

Empathy & Perspective

Understanding the perspectives of others and practicing empathy

Practicing Empathy

"Don't judge someone until you've walked a mile in his or her shoes." This lesson you've heard a hundred times has a one-word name: **empathy**. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of someone else.

Empathy is about many things, including reserving judgement. It's about understanding the challenges someone else might be facing. At its best, it's about reaching out to listen and show support.

Sympathy is feeling bad for someone's troubles. Empathy is about taking the time to truly grasp what that person is going through. Say that a teammate is late for a meeting. When he or she does arrive, he or she might be cranky and unfocused. Your immediate reaction might be anger or frustration. However, you really don't know what that person is going through. Maybe his or her parent lost a job. Maybe

the teammate just doesn't feel accepted by the team. There are always a million possible maybes. Don't jump to conclusions. Instead, be supportive. Try to understand. Doing so will build

How are
perspective
and **empathy**
connected?

Was Empathy Shown?

Directions: Read the scenario. Decide whether empathy was shown.

Kevin arrived at the group meeting without having done his part of the work.

Kevin was late for the group meeting because he didn't have his part of the work done. The other group members were all surprised that Kevin was late. They didn't know he was late because he was late for the bill. Kevin was really late for the meeting. He was late for the meeting because he was late for the bill.

Was empathy shown in the scenario?

Yes

No

- If you said "Yes", highlight where empathy was shown in the text, and summarize how it was shown below.
- If you said "No", explain some ways that empathy could have been shown below.

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Digital Access

Resource	Google Slides Access
Practicing Empathy Passage	<u>Click here to copy to your drive.</u>
Empathy Discussion Questions	<u>Click here to copy to your drive.</u>
Was Empathy Shown? Version A: Situational Passages with Questions	<u>Click here to copy to your drive.</u>
Was Empathy Shown? Version B: Passages only for Whole Class Discussion	<u>Click here to copy to your drive.</u>
Paired Perspective Version A - Passages with Questions	<u>Click here to copy to your drive.</u>
Paired Perspective Version B - Passages only for Whole Class Discussion	<u>Click here to copy to your drive.</u>
Perspective Discussion Questions	<u>Click here to copy to your drive.</u>
ALL ACTIVITES IN ONE SLIDE	<u>Click here to copy to your drive.</u>

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Practicing Empathy

“Don’t judge someone until you’ve walked a mile in his or her shoes.” This lesson you’ve heard a hundred times has a one-word name: **empathy**. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of someone else.

Empathy is about many things. It’s about reserving judgement. It’s about imagining the challenges someone else might be facing. At its best, it’s about reaching out to listen and show support.

Sympathy is feeling bad for someone’s troubles. Empathy is about taking the time to truly grasp what that person is going through. Say that a teammate is late for a practice. When he or she does arrive, he or she is cranky and unfocused. Your immediate reaction might be anger or frustration. After all, you were on time. You’re contributing. However, you really don’t know what else that person is going through, do you? Maybe his or her parent lost a job. Maybe a family

member is ill. Maybe the teammate just doesn’t feel accepted by the team. There are always a million possible maybes. Don’t jump to conclusions. Instead, be supportive. Listen. Try to understand. Doing so will build stronger relationships, help you be more accepting, and allow you to learn about the world and the different kinds of people in it.

One of the great strengths of America is its diversity. It’s likely that the people around you have had very different experiences and opportunities than you have. Therefore, it’s unrealistic to think that you know why someone acts or feels a certain way. The same event, for example, might affect you and a classmate very differently.

What an opportunity there is to learn and grow! This is where empathy comes in. It demands attention and effort. It will allow you to be more accepting and understanding and enable you to be a better friend.

Let's Talk About Empathy

- What have you learned about empathy?
- Why is it important to show empathy toward others?
- How does empathy go beyond sympathy?
- What is an example of a time when you wished that someone had shown empathy toward you?
- What is an example of a time when you showed empathy toward someone?
- What is an example of a time when someone showed empathy toward you?
- What are some ways that we can show empathy toward others?

What is
empathy?

Why is
empathy
important?

How does
empathy go
beyond
sympathy?

What are some
examples of times
when others
showed **empathy**
toward you?

