

Empathy

Overview: This lesson is to introduce students to the term empathy and what it means to demonstrate empathy.

Student Objectives:

- Learn the definition of empathy
- Learn how to demonstrate empathy
- Learn why it is important to have empathy

Materials: None | **Vocabulary:** Empathy | **Compassionate skills:** Empathy

Clapping Activity (5 mins)

Invite students to sit or stand in a circle. Instruct students to close their eyes and give them the option of dropping their gazes to the floor if they are uncomfortable closing their eyes.

Next, ask students to take three deep breaths. (Be sure to demonstrate three slow and easy deep breaths so that they can hear you inhale and exhale.) Then ask students to keep their eyes closed but to return to their normal breathing.

After one minute of breathing, invite students to open their eyes. Next, lead them in a simple beat consisting of knee slaps and hand claps. You can choose your own beat, but the beat to “We Will Rock You” is simple, and most students will know it. Do this until everyone is doing the beat together then move on to the next activity.

Note: This activity builds group cohesion subconsciously because everyone is watching each other do the same movements. The abrupt ending of this activity is to maintain that mental state for the next activity.

Human Knot (5 to 10 mins)

Invite the students to stand in a tight circle. Instruct the students to reach in with their right hands and grasp one of the right hands available. Repeat with left hands. Then ask them to unravel the knot so that they are in a big round circle without letting go of each other's' hands. The circle of hands is to remain unbroken.

Discussion: Talk to the students about empathy and why it is important to understand others and how they are feeling. Ask questions such as:

- How did you use empathy to help with the Human Knot activity?
- How does it feel to be misunderstood?
- How does it feel to understand someone else?
- How can we be empathetic every day?

Empathy is putting yourself in other's situations to understand that we all have feelings and that the way others feel is just as important as how we feel. Empathy is an important skill to have when interacting with others, because it helps us to balance our own needs with the needs of others.

TELL US HOW YOU CELEBRATE PEACE DAY! Tag or mention us and use hashtag #PeaceDayChicago. Follow us on Facebook (Build the Peace) or Instagram and Twitter (@BuildthePeace_) and email us at info@buildthepeace.org