

Learning How to Practice Empathy Education.com

Fourth Grade, Fifth Grade

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In this lesson, students will practice empathy through learning the "just like me" mindfulness practice.

Learning Objectives

Students will learn what empathy means and engage in a mindfulness exercise called "just like me" to grow their empathy.

Materials and preparation

[Just Like Me worksheet](#)

Key terms

- empathy

Attachments

- Just Like Me (PDF)

Introduction (5 minutes)

- Gather students into a circle either seated in chairs or on the floor.
- Remind students about the circle guidelines they created: the raised-hand attention signal and talking piece (every week, each student rotates and brings in a talking piece that means something to them).
- Have the student introduce the talking piece for the week.
- Welcome each student into the circle using the talking piece (each student welcomes another student in the circle).
- Share that today during circle time, they will be learning about empathy and doing a practice called "just like me" together.

Explicit Instruction/Teacher modeling (15 minutes)

- Ask students if they have ever heard the term empathy before and what it means to them.
- Chart their answers. If their answers didn't reveal what empathy actually is, share that empathy is the ability to understand how someone else is feeling or to understand the situation they are in. It is the ability to "put yourself in someone else's shoes" and to understand the way a situation might make them feel. Empathy has two parts: shared feeling and seeing someone else's point of view.
- Explain that one of the ways they can prime themselves for practicing empathy is to engage in a practice called "Just Like Me."
- Have students first practice some mindful breathing.
- Gently ring a small bell or sound a chime and have students take 3-5 deep in and out breaths. As they do this have them send themselves empathy.
- Offer the prompt, "What would a good friend say to you right now? Now say that silently to yourself."
- Model doing this by expressing how you would send kindness or engage in positive self-talk. Share that when they feel upset, they can ask themselves, "What would a good friend say to me now?" and use that to guide how they can comfort themselves.

Guided Practice (15 minutes)

- Share this quote from the Dalai Lama: "Realizing that the other person is also just like me is the basis on

which you can develop compassion, not only towards those around you but also towards your enemy. Normally, when we think about our enemy, we think about harming him. Instead, try to remember that the enemy is also a human being, just like me."

- Have students reflect on the quote and how at the end of the day all of us just want to be happy.
- Now have students stand in two lines, facing each other.
- Students will look at each other as you read the following script and after each round the line moves up by one and the exercise is repeated with another partner. This will increase the understanding that all other classmates are "just like me."
- Read the script: "The classmate in front of you is a fellow human being just like you. Silently repeat the following while looking at your classmate: 'This classmate has feelings just like me. This classmate has good times and challenging times just like me. This classmate gets sad, mad, scared, and can feel hurt just like me. This classmate wants friendship, just like me. This classmate makes mistakes, just like me. This classmate wishes to be happy, just like me.' Now, allow some positive, caring thoughts for that person to arise: 'I wish that this classmate have the support they need to get through challenging times and that our class can provide that support. I wish this classmate happiness and peace. Because this classmate is a fellow human being, just like me.'"
- After a few moments, ask the participants to thank their partners in whatever way feels appropriate and move the line up until everyone has been paired with each other.
- Optional: If your class is too large then have students just do this exercise with a few classmates and each week revisit it until everyone has been paired with each other.

Independent working time (10 minutes)

- Have the students remain in a circle and complete the Just Like Me worksheet.
- Support any students that need help.

Differentiation

- Enrichment: Advanced students will have more descriptive answers to the worksheet.
- Support: Struggling students may need to be paired with the teacher or teacher's aide initially.

Assessment (5 minutes)

- During guided practice and independent work time, look to see who is in need of support. Sit closer to them and give clues and encouragement.
- Review what students detail in the worksheet and check in with students who need extra support.

Review and closing (5 minutes)

- Have each student share one takeaway from this lesson and one way they will apply the Just Like Me practice to their life.

Name _____

Date _____

JUST LIKE ME



Empathy is the ability to understand how someone else is feeling or to understand the situation they are in. Reflect on empathy by responding to the the following prompts:

What does empathy mean to you?

Why is empathy important?

What did you learn from practicing empathy?
