

Developing Empathy

**Six lessons to teach elementary age kids empathy, kindness
and how to be change-makers in the world**



**Six lesson plans include: ASCA standards, worksheets, bibliography, core values chart,
feelings chart, problem situation cards and activities**

Lesson Plan—Developing Empathy through Recognizing Feelings

ASCA National Standard Domain: Personal/Social

- A. Students will acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and interpersonal skills to help them understand and respect self and others.

ASCA National Standard Domain: Personal/Social

- A. Students will acquire the attitudes, knowledge and skills contributing to effective learning in school and across the lifespan

Objectives: The student will be able to:

- Identify body language for different feelings
- Identify and practice ways to recognize and honor feelings in others

Essential Question: What are examples of different feelings?

What does the body language for each feeling look like?

Vocabulary: happy, sad, mad, scared, body language, feelings

Concepts to teach:

1. **Label feelings:** Don't assume that every child naturally recognizes and interprets body language correctly. Especially with the very young child begin to name the feelings that you see. "I see you frowning. You look angry. What is upsetting you?"
2. **Point out feelings in others:** Help children recognize the body language of feelings. Help them connect specific body language with specific feelings. "Sally is smiling and looks really happy. When you share with her she feels good."
3. **Teach kids they are in charge of feelings:** Help children see the connection between thoughts, feelings and actions. Teach specific techniques. "I see that you are angry. What can you do to change the angry feeling? Would this be a good time to practice some deep breathing?"

Lesson:

- Identify and discuss body language for different feelings: smiling, frowning, tense muscles, hands shaking, etc. Use large pictures of children that demonstrate feelings or as an alternative, use the feelings chart and have children come act out different feelings. Students can draw a feeling from a basket and the class can then guess the feeling that they are acting out. Discuss what body language was demonstrated.
- Discuss things that cause students to experience the different feelings.
- Discuss and give examples of ways to manage negative and positive feelings. What is a way to handle being angry? Happy? Sad? Scared? Why or why not?

- Read *My Many Colored Days* by Dr. Seuss
 - Have students give examples of days when they felt blue or yellow etc.
- Or read: *Visiting Feelings* by Lauren Rubenstein
 - What are some examples of different feelings? How do we express those feelings?

Activity:

- Students can create a page for a class book on feelings. Draw and write about a particular feeling and choose a color to represent that feeling. Describe the body language that goes with that feeling. Share with their feeling page with the class or with a partner. Bind the pages together to make a class book.

Materials:

- *My Many Colored Days* by Dr. Seuss
- *Visiting Feelings* by Lauren Rubenstein

agreeable	angry	annoyed	anxious	apprehensive
awful	betrayed	bored	brave	calm
capable	caring	cheerful	comfortable	confident
confused	content	cooperative	creative	cruel
curious	depressed	disappointed	disgusted	distracted
ecstatic	embarrassed	enjoying	enraged	excited
fantastic	fearful	fed-up	free	friendly
frustrated	generous	gentle	gloomy	guilty
happy	hurt	ignored	impatient	insecure
interested	jealous	joyful	lonely	lost
overwhelmed	panicked	peaceful	pensive	pleasant
proud	relaxed	relieved	sad	safe
satisfied	scared	sensitive	serious	shy
stressed	tense	thrilled	troubled	unafraid
uncomfortable	worried			

Lesson Plan—Empathy or Sympathy?

ASCA National Standard Domain: Personal/Social

A. Students will acquire the attitudes, knowledge and skills contributing to effective learning in school and across the lifespan

B. Students will make decisions, set goals, and take necessary action to achieve goals.

Objectives: The student will be able to:

- Define the words empathy and sympathy
- Give examples of empathy/sympathy in the classroom and in the community
- Identify ways that students can show empathy and create positive relationships with others

Essential Question: What is empathy? When are some times that you have been empathetic? What is sympathy and how is it different from empathy?

Lesson:

- Discuss: What does it mean to be empathetic? Give an example of a time that you were empathetic with someone else. What is sympathy? Give an example of a time that you may have been more sympathetic than empathetic. How does it feel? What are the consequences of each?
- Read *Wyatt the Wonder Dog Learns about Friendship* by Lynne Watts
- Or read *Giraffes Can't Dance* by Giles Andeae and Guy Parker Rees
- Or read *The Butter Battle Book* by Dr. Seuss
- Identify and discuss who shows empathy in the book. What is the outcome of showing empathy?
- Activity: Have students act out scenarios where they show empathy or sympathy. Then discuss: How is empathy different from sympathy in the role play? How do each of the characters in the role play feel?

