

Becoming Courageous

Contemplate: Lesson 5

Empathy

Objective:

1. To introduce the concept of empathy.
2. To give the children a script so that they can practice using empathy in their interactions with others.

Rationale:

1. Empathy is defined as the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. This is in contrast to sympathy, which is defined as feeling pity and sorrow for another person's misfortune.
2. Practicing empathy is an important skill for students to learn so that they can form friendships. It also gives children the ability to understand perspectives of others.
3. Empathy has 4 components: perspective taking, withholding judgement, recognizing emotion, and communicating understanding. This lesson introduces a simple script for students to use when practicing empathy.

Alignment to the British Columbia Core Competencies:

Social Responsibility; Building Relationships:

1. I can identify when others need support and provide it.
2. I am aware of how others may feel and take steps to help them feel included.

Supporting Literature:

1. [Shame and Empathy](#) by Dr. Brené Brown
2. Article, [Empathy in the Classroom: Why should I Care?](#) By Lauren Owen.
3. Article: [4 Proven Strategies for Teaching Empathy](#)
4. [Outrospection](#) by Roman Krznaric

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Materials and Resources:

1. Courage Journals. Children use exercise books or any type of book or journal. Courage Journals are used to reflect on the content of the day's lesson. Each child should have their own.
2. Smartboard, or projector and speakers (to show videos) Links to the videos are in the lesson.
3. Videos: [Sesame Street Empathy](#), Brene Brown [Kid Friendly Sympathy and Empathy](#)
4. Books: *The Invisible Boy* by Trudy Ludwig

Lesson (approx 1 hour)

Introduction:

1. Organize students so they can see the smartboard.
2. Show the students the [Sesame Street Video about Empathy](#)
3. Facilitate a conversation with your students about the video. Ask the students to tell you who showed empathy. (don't forget the happy dance at the end!)
4. Mention that many people confuse the terms, "sympathy" and "empathy". Clarify that empathy creates connection between people, and that sympathy creates distance between people. This is illustrated in the [Brene Brown Empathy](#) video.
5. Follow the videos by asking the students to give examples of empathy from their own experiences.

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Main Activity:

1. Read the book, *The Invisible Boy*. Afterwards, lead a discussion about how Brian is feeling at different parts of the story. What are some examples of the characters showing empathy? (when Brian leaves the note in Justin's box - how is Brian showing empathy for Justin?) (when Justin invites Brian to join his group)
2. Tell the children that you are going to help them learn how to be *empathetic* people. It's really about paying attention to how other people are feeling, and caring about them.
3. Introduce this script: (If you want to show it to the class, then scroll down and it is written on the bottom of this lesson so that you can show it to the class on the smart board.) It goes like this:

How to be Empathetic

Step 1: Figure out how the other person is feeling. Look at their face and guess or ask,

“Are you feeling _____?”

or

“How are you feeling?”

Step 2: Pause for a couple of seconds so that you can think about the person's answer.

Step 3: Respond in an empathetic way.

“I understand how you are feeling, sometimes I feel like that too.”

or

“I'm not sure what you mean, could you please tell me more about this?”

4. After you have given the students some examples, then it is time for them to practice being empathetic. Students can work in partners. Give the students a situation with one of them feeling a certain way. The other student approaches and practices the script. As they get more confident, they can come up with their own situations.

Reflective Activity:

What did you learn about empathy? Write about a time when you were empathetic to someone else, or when someone else showed empathy towards you.

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Extensions:

1. There are a number of children's books that show the characters being empathetic.

Last Stop on Market Street by Matt De La Peña

Those Shoes by Maribeth Boelts

One by Kathryn Otoshi

We're All Wonders by R.J. Palacio

Hey, Little Ant by Phillip and Hanna Hoose

Creative Activity: It's All About the Heart. Students, in the pop art style, draw concentric hearts with oil pastel on black construction paper. They can style them any way they like. The symbolism of this activity is that when you grow in empathy, your heart gets stronger. If you would like a template of concentric hearts, there is one to print out on the "creative activity" button. If you choose to have the students draw the hearts freehand, you might want to first do a quick lesson on how to draw a heart. It works best if the small heart in the middle is drawn first.

Note: the hearts fit best on the paper if you position it landscape.

Here is a [link](#) to some examples. (Some of the examples are useable)

Materials:

- Black construction paper **or** templates printed out from website
- Oil pastels

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