

Enhancing empathy

Ages 14–16



THE CYBERSMILE FOUNDATION

Enhancing empathy

OBJECTIVE

To learn what “empathy” is.

OUTCOME

To be able to show empathy for another person.

EMPATHY

The ability to imagine yourself in the place of another person and experience their feelings.

10 MINS

14-16 YRS

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To learn what empathy is.

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MATERIALS

A \$20 bill.

1. Introduce the exercise to the class, and present the objective and outcome.
2. Present the class with a \$20 bill and ask them if they want it and why (it is likely all will want it).
3. Fold the \$20 bill and ask if they still want it despite its crease and why (it is still likely all will want it).
4. Keep altering the \$20 bill by folding it up until it cannot fold anymore, scrunching it up and stepping on it. Then ask the class if they still want it (hopefully they still will).
5. Make the point that damaging the \$20 bill did not decrease its value and they still saw its worth, likewise, bullying and/or cyberbullying a person does not stop them from being human, and they should not forget that a person and their feelings have a lot of worth.
6. Pair each student up with someone they do not know so well.
7. In turns (4 minutes each), get each student to tell their partner about a difficult situation they have experienced, but without saying how it made them feel (avoid using emotional words).
8. Then ask their partner to re-tell the experience, but including the emotions the person may have felt, and the student who told the story can then comment on how accurate their partner was.
9. Get everyone back together again and ask them to share what it felt like doing this exercise.
10. End the exercise by explaining the importance of empathy. Explain that they should always try and think how their online comments will make the receiver feel. Lastly, explain that if they do not know someone, it is still not OK to be rude to them as that person still has feelings.

EVALUATION

- Ask the students to discuss what the benefits are of showing empathy towards other people compared to no empathy or sympathy.
- Encourage them to use examples of situations in their discussion.

NOTES

- Provide the following definition of empathy (also on the accompanying slides) - "The ability to imagine yourself in the place of another person and experience their feelings." It is different to "sympathy," which is to feel sorry for a person.