



8: The Magic of Empathy

A PK-6 Lesson on Understanding Feelings, Taking Perspective, and Caring in Action



Introduction for the Facilitator

This lesson teaches PK-6 students the professional skill of **empathy**, which is the ability to understand and care about how others feel, even when their experiences are different from our own. Empathy is the heart of strong friendships, teamwork, kindness, and leadership.

When students practice empathy, they begin to see the world through other people's eyes. They become better at resolving conflict, supporting others, and responding to different situations with care. Empathy builds bridges between people—and those bridges are powerful.

Empathy also supports a student's **personal competitive advantage**. It helps them become a person that others trust, include, and rely on. This will help them achieve whatever kind of **lifestyle** they dream of, whether that means strong relationships, peaceful communities, or being someone who makes a difference.

In this lesson, students explore empathy through story, discussion, and hands-on activities designed to stretch their perspective and deepen their compassion.

This lesson includes:

- **A Social Story with relatable challenges**
- **8 Group Discussion Questions with follow-ups**
- **8 flexible Journal Prompts for writing or drawing**
- **10 inclusive and impactful classroom Activities**
- **A printable Worksheet to personalize empathy in action**

Let's show students that empathy isn't just about feelings; it's about connection, kindness, and building the life we imagine.



Social Story: *Zara's Rainy Day Surprise*

Zara was having the best day. She'd finished her morning work early, her team won at recess, and her grandma packed her favorite snack—blueberry muffins.

But at her table, her classmate Elijah was quiet. He didn't laugh when someone made a joke. He barely touched his lunch. Zara remembered hearing that Elijah's dog had passed away over the weekend.

She wanted to cheer him up, so she waved a muffin at him. "Here! Take one!" she said.



Elijah shook his head. "No thanks."

Zara felt confused. "But muffins always make me happy."

Their teacher, Ms. Gómez, walked over and whispered, "Sometimes what makes us feel better doesn't work for others. Empathy means thinking about things from the other person's perspective. Want to try something else?"

Zara paused. Then she sat next to Elijah and said softly, "I'm sorry you're sad. I'm here if you need anything." Elijah looked at her and nodded. He didn't say anything, but his shoulders relaxed just a little.

That moment felt different. Zara had always cared about people. But now she understood something new: empathy wasn't about fixing. It was about feeling with someone. Being there. Trying to understand. Letting them know they weren't alone.

That day, **empathy** became part of Zara's **personal competitive advantage**. She didn't have to say the perfect thing... she just had to care, listen, and lead with kindness. And that helped her build the kind of **lifestyle** she wanted: warm, thoughtful, and full of connection.



Group Discussion Questions

1. What does empathy mean to you?

Follow-up: How is it different from just being nice?

2. Why is it important to understand how someone else feels?

Follow-up: How does that help us be better friends or teammates?

3. What can we do when someone feels sad or upset, even if we don't know exactly how they feel?

Follow-up: Why is it okay to just be there?

4. Have you ever felt like someone really understood you?

Follow-up: What did they do that helped?

5. How can you tell how someone else is feeling?

Follow-up: What clues can we look for?

6. What happens when people don't show empathy?

Follow-up: How can we remind each other to care?

7. How does empathy help you grow your personal competitive advantage?

Follow-up: How does it help you build trust with others?



Journal Prompts

(Students can write or draw their answers based on age and ability.)

1. **Draw or write about a time someone showed you empathy. What did they do?**
2. **Describe a time you helped someone feel better just by being there.**
3. **What are some ways to tell how someone is feeling without them saying it?**
4. **What do you do when a friend is feeling sad or left out?**
5. **If you had an “Empathy Superpower,” what would you do with it?**
6. **How do you show empathy to someone who has a very different life or feeling than you?**
7. **Why is empathy important in our classroom, home, or community?**
8. **How does empathy help you build your personal competitive advantage?**



Activities

1. **Feelings Walk**
Place cards with emotions around the room. Students walk to one and describe what might make someone feel that way and how to show empathy.
2. **Empathy Scenarios**
Role-play simple situations that could be hard (e.g., someone drops their tray, someone doesn't get picked). Practice what empathy might look or sound like.
3. **Step Into Their Shoes**
Students decorate paper shoes with drawings or words about how it feels to “stand in someone else's shoes.”
4. **Kindness Chain Reaction**
Start with one student doing something kind. Track how far that act of empathy spreads through the class.
5. **The Pause Game**
Teach students to pause before reacting in a conflict. Reflect together: “What might the other person be feeling?”
6. **Character Feelings Tracker**
As you read a book aloud, pause and ask: “How do you think this character feels? What would empathy look like here?”
7. **Empathy Mirrors**
In pairs, students mirror each other's faces and body language to build emotional recognition and awareness.
8. **What Helps Me, What Helps You**
Students fill out a chart with what helps them feel better. Then compare with others to learn that empathy isn't one-size-fits-all.
9. **Daily Empathy Challenge**
Give students one challenge per day (e.g., “Check in with someone at recess”) and celebrate follow-through.
10. **My Empathy Avatar**
Students draw a character with empathy traits: a listening heart, noticing eyes, patient hands, etc.



My Empathy Map

Name: _____

Helpful Words:

- **Empathy** = understanding and caring about how someone else feels
- **Lifestyle Goal** = the kind of life I want to live
- **Personal Competitive Advantage** = my special strengths and habits that help me grow

Directions:

Write or draw your answers. Your empathy helps others feel safe and seen.

Use the back of this sheet if you need more space.

1. A time I felt understood was:

2. A time I showed empathy to someone else was:

3. This is what empathy looks like to me:

4. I know someone might need empathy when I notice:

5. My Empathy Superpower helps me do these things:

6. Empathy helps me grow my personal competitive advantage by:

7. This is how empathy helps me live the lifestyle I want: