



## **The Empathy Pawject**

### **Lesson #1: What is Empathy**

#### **Lesson Overview**

- This This introductory lesson will guide students to understand:
- the definition of empathy
- the difference between empathy and its sister words, sympathy, compassion and pity
- the three basic steps for practicing empathy
- Empathy in action through role play

It is important to note that each child will come to an understanding of empathy on his or her own time and your job is simply to help guide what they already know, to the surface.

#### **Lesson Materials**

- 1) a smartboard or video projector
- 2) Sesame Street video, Mark Ruffalo Explains Empathy:  
<https://safeYouTube.net/w/fifL>
- 3) chart paper, a white board or a smart board
- 4) "Let's Get a Pup!" said Kate by Bob Graham or read aloud video on YouTube:  
<https://vimeo.com/166155259>
- 5) chart paper or a smart board for brainstorming

Create a power point presentation using the provided information in this lesson to help guide your lesson.

If you have a guidance counselor or youth development counselor at your school, I recommend inviting them to participate in discussion and exercises that take place in this first lesson.

#### **Curriculum outcome:**

#### **(from the Alberta Education Program of Studies for Grade 4 Art)**

- Evaluate whether or not a choice is respectful (CHC 1c)
- Understand how certain issues (societal, global, natural disasters, etc.) impact people (CHC 6e)
- Understand that operating from a position of trust sets the stage for building relationships (CHC 9e)
- Explore drawing media (AC: 10iii a) (CHC 10h)



## Learning Activity

As a group, brainstorm the character virtues students already know such as respect, compassion, self-discipline, and integrity. Ask them to think about what each word means and to share examples of the virtues in action. This will set the stage for today's lesson on empathy.

### Lesson Steps:

#### Group Discussion:

- 1) How is empathy Different? Empathy differs from its sister words such as compassion, sympathy and pity. Define each of these words for the students.

Pity: simply acknowledging that someone is suffering or in distress.

Sympathy: Feeling sadness for a person in distress

Compassion: Feeling care and warmth for a person in distress. Wanting to help or "fix" the problem.

Empathy: Sharing the same emotions of the person in distress. Putting yourself in someone else's shoes. Seeing someone who is sad, imagining how they may feel if that same situation happened to them and sharing that sadness.

- 2) Steps to understanding empathy:

- I. Recognize how the other person is feeling.
  - Read their facial expression - are they crying, frowning, smiling, etc.
  - Read their body language - are their shoulders up or they hunched with tightly folded arms, etc.
  - Listen to what their story is if they are sharing their feelings.
- II. Share their feelings.
  - Put yourself into their shoes. How would you feel if this situation happened to you? Feel how they feel.
- III. Provide a supportive response
  - It is ok if you cannot fix the problem someone else is experiencing! Sometimes the best thing you can do is listen and let them know you understand.

#### Video:

- 3) Watch the video: Empathy Explained by Mark Ruffalo:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=URevSwctZ2o>

#### Role-Play & Brainstorming:



- 4) Role-play Games to build a deeper understanding of empathy. Using chart paper, brainstorm scenarios to go with feelings such as upset, embarrassed, or happy. Make a quick list for students to refer to during the activity. Once brainstorming has completed, have them work in partners to role-play different scenarios where one student may show another empathy. Remind them of how Mark Ruffalo & Murray used role-play to go through different situations - this may help them if they feel stumped for ideas!

#### **End of Class Activity**

- A simple formative feedback piece will help guide your next lesson and help determine if you should review any of the taught topics. Have students give a thumbs up, thumbs sideways or thumbs down when asked for their understanding of empathy.
- Invite a couple of volunteers to share a time when they have felt empathy for someone else. Remind students that empathy doesn't have to mean feeling sad or angry; the key point is **sharing** a feeling. If someone is feeling really excited or proud, you can share in those same feelings with too!
- Let students know that in the next class they will get to "meet" their adoptable dogs and that they will receive the dogs' adoption profiles! They will be reading about their dogs and start preliminary sketches. Remind students that there will be discussion time in the next class for their questions about the project.