

Compassion Role Plays

This lesson focuses on caring through the act of compassion. Students will be presented with a series of difficult scenarios and will then create role-plays to illustrate how they can use kindness and compassion to work through them.

Caring Sub-Concept(s)

Compassion, Kindness

Lesson Timeframe

45 minutes

Required Materials

- Scenario cards
- Index Cards (optional)

Standards Map

This lesson aligns with CASEL Competencies, National Health Education Standards, and Common Core State Standards. Please refer to the [Standards Map](#) for more information.



DESIGNATED BY CASEL
AS A RECOMMENDED PROGRAM
FOR SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING.
See last page for details.

Lesson Objective

Students will:

- Show compassion by brainstorming solutions for difficult scenarios.
- Practice kind and compassionate ways to respond in different role-play scenarios.

Teacher Connection/Self-Care

The act of compassion for others often seems easy for us adults when we are watching a moving documentary or a news broadcast. However, the struggle to show compassion within our own community is at times a bit more difficult. We become immune to the homeless person with the sign or the single mother struggling with the packages. This week take a concentrated look around your community, your school, and even your classroom. Who might be in need that you may have overlooked in the past? Dialing in your compassion to your immediate surroundings can really increase the connectivity with your students, your peers, and your community as a whole. When we are connected, we are present, so take a look around. Who has fallen through the cracks? How can your compassion help you remain connected with your school community?

Tips for Diverse Learners

- Create diverse small groups of 4-5 to increase participation.
- Have one student in each group assigned to prompt the others if they forget their lines.
- Provide index cards for students to write down their lines.



Share

5-7 minutes

Have everyone find a partner (you can assign these randomly as well if desired).

- Have each pair stand back to back.
- Read the following statements aloud and have each student turn to face their partner if it relates to them. Remind them that sometimes their partner may not turn around. That is okay; everyone has different experiences.
 - I have started a new school.
 - My pet has died.
 - My family welcomed home a new baby.
 - I have broken a bone.
- How did it feel when you turned around but your neighbor did not?
- How did it feel knowing that your partner turned around but you couldn't?
- How did it feel to turn around and find out that your partner had also experienced the same event as you?

We are individuals, with different lives and different experiences. However, we can often find at least one thing in common as we get to know each other!



Inspire

What is Compassion?

7-10 minutes

Explain that Compassion is the feeling you get when you want to help someone that is in need. This person could be a friend, your teacher, your parents, a sibling, or maybe even someone you have never even met! When a person is upset, in pain, or needs help, we naturally feel compassion for them. Our hearts tell us to help. Sometimes we don't even stop to think about giving this help because the feeling of compassion is so strong. Our desire to be kind and caring overwhelms us and we just jump into action! When have you felt compassion for your family or friends? How were you able to show kindness?

Explain that compassion can be felt for people we have never even seen or met. Provide simple examples of scenarios that might naturally lead to a feeling of compassion. Some examples might include a sick child, a car accident, or hearing about someone's pet who died.

- Ask for other examples: have you ever seen a movie that made you feel compassion for one of the characters?
- If desired, list the answers on the whiteboard for future reference.



Empower

30 minutes

Explain that the class will break up into small groups to develop a role-play using the scenario card provided.

- Divide the class up into groups of 4-5.
- Provide each group with index cards (to write their lines if desired) and a scenario card (see below).
- Allow 10 minutes to create role-plays.
- Allow 20 minutes for each group to present their role-play.



Reflect

5 minutes

After all of the role-plays are completed, guide a discussion using the following questions:

- *Which skit seemed like the most challenging scenario to you and why?*
- *How were the people in each skit kind? How did they show compassion?*
- *What are some ways that we can show compassion and kindness for others?*
- *Do you get kinder the more you practice? If so, why?*



Extension Ideas

- Use this same technique during times of conflict with students throughout the year. This shifts the focus from “my point of view is right” to one of kindness and compassion for the other person.
- Add blank index cards to your peace corner or writing center and invite children to create their own scenarios. As time allows, take time to create role-plays for them during gaps in your schedule.

RAK Notebook Prompt (See RAK Notebook Project in the Respect unit for more details):

- Glue a piece of sandpaper into your notebook.
- Write the word COMPASSION below it.
- Some people in our lives can “rub us the wrong way” and make it difficult for us to play or work together. Luckily, we can use compassion to be kind and overcome this.
- How have you used compassion to work through a struggle with someone you don’t always get along with?
- Journal your answer below the compassion label.



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The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has been reviewing evidence-based SEL programs since 2003. Kindness in the Classroom® meets CASEL's SElect Program and is included in the CASEL Guide to Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs.

Kindness in the Classroom® met or exceeded all of CASEL's criteria for high-quality SEL programming. Kindness in the Classroom® received CASEL's highest designation for high-quality SEL programming.

<https://casel.org/guide/kindness-in-the-classroom/>

Role-play Scenarios

Situation 1: A third grader in your class is in a wheelchair and the other third graders ignore the student. You talk to the student and ask him or her to eat lunch with you. Create a skit to perform for the class where you use kind and compassionate words to help the student.

Roles: Student in a wheelchair, Group of students who ignore the student in the wheelchair, Kind student

Situation 2: There is a third grader at school who often plays alone at recess. She or he is in your class and seems pretty shy. One day, you decide to play with her/him, and ask others to play too. Create a skit to perform for the class where you use kind and compassionate words to help the shy student.

Roles: Shy student, Student who wants to play with him or her, Other students in the class

Situation 3: Your two best friends tease a kindergartner. You know the kindergartner doesn't have many friends. You don't like what your friends are doing. Create a skit to perform for the class where you use kind and compassionate words to help the kindergartner.

Roles: Two teasing friends, Kindergartner, Student who doesn't want others to tease someone else.

Situation 4: Someone new comes to your school. She moved here from another country and doesn't speak much English. Some of the kids don't want to talk to her and make fun of her accent. You were new last year, so you know what being new feels like. Create a skit to perform for the class where you use kind and compassionate words to help the new student feel comfortable.

Roles: New student from another country, Child who wants to talk to the new student, Students who don't talk to her and make fun of her accent.

Situation 5: There is a student in your school who hits kids sometimes. Some kids stay away from him. You want to be his friend but you don't want him to hit you. You decide to ask your teacher what you can say to him. Create a skit to perform for the class where you use kind and compassionate words to help the student who hits.

Roles: Student who hits sometimes, Students who want to be a friend, A teacher

Situation 6: You are at home with your brother and sister. Your older brother argues with you about what TV show to watch. Your younger sister argues with you about the game you are going to play. You don't want to argue, so you ask your mom for some ideas about what you can say to help solve the problem. Create a skit to perform for the class where you say kind and compassionate words to your brother and sister.

Roles: Third grade student, Older brother, Younger sister, Your mom