

# Caring

This is the 4th week in the Caring unit. Students will focus on compassion as the natural progression of caring once empathy is identified.

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



### Empathy + Compassion

This is the 4th week in the caring unit. Students will focus on compassion as the natural progression of caring once empathy is identified.  
(See page 2 for lesson details.)

## Mini Lessons

**For Small Groups**  
15 minutes



### Compassion Analysis

Small group discussion: In what ways does our class show compassion to each other? How could we do better? Share your small group answers with the class.

**For Partners**  
15 minutes



### Compassion Haiku

With your partner, create a compassion haiku. Reminder: A haiku is a 3 line poem with 5 syllables on the 1st and 3rd lines and 7 syllables on the second line. Make sure your poem connects to the feeling you receive when you give or receive compassion. (Example: Listen to others, I am here for you always, Spoken from the heart.)

**For Individuals**  
15 minutes



### Sharing Compassion

Create an uplifting card for a senior in your community. Incorporate kind words, gratitude and compassion through words and pictures. Try to find a time to meet with them and get to know them before creating this card (if possible). What they share with you will most definitely affect what you focus on and include and will have a greater impact in comparison with a non-personalized message.

**Technology-Focused**  
15 minutes



### Movie Analysis

Group Discussion: Think back to a recent movie you have seen and answer the following questions: How was compassion demonstrated? Was this realistic? Why or why not? How could the characters have increased their compassion for others?

# Empathy + Compassion

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## Lesson Timeframe

30 minutes

## Required Materials

- Projector for pictures
- Pictures (see below)

## 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 need for a combined approach of both compassion and empathy when helping others.
- Examine common assumptions when analyzing situations using only surface level approaches.

## Teacher Connection/Self-Care

In our Caring Unit the capstone emotion is compassion, which is the desire to help those in need. How do your students need you today? How do your colleagues need you? In what ways can you show compassion while still maintaining professional and personal boundaries? Remember that being compassionate does not mean you are responsible for solving everyone's problems. You cannot change a student's home life. You cannot magically improve another teacher's classroom management skills. What can you do to show compassion, then, when you see others struggling? You can provide a stable, healthy classroom environment for students to thrive while they are in your care. You can offer strategies, if asked, to help your colleague make small, positive changes in their classroom management. Compassion is about helping where you can and being supportive while recognizing that not every problem is yours to solve. Being present, listening, empathizing, and acting when able are good steps toward showing compassion toward your students and coworkers.



## Share

3-5 minutes

We have arrived at our final week in our Caring unit. We have explored self-care, gratitude, and empathy. The last component is compassion. At this point in our lives, we have heard this term before; however, our personal definition has definitely been shaped by our own life experiences.

How would you define compassion? (Invite student responses.)

Yes, all of these answers point to a common ground of kindness. Compassion is defined as feeling empathy for and wanting to help another in need.



## Inspire

3-5 minutes

Compassion is often the natural extension after empathy. It is the action that follows the emotional connection we make.

Now, think of a time where you were able to both show empathy and demonstrate compassion. Share your answer with a neighbor. (Allow several volunteers to share their examples with the whole class if time allows.)

There is a level of caution that must be noted here. Compassion without the presence of empathy is often not received in a positive nature. Although your intentions are positive, without the combination of the two (empathy and compassion), the other person may find offense with your actions. Let's think back to the example of the math test from last week. You would have been excited about that C your friend received. You do not stop and take the time to use empathy to understand how they might feel based on their perspective, but instead you assume they struggle with math like you do. You immediately congratulate them, pat them on the back, and invite them to join you and your tutor in your next session so they can get an even higher score next time. What might their response be this time? How might they react when you assume they feel exactly how you feel? Has this ever happened to you?

Remember, true empathy cannot occur by making assumptions. You must engage with the other person whenever possible before moving forward to the action component connected with compassion. You cannot expect to put yourself in someone else's shoes without first getting to know how they view the topic at hand!



## Empower

15 minutes

Explain that the class will now explore the necessary combination between empathy and compassion as they examine difficult scenarios within history and possible responses others might have both with and without empathy. Remember, compassion without empathy is not always positive!

Using the pictures provided, guide a discussion on the following:

- What do you see here?
- What is your first idea to "help" this person or people?
- How might they react?
- Now stop and think about how they truly feel. What is their focus? What do they need *from their perspective*?
- How would your approach to helping them change now?

Picture # 1: A woman and her children during the Great Depression

- Common assumptions might include that she is starving and needs a handout of food.
- Encourage the students to look beyond their understanding and exposure to the Great Depression (which frequently focuses on the lack of food). What else might she be thinking about? How might she feel about that food handout? Will it really help her in the long run?

- Other takes on the picture: her husband just left for work and she is sad to see him leave, she has finally found employment and is pondering childcare, she just had word that a family member has come down with a serious illness, etc.
- Encourage solutions that involve a conversation with the person(s) FIRST. You can't experience true empathy from initial judgements and zero conversation!

