

Teaching Empathy in the Classroom [Activity]

In our recent article, [Emotional Intelligence vs. IQ](#), we talked about the difference between Emotional Intelligence and the Intelligence Quotient; two equally important measurements of ability. In traditional education settings, the focus has been on IQ skills, however, recent research shows that while IQ might be the strongest predictor of future salary, a person's Emotional Intelligence has a significant impact on predicting life-altering factors including adult conviction rates, substance abuse, and overall health¹. The research shows that Emotional Intelligence is the strongest indicator of future health and happiness. So how can we make sure our students are learning these crucial social emotional skills? Today we wanted to share a classroom exercise that will allow you to teach one of these important skills: *Empathy*.

Exercise: How would you feel?

Objective: Students will be able to identify how different situations can elicit different emotions.

Skills: Empathy, Identifying Emotions, Mindfulness

Age: PreK - 4th Grade

Time: 15 min (or longer if you would like the whole class to go!)

How it works:

1. Download, cut up, and laminate (if possible) the following "situation cards"
2. Put the situation cards in a bowl or jar
3. Have a student pull a card out of the bowl and ask him/ her to read the situation (or you can read it!)
4. Ask the student how the child probably feels based on the situation, and allow 1-2 other students to share their opinion as well
5. Validate what the students said, or clarify any responses that you think need follow up
6. Have the next student go and do the same thing; choose, read, respond, have the class reflect. Do this 2-3 times
7. Close the activity by highlighting the most important reflections students gave and remind students to always put themselves in one another's shoes to understand why another student might be crying, laughing, nervous, excited, etc..

TIP: Don't limit yourself to the situations provided; use classroom examples or other community events that will help students apply this exercise to what they experience in their daily lives.

Do you like this activity? Make sure to share it with your colleagues and friends!

¹ Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D. & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development*, 82(1): 405-432.

**Today is her
birthday**

**He scraped his
elbow**

She has a fever

**He has a test
today**

**Her friend didn't
want to play with
her**

**He wasn't invited
to play with his
friends**

**She doesn't
understand the
math question**

**He forgot his
homework**

**She has been in
the car for 4 hours**

<p>He has a new baby brother</p>	<p>She wants a new toy</p>	<p>He has to share his toys with his sister</p>
<p>Her sister wants to do everything she does</p>	<p>He is going to see his cousins</p>	<p>She has to wait an hour before using the iPad</p>
<p>He is in time out</p>	<p>She was sent to see the principal</p>	<p>He received a gift</p>

She has been waiting for her turn for 15 minutes

The snack he wanted is finished

She has to leave her friend's birthday party early

He didn't eat breakfast today