



KidsHealth.org/classroom

Teacher's Guide

This guide includes:

- Standards
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Standards

This guide correlates with the following National Health Education Standards:

Students will:

- Comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention to enhance health.
- Analyze the influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology, and other factors on health behaviors.
- Demonstrate the ability to access valid information and products and services to enhance health.
- Demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks.
- Demonstrate the ability to practice health-enhancing behaviors and avoid or reduce health risks.
- Demonstrate the ability to advocate for personal, family, and community health.

Your state's school health policies:
nasbe.org/HealthySchools/States/State_Policy.asp

In a time when life is so fast-paced that we have difficulty taking time for ourselves, it's easy to be less compassionate toward those around us. The following discussion questions and activities will help students understand what empathy is and how they can take small steps toward acting more empathetically.

Related KidsHealth Links

Articles for Teens:

What Does It Mean to Be a Friend?

KidsHealth.org/teen/your_mind/relationships/friend_comments.html

Diversity, Prejudice, Tolerance, and Respect

KidsHealth.org/teen/your_mind/emotions/diversity.html

Dealing with Bullying

KidsHealth.org/teen/your_mind/problems/bullies.html

Talking to Your Parents – or Other Adults

KidsHealth.org/teen/your_mind/families/talk_to_parents.html

Discussion Questions

Note: The following questions are written in language appropriate for sharing with your students.

1. What is empathy, and how is it different from sympathy? Make a list of actions that show empathy versus those that show sympathy.
2. You have probably heard the proverb, "Don't criticize a man until you have walked a mile in his shoes." What does this mean? In what ways can you "walk" in someone else's shoes?
3. Why do you think it's easier for some people to empathize with others? What makes it difficult to show empathy? In what ways can adults help children learn to empathize with others?
4. What images of empathy do you see around you – on TV, in the movies, and so on? What effect do you think the media have on how we act toward other people?



Activities for Students

Note: The following activities are written in language appropriate for sharing with your students.

Walk a Mile in Another Man's Shoes

Objectives:

Students will:

- Recognize actions that do not depict empathy
- Identify ways to show empathy

Materials:

- Computer with Internet access
- Walk a Mile in Another Man's Shoes handout (available at: KidsHealth.org/classroom/9to12/personal/growing/empathy_handout1.pdf)

Class Time:

45 minutes

Activity:

Everyone has heard the phrase “Don’t criticize a man until you have walked a mile in his shoes,” but what exactly does this mean? How can you understand someone else’s feelings without experiencing them yourself?

Take some time to read the articles at KidsHealth to learn about actions that show empathy, as well as those that don’t. With a partner, select two scenarios from the Walk a Mile in Another Man’s Shoes handout, and examine the situations. What are the characters feeling? How do their actions and words show this? How are they not being empathetic? Next, role-play the situations using strategies that show empathy toward one another.

Extensions:

1. Find a poem, song, or scene in a story and discuss how it portrays empathy.
2. Create a public service announcement to be aired on TV that encourages teens to be empathetic toward one another.
3. Design a poster that symbolizes empathy and reminds your classmates to show compassion toward one another. What images and words best convey what empathy means to you?



Plan of Action

Objectives:

Students will:

- Identify how empathy exists in the school community
- Discuss ways for students to show more empathy toward one another

Materials:

- Computer with Internet access
- Pen and lined paper

Class Time:

1 hour

Activity:

Mother Teresa, one of the most admired figures of the 20th century, once said, “I want you to be concerned with your next door neighbor. Do you really know your next door neighbor?” Think about how this applies to being able to walk in someone else’s shoes. If we understand where each of us is coming from, it’s probably going to be a lot easier to show empathy toward one another.

Using these thoughts and the articles at KidsHealth, write an editorial for your school newspaper that examines the role empathy plays in your school community. What acts of empathy do you see around you? Where could there be improvement? Next discuss how people can take small steps to know their fellow students more and to show empathy each day, thus creating a more positive school environment.

Extensions:

1. After reading your editorial in the school newspaper, your principal asks you to create an action plan to help your fellow students develop more empathy toward one another. What activities could you do to encourage this? What strategies can help achieve this goal?
2. How well do you talk the talk and walk the walk? Make a list of everyday ways you can show empathy to the people in your life – family members, friends, fellow classmates, teachers, etc.

Reproducible Materials

Handout: Walk a Mile in Another Man’s Shoes

KidsHealth.org/classroom/9to12/personal/growing/empathy_handout1.pdf



Name: _____

Date: _____

Walk a Mile in Another Man's Shoes

Instructions: With a partner, read through the scenarios, select 2, and examine what is happening. What are the characters feeling? How do their actions and words show this? How are they not being empathetic? Next, role-play the situations using strategies that show empathy toward one another.

1

A group of students is milling about in the hall. Micah teases Adam, a younger student, about not making the soccer team, and Adam argues back. The argument escalates to a shouting match.

2

You are excited to go out with your friends on Friday night, but your mom wants you to go out to dinner with the family. You refuse, your mother grounds you, and you storm to your room.

3

Sarah is telling Jeanne how hurt she is by her recent break-up with her boyfriend, but Jeanne isn't really paying attention and keeps changing the subject. Sarah eventually yells at Jeanne for not listening to her.

4

The bell is about to ring, and everyone is rushing to their next class. In the rush, Samantha accidentally knocks books out of Dan's hands. Everyone laughs and keeps moving on while Dan turns red and scurries to pick up his books.

5

You get your math test back only to discover you got a low grade. You are not surprised because you have been really busy getting ready for the school play, but when your friend picks up the test and starts showing everyone, you feel angry and embarrassed. You rip the test out of his hands and stomp away.

6

You have a big date this weekend and really want to borrow one of your sister's sweaters. When you ask her to borrow it, she says no because she doesn't want it to get ruined. You beg her, explaining that the date is very important, but she won't budge.