

# Caring

This is the 3rd week in the caring unit. Students will focus on empathy and finding common ground with others regardless of background and location.

Begin the unit with the whole class lesson and then aim to complete at least two of the mini lessons with your students throughout the week. Each mini lesson is designed to present elements of the main lesson in new and engaging ways.

## Main Lesson

**Whole Class Lesson**  
30 minutes



### Choose Your Empathy

This is the 3rd week in the caring unit. Students will focus on empathy and finding common ground with others regardless of background and location. (See page 2 for lesson details.)

## Mini Lessons

**For Small Groups**  
15 minutes



### Common Struggles

Divide the class into groups of 6-8. With your small group, select a common scenario that other teens experience throughout the world regardless of money, environment, etc. Write your idea down and list 3 supporting details to backup your answer. Share your common ground with the large group.

**For Partners**  
15 minutes



### Common Ground

Have students partner up with someone they are not friends with or do not know very well. Create a list with your partner highlighting 10 things you have in common. You may NOT include obvious attributes such as appearance, grade, gender, etc. Dig deeper!

**For Individuals**  
15 minutes



### Welcome Home

Create a welcome home banner for a veteran returning home in your community. Speak with your local VFW to get more info about when they might arrive and how to deliver your banner. You could also create a welcome home banner for all the Vietnam veterans that did not receive a happy homecoming.

**Technology-Focused**  
15 minutes



### Awareness Extended

Divide into small groups. Identify one recent campaign that you became aware of through technology specifically. Examples might include animal rights, homelessness, bullying, etc. How did technology help you become aware and how can you use technology to ACT and HELP spread awareness now that you know?

# Choose Your Empathy

This is the 3rd week in the caring unit. Students will focus on empathy and finding common ground with others regardless of background and location.

## Lesson Timeframe

30 minutes

## Required Materials

- No materials are required for this lesson

## Standards Map

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

## Lesson Objective

Students will:

- Explore the difference between sympathy and empathy.
- Develop an understanding of empathy as it applies to them personally.
- Practice empathy in a variety of scenarios throughout their daily routine.

## Teacher Connection/Self-Care

Each student you work with is unique. Maybe you work with students who come from challenging backgrounds. Maybe you work with students who have very stable, loving homes. Maybe you work with students who are in foster care or who live with extended family or are homeless. Maybe you work with students who love school and do well. Maybe you work with students who do not like school and are behind grade-level. Whatever the situation, look for the common ground that you share with each student, both in their challenges and their triumphs. Being able to empathize with what they are going through outside of your care will help you be more caring and compassionate toward them when they are in your charge. Students at this age are forming their identities and long to be seen and known. Showing empathy toward them as individuals will go a long way in helping them cope with challenges and form healthy self-images.



## Share

3-5 minutes

We are halfway through our unit on caring and we have covered both self-care and gratitude. This week our focus is on empathy, what that means, and how we can really tap into it throughout our daily lives.

How do you think sympathy and empathy differ from each other?



## Inspire

15 minutes

The word empathy is often thrown around lightly, but many people struggle to really define it for themselves. One way to help yourself create this personal understanding is to look at the difference between the two concepts that are frequently interchanged but have very different meanings: sympathy and empathy.

Sympathy is defined as feeling pity or sorrow for someone else's situation. Babies as young as one show this to their parents or siblings when they get hurt. You see them run up to the person with a sad face offering them a hug and some love because they recognize their pain. However, there is a big difference between feeling sorry for someone and actually understanding how they feel.

Empathy is the ability to truly understand someone else's emotions and look at things from their perspective. We are able to step into their shoes and feel what they feel, see what they see, and ultimately understand the situation from their point of view. We often feel that this concept is easy when we have had a similar (or even the exact same!) situation occur within our lives. While this is somewhat accurate, true empathy pushes us to see things from the perspective of the other person, which is the true challenge. How you interpret a situation could (and often is) much different from others around you.

Let's explore this situation with a common activity that we have all experienced at school:

- Close your eyes and imagine that I have just announced that we have an assembly during class today. We will be leaving in the next 3 minutes.
- Okay, open your eyes.
- Raise your hand if you feel excited about this sudden change.
- Stand up if you feel upset/anxious by this sudden change.
- Remain sitting if you feel annoyed by this sudden change.
- Now everyone take a look around you; there are a variety of responses to the exact situation. We have all experienced an assembly at some point. However, the type of assembly, the topic of the assembly, and our personal preferences all color our perspective on the activity. When you are truly showing empathy, you first thought is to put yourself in the shoes of the other person based on what they might be feeling towards the situation. Observing body language, facial expressions, and the tone of the words they use can all help you empathize.



## Empower

15 minutes

Explain that the class will now practice exhibiting empathy using the skills above. The teacher will read two scenarios aloud. Each student must choose the situation that they can best empathize with. Select several students to share their reasons for their choice after each round.

#### Directions:

- Divide the room into Scenario A (front) and Scenario B (back).
- Explain that you will read two scenarios aloud. Each student must consider which situation they can better empathize with.
- Once they have made their decision, every student must walk to the corresponding area of the room.
- Repeat 3-5 times and make sure that each student explains their choice at least once.

#### Scenarios:

- Being late for school vs. missing the school bus
- Forgetting your lunch vs. forgetting your homework
- Being bullied vs. being ignored
- Failing a test vs. not knowing the answer when called on
- Walking home alone and someone is following you vs. being home alone and a stranger knocks on the door



#### Reflect

5-7 minutes

The scenarios chosen today were real life situations that can and do happen every day to seventh graders just like yourself. It's extremely important to take time to consider the other person before you share your understanding of their experience.

- What might happen if you don't think about the other person's perspective before you share your understanding?
- How can be more cautious when showing empathy?

Remember, some topics cause you panic while others are excited by them. However, the reverse may be true and you might accidentally offend them with your positive reaction to a situation that caused them a great deal of anxiety!