#### Picture #2: Boy holding new shoes

- Common assumptions might include that he desperately needed new shoes and money for the other areas of his life that might be difficult for him.
- Encourage the students to look beyond what they can see and dig deeper. What expression does he have on his face? What emotion is he conveying? What else might he be thinking about while holding these shoes? If you give him money and he doesn't view his life as a struggle, how might he react?
- Other takes on the picture: these shoes are a gift he is giving to another child in his neighborhood that is barefoot, the shoes represent the health of his older sibling who couldn't walk before, the shoes represent his father's first sale as a cobbler, etc.
- Encourage solutions that involve a conversation with this child!



### Reflect

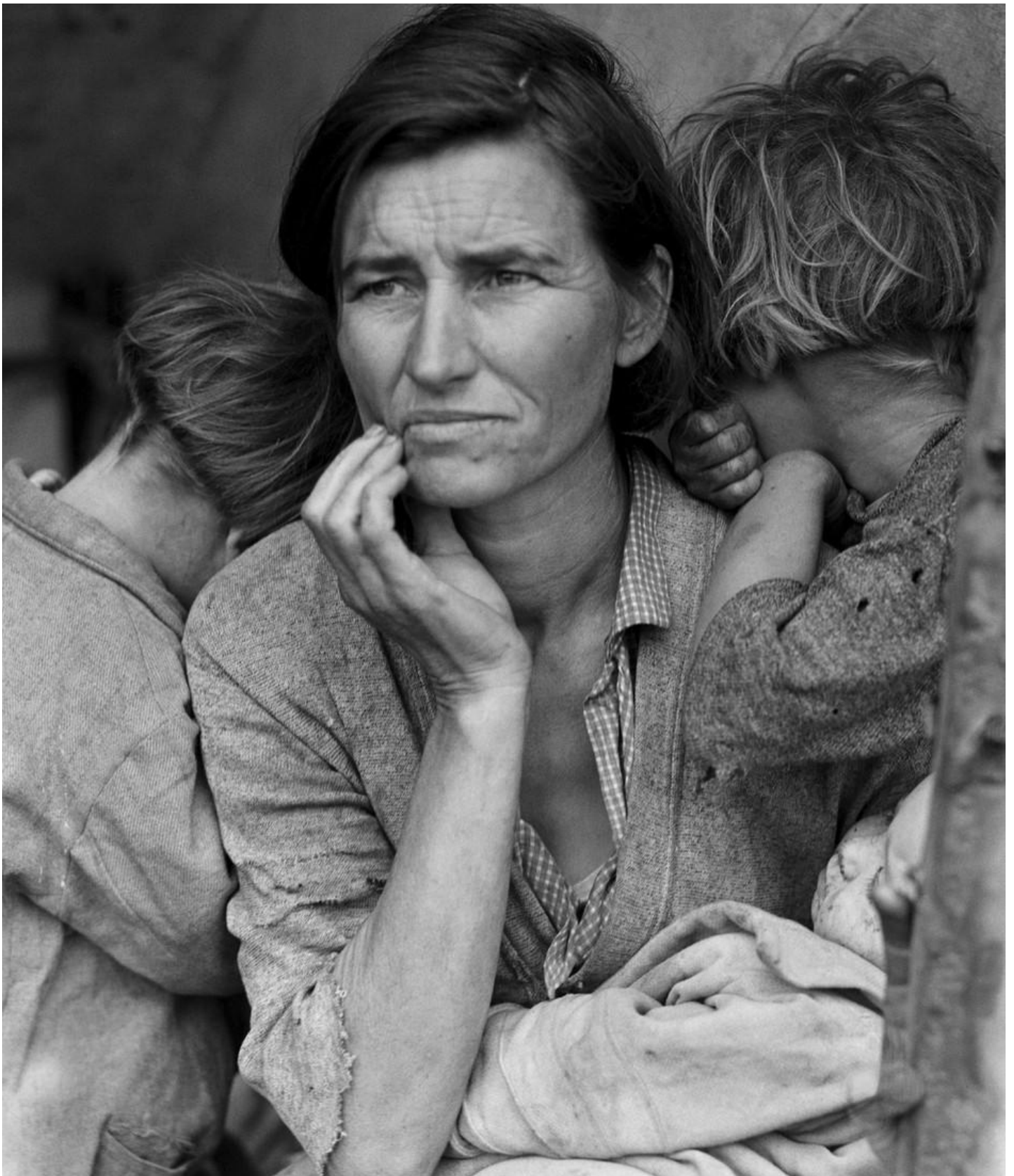
5-7 minutes

As a class, discuss the challenges of pausing to find the empathy BEFORE responding with compassion.

- Why is it hard to wait when our first response is to DO SOMETHING?
- How might a conversation with the other person/persons change my compassionate approach?

When you truly empathize with someone, it takes courage to follow through and help them through their situation. Your compassion just might be the positive turning point to a really difficult situation!

Picture #1: Mother in Great Depression



Picture #2: Boy Holding New Shoes

