



YOUNG & eSAFE



THEME - Empathy



TARGET AGE GROUP - Years 9 and 10 (Level 6)



LESSON DURATION - 15-20mins

Activity purpose: Develop students' ability to understand the feelings of another person in order to promote empathetic behaviour online.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Empathy is the ability to identify and understand the feelings, motives and actions of another person. Having empathy allows a person to stop and consider what is happening for another person, and then use this understanding to respond in a compassionate way. Compassionate responses are empathy in action, including what to say and do to connect with and support others.

Demonstrating empathy online is the ability to recognise and respond to differing viewpoints and opinions in a way that takes into account others' feelings and beliefs. Empathy online can be challenging when attempting to identify and understand another person's perspective. Some essential cues and feelings can be missed when communication is only through text. It can be easy to forget that there are genuine people on the other side of cruel memes or mean remarks online. It is important to use empathy online, as the words people write and the actions taken online can have real-life repercussions that can impact a person's physical and mental well-being.

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TEACHING SEQUENCE / ACTIVITY	DURATION	RESOURCES REQUIRED
<p>1. Prepare students for the activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Explain to the class that they will be guided through a teacher-led mindfulness activity to imagine the situation and feelings of another person.b. Explain that students are welcome to participate in the guided mindfulness activity as much or as little as they would like.c. Welcome any students who do not wish to participate in the activity to sit quietly in their chair. Explain how students can take a break (e.g. step outside) if the activity makes them feel distressed at any point.	1 min	No resources required: The guided mindfulness script is embedded within these instructions.
<p>2. Read out the script below to introduce the mindfulness activity:</p> <p>“Sitting with your eyes closed, take a few slow breaths to settle and relax your breathing. As you sit there, notice your breath going in and out. You might notice the feeling of the seat underneath you, or the feeling of the floor beneath your feet. If you notice yourself distracted by anything in the room, tell yourself “that’s okay”. Just return your attention to listening to the story and noticing what you feel.</p>	1-2 mins	

Activity 1

3. Script

Read out the story (in bold) followed by the prompts (in italics) to encourage student reflection.

'...there's this person at my school who has some issues at home. And to be honest, they don't have too many friends either.'

Prompt the class: Imagine how this person would be feeling. You could imagine what it would be like if you were going through your own issues and feeling down. Imagine how it feels to go through a challenging time without much support.

'One day, these other people at school, who I'm kind of friends with, made this fake profile to pretend they were interested in dating this person. The person believed it was true and had no idea that it was a joke.'

Prompt the class: Imagine how this person might feel having this joke played on them. Imagine how it would feel to have your trust broken.

'Some people made a copy of the conversations and shared it around the school. Everyone found out about it. Some people started saying nasty things online, such as "no one cares about you, go and die" and "no one will ever want you, you loser.'

Prompt the class: Imagine how it would feel to be worried about what people are saying about you at school or behind your back. Imagine coming to school knowing most people will ignore you as if you don't even exist.

'Things started getting really out of hand and just kept getting worse and worse. This one person took it way too far when they hacked this person's gaming account and did some illegal stuff which got them banned from playing online games by their parents and the site itself. They were pretty upset about it.'

Prompt the class: Imagine how it would feel to have something you care about and enjoy taken away from you. Imagine how it would feel to have your privacy invaded and not feel safe.

'Some people at school felt bad about what had happened and ended up standing up for this person. They reported what was going on and helped them see the school counsellor and get support.'

Prompt the class: Think about what you would do in this situation: Would you choose to do nothing at all or would you try to help. Sometimes even a supportive message or text to someone can make an incredible difference. You might think about how you would want someone to help you in this situation. Imagine how it would feel to have someone stand up for you and show they care.

Prompt the class to support options: Sometimes people might not feel comfortable yet to talk to someone at school. Other than going to the school counsellor, how else might you help this person?

There are lots of people who get support from Kids Helpline (KHL). The people that answer the phones are qualified counsellors. KHL also has web and email counselling you can access through the KHL website.

TEACHING SEQUENCE / ACTIVITY	DURATION	RESOURCES REQUIRED
<p>4. Read out the script below to unwind from the activity:</p> <p>“Keep your eyes closed and notice any of the feelings that continue to be in your body. Just notice these, without trying to push them away. Take a few deep breaths and start to bring your attention back to what you can feel beneath you. This might be the feeling of the floor under your feet, or the feeling of the chair under your legs. Once you are ready, you can open your eyes. You might like to stretch or move your body”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeat to the students that these activities can bring up challenging feelings, and that it is important to talk about these feelings if they are impacting them. Remind students of supports at school or supports available through Kids Helpline. 	5 mins	
<p>5. Encourage class brainstorming on the benefits of empathy/ understanding for others with the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. How does your behaviour change when you can see something from another person’s point of view? b. How do you feel when someone else understands what you are going through? c. How do you already practice having empathy for others? d. How can you express your opinions and beliefs while still showing understanding for others opinions and beliefs? 		

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AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

English Learning Area:

- **Language for social interactions:** Understand how language use can have inclusive and exclusive social effects and can empower or disempower people (ACELA1564).

Health and Physical Education Learning Area:

- **Interacting with others:** Investigate how empathy and ethical decision making contribute to respectful relationships (ACPPS093).
- **Understand emotions:** Evaluate situations and propose appropriate emotional responses and then reflect on possible outcomes of different responses (ACPPS094).

Personal and Social Capability:

- **Recognise emotions:** Reflect critically on their emotional responses to challenging situations in a wide range of learning, social and work-related contexts.
- **Express emotions appropriately:** Consider control and justify their emotional responses, in expressing their opinions, beliefs, values, questions and choices.

Intercultural Understanding Capability:

- **Emphasise with others:** Recognise the effect that empathising with others has on our own feelings, motivations and actions.

EXTERNAL LINKS INCLUDED IN THE ACTIVITY

None