

Materials Masking tape

Learning Outcome Analyze what empathy means and how it feels while considering the diverse experiences of self and peers.

Flipped Classroom Strategy (Optional)

A flipped classroom is an instructional model where direct instruction is delivered to students *outside of and before* instructional time. Students are introduced to content that supports the introduction, comprehension, and recall of content and then instructional time is utilized to apply, analyze, synthesize, or evaluate content.

Before implementing this activity during instructional time, provide students with the link to the Brené Brown's video [Empathy vs. Sympathy](#) video. Ask students to watch the video and come to class prepared to discuss one key takeaway from the video.



Activity Description

Note: This activity is best implemented with students who are part of a cohesive group where students feel a sense of community, trust and mutual respect exist.

If utilizing a flipped classroom approach, ask students to share their key takeaway from the video and discuss it. If not utilizing a flipped classroom approach, watch Brené Brown's video [Empathy vs. Sympathy video](#) and ask student to share one key takeaway from the video.

Be sure to probe students on how language is important and the way in which words are shared make a difference. This discussion will set the foundation for the activity so take some time to dive into what the students believe empathy to be.

Make two long lines across from each other by sticking pieces of masking tape across the floor to represent a line.

Part I

Set class guidelines for this activity and emphasize the need for everyone to agree to how the activity will be conducted. Some group guidelines might include:

- Show respect to people who are sharing information.
- Different feelings may arise as experiences are or remembered – it is important that empathy is shown to all people.
- Care must be shown to people who may be divulging personal experiences or feelings.
- Other perspectives should be considered.
- The activity is completed in silence – opinions are not given.

Part II

Set the task for the students and explain the activity:

- Everyone will line up along the same line.
- A statement is going to be read.
- If the statement or experience applies to you, that is, you have experienced it, you are to cross the line and stand on the other side of the line.
- Once you have crossed the line turn around and face the people standing on the other side of the line.
- Stop and notice how many people have this personal experiences – think about how they must have felt. Then the group who crossed the line will return to their original places so the whole group stands together again.
- The next statement is read, and the same process is followed.

It is important that students feel safe sharing - ensure that students know that if they do not feel comfortable crossing the line, they can stay exactly where they are.

Part III

To encourage deeper thinking about others, their feelings, and experiences the teacher can pose questions after each statement without expectation of response.

Some examples may include:

- How does it feel to cross the line?
- How does it feel to see a peer cross the line?
- Did you know that your peer(s) had those feelings this experiences?
- Can you understand how that must feel?
- How would you feel standing in different shoes?



Questions that might be asked:

- Cross the line if you have been left out of group activities?
- Cross the line if you have experienced bullying?
- Cross the line if you have been made fun of because of your gender?
- Cross the line if sometimes you don't understand yourself?
- Cross the line if sometimes you don't feel good enough?
- Cross the line if you've ever felt pressure from your friends or an adult to do something you didn't want to do?
- Cross the line if you ever feel ashamed about something you have done?
- Cross the line if the future scares you?
- Cross the line if you feel different from your friends?
- Cross the line if you've used more than one substance at the same time?
- Cross the line if you've tried to quit using substances before?
- Cross the line if you've felt pressured to use substances like vaping?

The examples of questions provided may or may not be appropriate for certain cohorts of students and contexts. Choose statements that align with the needs and experiences of each individual group. School leadership, parents, and caregivers may need to be consulted prior to participating in this activity.

Part IV

As a large group, debrief and comment on the experience. Explain to students that not commenting on individual's sharing or crossing the line, but on how they felt knowing that they or their friends peers had these experienced. From this frame pose questions:

- What was the hardest part of the activity?
- What did you learn about your feelings? How does the knowledge make you feel?
- How does this influence how you view others?
- Why is empathy for others important in life?

Healthy Living Competencies

THINK



Develop cognitive skills and strategies that facilitate knowledge about healthy habits, health risk situations, and the short-term and long-term effects of their health choices.

FEEL



Develop affective skills and strategies that facilitate healthy living for themselves, others, and their community.

ACT



Practice behavioural skills and strategies that facilitate choices, actions, and habits for healthy living.



Reflection Questions

Reflection is important to support learning. Consider asking students the following questions and discuss the answers together.

- *How might you better empathize with your friends and family?*
- *Do you think your ability to empathize has grown as you have gotten older? Why or why not?*

Observing Learning Outcomes

Sample questions to observe learning outcomes include:

- Is the student able to successfully describe what empathy is and how it feels?
- Does the student demonstrate respect and consideration for peers who have crossed the line?
- Does the student actively participate in self-reflection during the debrief of the activity?

Learning Extension (Optional)

Ask students to explore a favourite childhood book, show, or movie and identify examples of empathy. Share that empathy is often discussed and modelled for children and can be the moral of many children's stories. Ask students to explain why they think empathy is so evident in children's stories.