

EMPATHY

Teacher Resource

WHAT IS EMPATHY?

Understanding others' thoughts, feelings and actions.

BENCHMARKS

- ✓ **HE.68.R.1.1** Demonstrate the ability to respond with **empathy** in a variety of contexts and situations. Clarification: Identifying others' feelings, perspectives, circumstances, experiences and active listening.
- ✓ **HE.68.R.1.2** Describe the importance of **empathy**, kindness, honesty and trust in building and sustaining relationships.

PURPOSE

- These interactive activities will help your students learn the characteristic of **empathy** and understanding others' thoughts, feelings and actions. Share the suggested introduction with your students, choose one or more of the activities below, and conclude with the suggested wrap-up. Feel free to modify or revisit activities throughout the week to continue reinforcing **empathy**.



Suggested Introduction:

"You are familiar with **empathy** and understanding others' thoughts, feelings and actions. **Empathy** helps us connect with others, show kindness, and support friends and family who go through hardships. When we demonstrate **empathy**, we make our community a more caring and understanding place. It's a skill that makes a big difference in how we treat one another!"



Activities to Build Empathy:

1 Resiliency Reading Connection

Read *The Survivor Tree: Inspired by a True Story* by Cheryl Somers Aubin from the Commissioner's Book of the Month List. Have students discuss the examples of **empathy** found in the book. Encourage students to reflect on how they felt while reading the book and brainstorm how they may have responded in a similar situation. At the end of the week, hold a class discussion and focus on what they have learned about responding with **empathy** in a variety of contexts and situations. Visit buildresiliency.org to learn about other books listed on the Resiliency Reading List; each title has a corresponding Family Reading Guide.

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Activities to Build Empathy (Continued):

2 Empathy in the Workplace

Provide students with examples of workplace interactions (e.g., a coworker asking for help, a supervisor giving feedback, a customer expressing concern). In groups, have students brainstorm to explore what the individual in each scenario thinks and needs. Then, have students consider **empathetic** and effective ways to communicate in each situation and discuss the role of active listening and professionalism in workplace communication.

3 Building Empathy

Divide students into pairs and give them a task that will require students to communicate and demonstrate **empathy** when solving a problem.

Tasks for students could include:

- Solving a school or community issue
- Renaming a school
- Changing a school mascot

This activity requires clear communication, trust and cooperation. Afterward, have students reflect on their experiences and discuss how the students needed to trust each other, show patience and respond with **empathy** when the activity got difficult.



Suggested Wrap-Up:

“Today, we have explored **empathy** and practiced understanding how and why others think, feel and act. You never know what another person is going through in his or her life. When we recognize others’ feelings, understand where they are coming from and choose to show them kindness, we are building stronger relationships and creating a more supportive community. Remember, even small actions like listening, offering help or just being there for someone can make a big difference. Let’s continue to use **empathy** every day to make the world a kinder place!”