Materials:

Wyatt the Wonder Dog Learns about Friendship, by Lynne Watts

Giraffes Can't Dance by Giles Andeae and Guy Parker Rees

The Butter Battle Book by Dr. Seuss

Lesson Plan--Kindness

ASCA National Standard: Behavior – Social Standard

- Demonstrate empathy
- Demonstrate ethical decision making and social responsibility
- Use effective collaboration and cooperation skills

Objectives: The student will be able to:

- Define the word kindness
- Give examples of individuals who portray this characteristic
- Identify ways that students can personally be kind

Essential Question: What is kindness? How can you be kind?

Lesson:

- Discuss: What does it mean to be kind? Give an example of a time that you have been kind to someone else. Give an example of a time that someone has been kind to you. Give an example of something that someone did that was unkind? Does kindness always involve money or things? Why should we be kind? What are some examples of random acts of kindness? Has anyone ever experienced one? How did it make you feel?
- Read *Wyatt the Wonder Dog Learns about Friendship* by Lynne Watts
- Or read: *A Sick Day for Amos McGee* by Philip C. Stead and Erin E. Stead
- Or read: *The Invisible Boy* by Trudy Ludwig
- Discuss how the characters in the book were kind or unkind in the book. What are some other ways that characters in the book could be kind?
- Grades 1-3: Write your own story or draw a picture about a time that you were kind. Share with a partner
- Grades 1-5: Write an encouraging letter or note to someone that you think could use some kindness. Share the note or mail the letter.
- Grades 1-5: Make a list of ways that students could share random acts of kindness at school or in their community. Have each student commit to at least 2-3 things they could do before the next lesson. Have students report on their random acts of kindness during the next class.

Materials:

- *Wyatt the Wonder Dog Learns about Friendship* by Lynne Watts
- *A Sick Day for Amos McGee* by Philip C. Stead and Erin E. Stead
- *The Invisible Boy* by Trudy Ludwig

Lesson Plan: Developing Empathy through Moral Character

ASCA National Standard Domain: Personal/Social

- A. Students will acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and interpersonal skills to help them understand and respect self and others.

ASCA National Standard Domain: Personal/Social

- A. Students will acquire the attitudes, knowledge and skills contributing to effective learning in school and across the lifespan

Objectives: The student will be able to:

- Define core values
- Create a motto or mission statement that incorporates core values
- Identify ways to practice core values
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Essential Question: What are my core values and how do I practice them?

Vocabulary: core values, motto, mission statement

Concepts to teach:

1. **Core values help define who we are:** Identifying core values helps develop character.
2. **Core values help determine behavior:** Help children recognize the importance of acting out core values everyday situations
3. **Identify impact:** Help children see the results of acting out their core values and recognize the positive feelings that come from core values in action.

Lesson:

- Discuss: What are core values? Why is it important to know your core values? Give an example of a time that core values have helped you determine what to do in a difficult situation. What is a motto or mission statement? Give examples: I treat others with kindness and compassion. I am helpful to others. I care about other's feelings. I look for ways to treat others fairly.
- Read *Wyatt the Wonder Dog Learns about Friendship*, by Lynne Watts
- Or read: *Wyatt the Wonder Dog Learns about Teamwork*, by Lynne Watts
- Or read: *The Digger and the Flower* by Joseph Kuefler
- Or read: *The Kindhearted Crocodile* by Lucia Panzieri
- Review core values sheet and have children create their personal motto
- Review how their motto determines their behavior

Materials:

- *Wyatt the Wonder Dog Learns about Friendship*, by Lynne Watts
- *Wyatt the Wonder Dog Learns about Teamwork*, by Lynne Watts
- *The Digger and the Flower* by Joseph Kuefler
- *The Kindhearted Crocodile* by Lucia Panzieri
- Worksheet: Core Values and My Motto

peacefulness	orderly	courageous	achievement	stability
			self-	
tolerance	knowledge	creativity	acceptance	community
power	family	integrity	honesty	spiritual growth
respectful	helping	perseverance	fairness	adventure
harmony	security	friendship	competence	self-control
forgiveness	teamwork	personal growth	belonging	recognition
prosperity	authority	advancement	health	friendly
dependability	generous	reliable	loyalty	open minded
consistent	innovation	compassion	positivity	optimism
			service to	
fitness	education	patriotism	others	environmentalism
acceptance	appreciation	citizenship	consideration	cooperation
empathy	gratitude	helpfulness	kindness	responsibility
service				

Core Values and My Motto Worksheet

Name _____

My Core Values are:

My motto is:

Describe a situation and how your motto will determine your actions. What will you do?