When have
you shown
empathy
toward others?

What are some
ways that we
can
show **empathy**?

Was Empathy Shown?

Situational Passages with Questions

1 Was Empathy Shown?

Directions: Read the scenario. Decide whether empathy was shown.

Kevin arrived at the group meeting without having done his part of the research for the group presentation. Everyone else had done their work, so they were all a bit frustrated...all except for Riley. He could tell that Kevin was upset. He asked Kevin if there was a reason why he hadn't done the research. Kevin explained that the Internet at his house had been shut off because his mother couldn't pay the bill. Riley thought that would be really tough, so he said so to Kevin. Riley then told Kevin that he was welcome to do the research at his house.

Was empathy shown in the scenario?

Yes

No

- If you said "Yes", highlight where empathy was shown in the text, and summarize how it was shown below.
- If you said "No", explain some ways that empathy could have been shown below.

2 Was Empathy Shown?

Directions: Read the scenario. Decide whether empathy was shown.

Charles was unpacking a box in his new room. It was a huge room. It was much bigger than his room in their last town, which was a thousand miles away. Charles pulled a photo out of the box, a picture of him and the best friends he had left behind. It made Charles upset, and he sat down on the floor, holding back tears. His sister walked in and found him there. She told him to get over whatever he was so upset about. "It's a huge house with a pool," she said. "Toughen up. It's time to move on."

Was empathy shown in the scenario?

Yes

No

- If you said "Yes", highlight where empathy was shown in the text, and summarize how it was shown below.
- If you said "No", explain some ways that empathy could have been shown below.

3

Was Empathy Shown?

Directions: Read the scenario. Decide whether empathy was shown.

Lou was waiting outside the gym for tryouts to start. He was standing next to Wally, who was by far the smallest kid in school. Wally started nervously pacing. Lou asked him what he was doing. Wally said that he was worried that the coaches would take one look at him and not even give him a real shot because he was so small. Lou just shrugged and told Wally that it is basketball and that size is really important.

Was empathy shown in the scenario?

Yes

No

- If you said “Yes”, highlight where empathy was shown in the text, and summarize how it was shown below.
- If you said “No”, explain some ways that empathy could have been shown below.

4

Was Empathy Shown?

Directions: Read the scenario. Decide whether empathy was shown.

Every year, Holly's school had the students' moms and dads come in to talk about their careers. This made Holly very anxious. She lived with her aunt. She thought that everyone would think that she was weird if they found out that her parents weren't around. Layla could tell that Holly was nervous, so she asked Holly about it. Finally, Holly told Layla about the situation. Layla listened closely as Holly explained how she wished that she had a "normal" family. Layla put her hand on Holly's shoulder and said that she had an idea. Layla uninvited her dad from Parent Day. Instead, she invited her uncle.

Was empathy shown in the scenario?

Yes

No

- If you said "Yes", highlight where empathy was shown in the text, and summarize how it was shown below.
- If you said "No", explain some ways that empathy could have been shown below.

5

Was Empathy Shown?

Directions: Read the scenario. Decide whether empathy was shown.

Mr. Grail paired up the students to work on a book report. Jen and Carla were paired together. Carla was having trouble keeping her eyes open. Jen had overheard Carla talking to Mr. Grail earlier in the day. A pipe had burst in Carla's house in the middle of the night. Her family had had to evacuate. Carla kept nodding off, and Jen kept getting more and more frustrated. Finally, she told Carla that she just had to try harder since they were both sharing a grade on the assignment.

Was empathy shown in the scenario?

Yes

No

- If you said "Yes", highlight where empathy was shown in the text, and summarize how it was shown below.
- If you said "No", explain some ways that empathy could have been shown below.

6 Was Empathy Shown?

Directions: Read the scenario. Decide whether empathy was shown.

Iman was new to school. In history class, the students were watching a movie about World War II. Iman became very upset and asked to go the bathroom. Some students snickered that Iman had a “weak stomach”, but Brenda thought that it might be something more. She also asked to go to the bathroom. She found Iman sobbing in the hallway. Brenda asked if she could help. Iman explained that the country she had moved from – her home – was at war. Brenda listened, imagining how terrible that must be. She stayed with Iman in the hallway until the bell rang.

