

RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- Student Engagement
- School and Classroom Leadership
- Social and Physical Environments

EMPATHY RESOURCES:

[School Mental Health Ontario-Empathy Practices](#)

[Physical & Health Education Canada's Emotional Well-Being Education Activities](#)

- [I Am Human](#) (K-3)
- [Pay it Forward](#) (K-3)
- [Spread Compassion and Empathy](#) (4-6)

Take What You Need

ACTIVITY GOAL: Help students develop empathy by encouraging them to think about how another person may feel in a difficult situation and how to respond to another's mental state.

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Ask each class to display the sentence 'Take What You Need' on the outside of their classroom door.
2. Lead each class in a discussion about empathy.

a. What is empathy?

Empathy is when you are able to understand how someone else might be thinking or feeling by imagining what it would be like to be in their situation. It is about "putting yourself in their shoes" and imagining what they might be going through.

b. Can you think of an example of someone showing empathy?

c. Can empathy be learned?

Yes, we can develop and improve our empathy skills ^[4].

d. Why is empathy important?

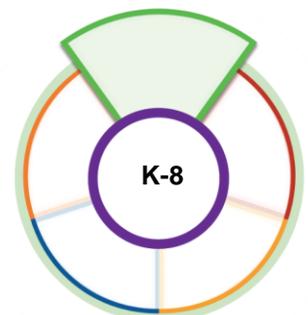
Empathy helps us connect to and create good friendships and relationships with others ^[6]. When someone has good empathy skills, they:

1. are better at cooperating with others;
2. are better at resolving conflicts with others; and
3. show more caring behaviours ^[3].

Good relationships are important for our happiness and mental health ^[2].

Curriculum Connections

Grade K-8: A1.4 Healthy Relationships



e. How can you practice empathy with others?

One of the ways we can develop our empathy skills is by learning about and from others. If we can learn how to embrace our differences and find things in common with others, we can really get to know, come to appreciate, and care about one another ^[1][5].

- In a respectful way, ask questions and be curious about people and communities who look, act, or speak differently than you.
- Look for things you have in common with other people or fictional characters (from TV, movies, books, etc.).

Practice Scenarios:

- **Primary (K-3):** A group of students were playing tag at recess and told Morgan that they couldn't play, Morgan spent recess alone.
- **Junior (4-6):** Cameron and Blake are best friends who love basketball, they decided to try out for the school team, Cameron was cut from the team after the second try out while Blake made the team.
- **Intermediate (7-8):** Jamie isn't participating in class like they usually do, during recess they share that their family is moving to a different city and that they will have to go to a new school.

Reflection Questions:

- How do you think this person may feel?
- What are some positive words you could share with a person that is having a hard day or dealing with a difficult situation to show them empathy?

3. Provide all students with a sticky note and have them write their positive words on it.
4. Have students post their sticky note on their classroom door.
5. Encourage students and staff to take a sticky note from any classroom door whenever they need and leave a positive note whenever they feel like contributing more.



References:

- [1] Batson, C., & Ahmad, N. (2009). Using empathy to improve intergroup attitudes and relations. *Social Issues and Policy Review*, 3(1), 141-177.
- [2] Cheang, R., Gillions, A., Sparkes, E. (2019). Do Mindfulness-Based Interventions Increase Empathy and Compassion in Children and Adolescents: A Systematic Review. *Journal of Child & Family Studies*. 28(7):1765-1779.
- [3] Decety, J., & Cowell, J. M. (2015). Empathy, justice, and moral behavior. *AJOB neuroscience*, 6(3), 3-14.
- [4] Heyes, C. (2018). Empathy is not in our genes, *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*, Volume 95, 2018, Pages 499-507, ISSN 0149-7634, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neubiorev.2018.11.00>
- [5] Leary, M. R., Tipsord, J. M., & Tate, E. B. (2008). Allo-inclusive identity: Incorporating the social and natural worlds into one's sense of self. In H. A. Wayment & J. J. Bauer (Eds.), *Transcending self-interest: Psychological explorations of the quiet ego* (pp. 137–147). American Psychological Association.
- [6] So Ra Kang, Shin-Jeong Kim, Jungmin Lee. (2020). Development of a Violence Prevention Educational Program for Elementary School Children Using Empathy (VPEP-E). *Child Health Nursing Research*. 2020;26(4):422-433. doi:10.4094/chnr.2020.26.4.422