Lesson Plan: Developing Empathy: Learning to Walk in Someone Else's Shoes

ASCA National Standard Domain: Personal/Social

- B. Students will acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and interpersonal skills to help them understand and respect self and others.

ASCA National Standard Domain: Personal/Social

- B. Students will acquire the attitudes, knowledge and skills contributing to effective learning in school and across the lifespan

Objectives: The student will be able to:

- Define empathy
- Identify the feelings of others
- Identify ways to demonstrate empathy
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Essential Question: What is empathy and how can I show it to others?

Vocabulary: empathy

Concepts to teach:

- **Encourage children to explore how beliefs, emotions and desires impact relationships:** Teach children to expand their perspective by taking on the perspective of others. Explore all aspects of a situation by asking questions: How did that make you feel? How do you think the other person felt? How did that influence their behavior? What are your choices in responding to the situation?
- **Use real life teachable moments:** Use real life situations, books, movies and cartoons to point out ways that others show empathy as well as to help children identify with the feelings of others. Ask: how would you feel if that happened to you? What would you want someone else to do to show that they cared? Role play situations with students. This not only helps them empathize with others but helps them experience the choices they have in how they respond. If you collect food for a food bank or toys for a holiday service project make the experience more real by discussing where these things go and what life must be like for the people who benefit.
- **Teach that even though we are all very different, we still have much in common.** Part of understanding and appreciating diversity is recognizing that we all have the same feelings. Everyone has a need for compassion and support.
- **Have students use facial expression to imagine how someone else is feeling.** Research shows that there is a connection between our brain and our physical expression that results in an ability to feel and understand other's feelings. Just the act of making an angry face or a sad face, helps us tune in to other's emotions.

Lesson:

- Discuss: What is empathy? What does it mean to walk in someone else's shoes? Give an example of a time that you had empathy for someone. What is an example of a time that someone showed empathy for you? How did you feel?
- Read *Wyatt the Wonder Dog Learns about Friendship*, by Lynne Watts
- Or read: *One* by Kathryn Otoshi
- Or read: *A Special Thank You: Junior Discovers Integrity (Life Lessons with Junior)* by Dave Ramsey
- Have students practice empathy by using the problem situation cards. They can draw and card and share with a partner how they would show empathy in the situation. For each situation have the student identify how the other person might feel and what they could do to show empathy

Materials:

- *Wyatt the Wonder Dog Learns about Friendship*, by Lynne Watts
- *One* by Kathryn Otoshi
- *A Special Thank You: Junior Discovers Integrity (Life Lessons with Junior)* by Dave Ramsey
- Problem situation cards

You best friend says there is no room for you at the lunch table and you will have to sit at another table. What do you do? What can you say?	You are jumping rope with some friends and a classmate is watching from the sidelines. What do you do? What can you say?	Your soccer game is over and your team won. Your friend was playing on the losing team. What do you do? What do you say?	A boy in your class just got a new haircut and other kids are laughing at him. What do you do? What can you say?
Your soccer game is rained out and you are really disappointed. What do you do? What can you say?	Your best friend is invited to a party and you are not. What do you do? What can you say?	The umpire called you out at first base but you think he made a mistake. What do you do? What can you say?	A classmate asks to join in a game you are playing with some other kids. They say no. What do you do? What can you say?
Your friend is bragging about how well he can ride his bike. You haven't learned to ride a bike yet. What do you do? What can you say?	A friend who was mean to you before, says he is sorry and asks you to be his friend again. What do you do? What can you say?	Your brother wins the video game you are playing with him. What do you do? What can you say?	You overhear two girls saying some mean things about your friend. What do you do? What can you say?
You are playing a game that a new kid has never played before. What do you do? What can you say?	Someone calls you a name and hurts your feelings. What do you do? What can you say?	You want to play with a toy and someone else is playing with it. What do you do? What can you say?	You have someone on your team who has never played basketball before. They are not very good. What do you do? What can you say?
A classmate drops their books on the floor and your friends laugh. What do you do? What can you say?	Your team has two outs and a team mate strikes out. What do you do? What can you say?	Your sister won the board game they you are playing. She won last time too. What do you do? What can you say?	Someone pushes you in line and says "Hurry up slowpoke!" What do you do? What can you say?
Your brother makes fun of you because you can't throw the ball very far. What do you do? What can you say?	Your team just lost the championship game. What do you do? What can you say?	You have a friend who never listens to you and interrupts you all the time. What do you do? What can you say?	A classmate is making fun of someone else and calling them a name. Everyone is laughing at them. What do you do? What can you say?
A teammate just hit a home run. What do you do? What can you say?	Your friends are playing four square but you've never played before. What do you do? What can you say?	A friend of yours won't talk to you and you don't know what is wrong. What do you do? What can you say?	Someone in your class is always cutting in front of you in line. What do you do? What can you say?