Was empathy shown in the scenario?

Yes

No

- If you said “Yes”, highlight where empathy was shown in the text, and summarize how it was shown below.
- If you said “No”, explain some ways that empathy could have been shown below.

7 Was Empathy Shown?

Directions: Read the scenario. Decide whether empathy was shown.

It was the last practice before the championship game. Ray was playing poorly. He was sluggish and unfocused, and Coach was really yelling at him to get it together. During a break, Jim, the team captain, pulled Ray aside. He asked if everything was alright. Ray said that his dad had forgotten to pay for his school meal plan, so he hadn't eaten all day. Jim thought about how he felt when he was really hungry; he could barely form a sentence. Jim grabbed his backpack from the bleachers. He took out a granola bar and handed it to Ray.

Was empathy shown in the scenario?

Yes

No

- If you said "Yes", highlight where empathy was shown in the text, and summarize how it was shown below.
- If you said "No", explain some ways that empathy could have been shown below.

8

Was Empathy Shown?

Directions: Read the scenario. Decide whether empathy was shown.

The students in the robotics club were gathered for their monthly meeting. Everyone was offering their input about how to spend the annual budget...everyone except Otto, who was silent. Finally, Denise, the club president, told Otto that he needed to share his thoughts. After all, he was the treasurer. Otto apologized for being so quiet. In a low voice, he explained that he had just found out that his parents were going to "spend some time apart". Denise rolled her eyes and said that it was no big deal and that half of marriages ended in divorce anyway.

Was empathy shown in the scenario?

Yes

No

- If you said "Yes", highlight where empathy was shown in the text, and summarize how it was shown below.
- If you said "No", explain some ways that empathy could have been shown below.

9

Was Empathy Shown?

Directions: Read the scenario. Decide whether empathy was shown.

Many students thought that Trish was a snob. She never went to any school events or birthday parties. Kim didn't like jumping to conclusions. She was worried that Trish might not feel welcome. After all, Trish was new to school. Kim asked Trish why she never showed up to anything. Kim could tell that Trish was happy that someone had finally asked. She explained that she was always babysitting her young sister since their mother worked at the hospital from two to ten every day. Kim could tell that Trish felt left out. Kim started hanging out at Trish's house once a week.

Was empathy shown in the scenario?

Yes No

- If you said "Yes", highlight where empathy was shown in the text, and summarize how it was shown below.
- If you said "No", explain some ways that empathy could have been shown below.

10

Was Empathy Shown?

Directions: Read the scenario. Decide whether empathy was shown.

Mrs. Hoyt's room was set up with desks in groups of four. In one group, Vern, Curtis, and Dan were talking excitedly. They had all just gotten the same video game. They'd spent the previous night playing together online. Meanwhile, the fourth student, Bobby, kept his eyes down. He didn't say anything. At one point, Vern asked Bobby if he had an Xbox, too. Bobby explained that he'd asked for one for his birthday and around the holidays, but there wasn't much extra money to go around. The boys just shrugged and made plans to play more after school.

Was empathy shown in the scenario?

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- If you said "Yes", highlight where empathy was shown in the text, and summarize how it was shown below.
- If you said "No", explain some ways that empathy could have been shown below.

Was Empathy Shown? Sort

Was Empathy ShOWN?

Yes

No

Cut and sort the scenarios depending on whether empathy was shown or not.

1. Kevin arrived at the group meeting without having done his part of the research for the group presentation. Everyone else had done their work, so they were all a bit frustrated...all except for Riley. He could tell that Kevin was upset. He asked Kevin if there was a reason why he hadn't done the research. Kevin explained that the Internet at his house had been shut off because his mother couldn't pay the bill. Riley thought that would be really tough, so he said so to Kevin. Riley then told Kevin that he was welcome to do the research at his house.

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4. Every year, Holly's school had the students' moms and dads come in to talk about their careers. This made Holly very anxious. She lived with her aunt. She thought that everyone would think that she was weird if they found out that her parents weren't around. Layla could tell that Holly was nervous, so she asked Holly about it. Finally, Holly told Layla about the situation. Layla listened closely as Holly explained how she wished that she had a "normal" family. Layla put her hand on Holly's shoulder and said that she had an idea. Layla uninvited her dad from Parent Day. Instead, she invited her uncle.

