympathy and empathy.
- Develop an understanding of empathy as it applies to them personally.
- Practice empathy in a variety of scenarios throughout their daily routine.

Teacher Connection/Self-Care

Each student you work with is unique. Maybe you work with students who come from challenging backgrounds. Maybe you work with students who have very stable, loving homes. Maybe you work with students who are in foster care or who live with extended family or are homeless. Maybe you work with students who love school and do well. Maybe you work with students who do not like school and are behind grade-level. Whatever the situation, look for the common ground that you share with each student, both in their challenges and their triumphs. Being able to empathize with what they are going through outside of your care will help you be more caring and compassionate toward them when they are in your charge. Students at this age are forming their identities and long to be seen and known. Showing empathy toward them as individuals will go a long way in helping them cope with challenges and form healthy self-images.



Share

3-5 minutes

Thus far we have explored caring and how it connects to self-care and gratitude. This week our focus shifts to empathy. This can be a difficult concept to explain and define. To help us better understand this tricky concept, let's explore the difference between sympathy and empathy.

Sympathy is feeling pity or sorrow for someone else.

What is one example of a time when you have felt pity for someone else?



Inspire

3-5 minutes

Empathy goes beyond this feeling of pity or sorrow. You don't just feel sorry for someone and their situation. You are able to truly understand someone else's emotions and look at things from their perspective. Let's work together to explore what this looks like:

Close your eyes and picture the following scenario:

Miriam gets up every morning by 6:30 to catch the bus. If she is late, she must walk the 2 miles to school because her father leaves for work before she gets up. Today she is 15 minutes late and has to start walking. She opens the door and she is greeted with a gust of chilly wind and several snowflakes. She smiles.

Okay, now place yourself in her shoes.

What might she be feeling, thinking, and experiencing? Make sure these are not your feelings but hers. She loves snow and is excited to walk in it this morning. You, however, may be frowning at the thought!

Your ability to understand her feelings and look at this from her perspective even though it might differ from your own is empathy. You were able to connect with her on a personal level; maybe you have been late before, have had to walk somewhere, or have been caught in a snowstorm. You found some common ground and that increased your empathy.



Empower

15 minutes

Explain that the class will now play a game to practice using empathy. Emphasize that some situations are easier for us to empathize with as we have experienced something similar. A simple example might be being late for class. Most of us have had this happen at one time or another. You can easily use empathy to put yourself in a late student's shoes!

How to Play:

Identify one side of the classroom as "yes" and the other side as "no". Explain that you will read a scenario about other children aloud. Each student will close their eyes and attempt to empathize with the person. If they are able to easily understand that person's emotions and look at things from their perspective, they walk over to the "yes" side of the room.

If you choose the "yes" side, be prepared to explain your reasons. How are you able to empathize? What connection do you have to that person's situation?

If you choose the "no" side, be prepared to explore the possibility of common ground you might not have thought of before.

Note: If students say they cannot empathize with the scenario, challenge them to find common ground. If we really think about it, we can usually find something in common!

Scenarios:

- A boy comes home and finds the door locked. No one is home and his phone is dead. His neighbors are not answering the door and he doesn't know where his family is.
- Two children find themselves lost in the woods. They were fishing down at the lake and did not pay attention to where they wandered. It is getting dark and the temperature is dropping quickly.
- A 12 year old loves being the "baby" in the family and just found out that his/her parents are expecting another child.
- A family just found out they have to move in the next week for a new job. The children will have to switch schools and it is already February.



Reflect

5-7 minutes

As a class, discuss the importance of empathy and how it helps us care for others both in our community and on a larger scale (nationally, worldwide, etc.).

This week, try to use empathy with those that you don't usually hang out with. What might you have in common with the girl you sit next to in class? The boy in your neighborhood? The family down the street?