A friend is visiting you and you want to play video games. She wants to play outside. What do you do? What can you say?	You just lost the spelling bee. You really wanted to win. What do you do? What can you say?	There are three kids at the table but only one pair of scissors. What do you do? What can you say?
A classmate makes fun of how you run. She says you are as slow as a turtle. What do you do? What can you say?	A friend gets mad at you and calls you a name. What do you do? What can you say?	Someone else is sitting with your friend on the bus and there is no room for you to sit there. What do you do? What can you say?
You and your friend always argue about who goes first. What do you do? What can you say?	Your grandmother is coming for a visit and a friend invites you to come play at the same time. What do you do? What can you say?	You are trying to do your homework but your sister is making a lot of noise and you can't concentrate. What do you do? What can you say?
You thought you wanted to take piano lessons but now that you are signed up it isn't as much fun as you thought it would be. What do you do? What can you say?	Your class lost the kickball team and another class won. What do you do? What can you say?	A classmate broke their arm and can't carry their books. What do you do? What can you say?
A friend starts talking to you while your teacher is teaching a lesson. What do you do? What can you say?	You forgot to do your homework last night. What do you do? What can you say?	A friend borrows something that belongs to you without asking. What do you do? What can you say?
Your friends decide to play a game at recess that you don't like to play What do you do? What can you say?	Your grandmother gives you a shirt for your birthday. You don't really like it. What do you do? What can you say?	Your little brother takes apart a Lego model that you have been working on for a long time. What do you do? What can you say?
Your sister borrows your favorite jacket without asking and loses it. What do you do? What can you say?	There is a new kid in your class and he seems nice but the other kids talk about him behind his back and think he is weird. What do you do? What can you say?	You clean up all the toys in the playroom at home and your brother and sister don't help at all. They are playing while you are working. What do you do? What can you say?

Lesson Plan: Developing Empathy and Becoming a Change-maker

ASCA National Standard Domain: Personal/Social

- C. Students will acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and interpersonal skills to help them understand and respect self and others.

ASCA National Standard Domain: Personal/Social

- C. Students will acquire the attitudes, knowledge and skills contributing to effective learning in school and across the lifespan

Objectives: The student will be able to:

- Define the word: empathy
- Identify individuals who have been change-makers
- Identify and practice ways they can be change-makers
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Essential Question: What are examples of ways to demonstrate empathy through being a change-maker?

Vocabulary: empathy, change-maker,

Concepts to teach:

4. **Teach growth mindset:** Empathy can be learned and increased through practice just like muscles are increased through exercise.
5. **Empathize effort and practice:** Help children recognize the importance of looking for opportunities to develop empathy and practice it in everyday situations
6. **Identify impact:** Help children see the results of their efforts and recognize the positive feelings that come from empathy in action.

Lesson:

- Discuss: What does it mean to be change-maker? Give an example of a time that you have been a change-maker. Give an example of a time that someone has been empathetic toward you. What are small ways we can be change-makers at school? In our community? At home? Where else can we show empathy and compassion toward others?
- Read *Wyatt the Wonder Dog Learns about Giving*, by Lynne Watts
- Or read: *Brave Girl* by Michelle Markel
- Or read: *Farmer Will Allen and the Growing Table* by Jacqueline Briggs Martin
- Or read: *Harvesting Hope: The Story of Cesar Chavez* by Kathleen Krull
- Review examples of children who have been change-makers:
<https://www.kidsareheroes.org/>
- Complete the Empathy worksheet

- Older Grades:
 - Research and report on famous people who have lived a life of service/generosity: Mother Teresa, Florence Nightingale, Desmond Tutu, Nelson Mandela etc.

Materials:

- *Wyatt the Wonder Dog Learns about Giving*, by Lynne Watts
- *Brave Girl* by Michelle Markel
- *Farmer Will Allen and the Growing Table* by Jacqueline Briggs Martin
- *Harvesting Hope: The Story of Cesar Chavez* by Kathleen Krull
- Worksheet: Empathy

Empathy Worksheet

Name _____

Empathy means:

Describe a time when you were empathetic and a change-maker:

Describe a time when someone was empathetic toward you:

What can you do to be empathetic and a change-maker in the future?