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Cut and sort the scenarios depending on whether empathy was shown or not.

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Was Empathy ShOWN?

Answer Key

Yes

No

#1

#4

#6

#7

#9

#2

#3

#5

#8

#10

**Paired Perspective
Passages with Questions**

Paired Perspective

Set 1, Story #1

Directions: Read the story.
Answer the questions that follow.

Uma walked through the cafeteria, not making eye contact with any of her fellow students. This included a group of kids from her own class. Uma walked right by them and sat at a table near the wall. She took out a magazine and started eating.

At the table she had passed by, Greg, Darla, and Whitney shook their heads. Uma had transferred in a few weeks ago, but she had yet to talk to any of her classmates. Uma was new, but they all recognized her. She had been on a hit national TV show – *Moose Crossing* – for two seasons. They all thought that Uma was stuck up and that she thought that she was too good to even eat at the same table as them. They all thought that she thought that she was too good to even *look* at them. She was such a snob!

What do the characters think about Uma?

What do we know about Uma?

Paired Perspective

Set 1, Story #2

Directions: Read the story.
Answer the questions that follow.

Every time I walk by my classmates in the cafeteria, I tell myself that this is the day I'm going to summon the courage to sit down with them. However, I'm so nervous that I'm just concentrating on not tripping or dropping the tray. By the time I get to their table, my mouth feels like it's full of cotton. What would I even say? I really have no idea how to do any of this. This is the first actual school I've ever attended. It's really the first time I've been around kids my own age. Since I was little, I always just had a tutor on the set. There were never any kids my age around, just adults. I learned to talk to other people by reciting lines someone else wrote! How hard can it be? Well, in those moments, walking by normal kids my age, it seems impossible. I just head straight for the farthest table. I pull out a magazine and pretend to read it. I hope that tomorrow will be different.

What did we learn about Uma that helped us understand and have empathy for her?

How did your feelings about Uma change after reading the story from her perspective?

Paired Perspective

Set 2, Story #1

Directions: Read the story.
Answer the questions that follow.

In Mrs. Lloyd's history class, the students were grouped up for a project. They had to choose a topic and complete it together as a group. Delilah wanted to do a project on inventions throughout history. Two other more vocal members of the group – who happened to be twins – had other ideas. Skip and Kip had a number of famous ancestors, whom they never stopped telling people about. They made the case that the group should do a project where everyone traces their family histories. Everyone was on board with the idea...except Delilah. She really fought against it. Everyone was surprised about what a bad mood she was in all of a sudden. Ines, another group member, told Delilah to relax. She said that the project would be an easy A. Plus, it might be fun. Kip said that Delilah was just mad that she hadn't gotten her choice of topics. Finally, Delilah just crossed her arms and sat silently fuming while the others made further plans for the project.

What do the characters think about Delilah?

What do we know about Delilah?

Paired Perspective

Set 2, Story #2

Directions: Read the story.
Answer the questions that follow.

I know my face was red and that it looked like I wanted to punch through a brick wall. I really just wanted to cry. I love my parents, and I have a really awesome life with great friends and a nice little house. At times like this, however, I'm reminded of where I came from. By that, I mean I'm reminded that I have no idea where I came from. My parents adopted me at birth, and they have no information about my biological mother or father. I know I could do a family tree for my adopted family, but it's not the same. Every branch of the tree would be my parents' ancestors, not mine. On my *real* tree, maybe there's a queen, president, or famous artist. I'll never know. You know that joy on my classmates' faces when they make amazing discoveries about their lineages? That's not possible for me. Nobody knows I was adopted, not even Mrs. Lloyd. I'm not ashamed of it; that's not the right word. I just always feel like something's missing. In times like these, I'm really reminded of it.

What did we learn about Delilah that helped us understand and have empathy for her?

How did your feelings about Delilah change after reading the story from her perspective?

Paired Perspective

Set 3, Story #1

Directions: Read the story.
Answer the questions that follow.

The debate team decided that it would be a good idea to switch up the places where they practiced. After all, they'd have to travel from school to school to compete. The idea was that the distractions of a new setting would help them learn to focus. There were ten team members. They decided that they would practice at a new member's house each week.

Pretty much everyone thought that this was a great idea. It got nine ayes and one no. The no was Winnie, who offered a string of excuses. Her house was too far away. It was too small. Wouldn't just practicing in different classrooms be easier? She kept protesting. The more she did, the more the rest of the team was getting frustrated. Everyone else was opening their doors. Why was Winnie being so selfish? Finally, Winnie told them that her family was getting new carpets put in and that her mother had forbid her from having any friends over. Everyone could tell that this wasn't true. They were fed up and said that they'd just skip Winnie's house. Everyone felt like she wasn't being a good teammate.

What do the characters think about Winnie?

What do we know about Winnie?

Paired Perspective

Set 3, Story #2

Directions: Read the story.
Answer the questions that follow.

Situations like this are impossible. I'm sometimes not even sure who I'm really protecting, if anyone. Since Jack was born, I haven't had a friend over to the house – not a single one. I'm not sure if that's the right move or not. It's just easier, I think, to not even find out. Jack has some developmental disabilities. He has trouble communicating and is prone to outbursts. We have an aide who comes over to help him in the afternoons and evenings. We've learned that it's really important to control the environment. We've created a lot of stability for him. Anything new – especially new people – can really set him off. On the flip side, some people just don't know how to handle themselves around people with special needs. Long story short, having debate practice at my house is just not a possibility. At the same time, there's no good way to explain it. I never want to seem like I'm using Jack as an excuse for something. I just end up making up other reasons until people drop the idea of coming over.

What did we learn about Winnie that helped us understand and have empathy for her?

How did your feelings about Winnie change after reading the story from her perspective?

Paired Perspective

Set 4, Story #1

Directions: Read the story.
Answer the questions that follow.

Kenny was late to practice for the third time this week. Everyone on the team was starting to get really annoyed. The practices over winter break were at 8 a.m. It was early, but it wasn't *that* early. All of the other players were getting there on time and putting in maximum effort. Kenny kept showing up late, always yawning as he walked in the door.

At today's practice, Coach gave a long speech about teamwork and commitment. He said that being on a team meant that everyone was putting in their best effort in pursuit of a common goal. Everyone was glancing over at Kenny, of course, during the speech. What they saw was Kenny yawning as his eyelids drooped again and again. The other players hoped that the speech got Kenny to take things more seriously and to care more about the team. They thought that he clearly didn't care enough.

What do the characters think about Kenny?

What do we know about Kenny?

Paired Perspective

Set 4, Story #2

Directions: Read the story.
Answer the questions that follow.

It's hard to describe how hard it was to drag myself to practice after working most of the night. My mother has huge medical bills. My father took on extra work to try to manage the payments. Since winter rolled in, he's been clearing snow from driveways and sidewalks. He comes home at four or five in the morning some nights. When there's been a heavy snowfall, he makes me come along. While he's plowing with the truck, I clear out some of the narrower areas with a shovel. We've had crazy snow this winter. It seems like it's dumping down every other day. I sometimes get home only a couple of hours before dawn. It seems like as soon as I lay my head down, the alarm is going off. Of course, I want nothing more than to stay in bed, but I don't want to let my teammates down. I summon up every last ounce of energy I have to flop out of bed and grab my practice stuff.

What did we learn about Kenny that helped us understand and have empathy for him?

How did your feelings about Kenny change after reading the story from his perspective?

Perspective Discussion Questions

Let's Talk about Perspective

- How did the characters respond to the main character in the story?
- What did you think about the main character in the first story?
- What information did you learn from reading the second story?
- How did your opinion change after reading the second story?
- What are some ways that the characters could have shown empathy toward the main character?
- How did reading a situation from different points of view help you understand varied perspectives?

What does it
mean to have a
different
perspective than
someone else?

Why is it
important to
take others'
perspectives
into account?

How are
perspective
and **empathy**
connected?

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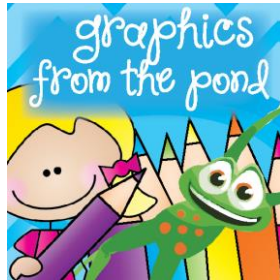
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