

Empathy Activity



Empathy is the ability to identify and understand the feelings of others. Building an understanding of another person's feelings is an important part of bullying prevention. The bully often doesn't understand the impact of his or her actions. When bystanders to bullying understand how others feel, they are more likely to intervene rather than participate. The following monologues will help you explore what it feels like to be bullied.

Read each monologue and answer the questions that follow.

1 I felt like crying. Why were they doing this to me? Why did he have to start it every time? Why do they follow him – they know it's wrong - why do they do it? I'm a strong person, but with him I feel helpless. It isn't about me, it's about him. You can see it in his eyes. The fear, the helplessness, the hurt, the anger - he's inflicting all that on me, but it's also his own. It isn't me. I pity him, I hate him, I can't forgive him – and I can't fight back, can't escape. They're all too powerful – or too weak.

a) Describe how this person was feeling in this situation.

b) Describe why this person was feeling that way.

c) What actions did this person take?

d) What other options did this person have?

e) Why didn't this person get help from someone else?

f) Describe how you could intervene and help in this situation.

2 The teacher called me up to his desk. He asked me why I hadn't told him about this before. Didn't he know? Was he blind? Couldn't he see it in me - in them? Why was he making me tell him? It's as if it's my fault, my responsibility - isn't it his job to stand up for me, for what's right? And why do I have to be the nark, the tattler-tale? Maybe I shouldn't do this. What will they do when he talks to them? They'll know it was me, even if he doesn't let on - they *will* know. "Always tell the teacher if you have a problem"? Yeah, right.

a) Describe how this person was feeling in this situation.

3 Please don't look - *don't look!* Nobody needs to know – they don't need to see. It's just a stupid test, what does it matter, does everyone else need to know? I feel like shrinking into my seat – I want to disappear. Why did I come to class today – why didn't I just stay home?

a) Describe how this person was feeling in this situation.

b) Describe why this person was feeling this way.

c) What actions did this person take?

d) What other options did this person have?

e) Why didn't this person get help from someone else?

f) Describe how you could intervene and help in this situation.

4 I went to the front door. I put my shoes on. I went out the door, down the front walk, and looked across the street, across the playground. Ten steps to the fence, a hundred steps across the grass - then the school. I stood there for what felt like an eternity. It was a warm spring day, but my feet were frozen to the sidewalk. The buzzer echoed in the distance, giving me a tight knot in my stomach. So I walked back inside, into the coolness and dark of the basement, turned on the TV, and escaped into a horror movie.

a) Describe how this person was feeling in this situation.

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c) What actions did this person take?

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e) Why didn't this person get help from someone else?

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Empathy Activity: Follow-Up, Reflection, and Discussion

1) What do you think you learned about bullying from this activity?

2) Why do you think people who are being bullied might need your support and help to make it stop?

3) How do you see your role in getting a bully to stop?

Empathy Activity: Teacher's Guide



[Teacher's notes appear in square brackets]

Empathy is the ability to identify and understand the feelings of others. Building an understanding of another person's feelings is an important part of bullying prevention.

The bully often doesn't understand the impact of his or her actions. When bystanders to bullying understand how others feel, they are more likely to intervene rather than participate. The following monologues will help you explore what it feels like to be bullied.

Read each monologue and answer the questions that follow.

[You may want to spend extra time on the first monologue to allow students to either come up with ideas on their own, or in small group discussion. You may want to assign a gender to the characters in the monologues or, after you complete one section, ask students to change the gender of the character and re-evaluate their responses. This will emphasize that a bully can be male or female, and the victim may be male or female. How each gender bullies may be different, but the result may be the same.]

1 I felt like crying. Why were they doing this to me? Why did he have to start it every time? Why do they follow him – they know it's wrong - why do they do it? I'm a strong person, but with him I feel helpless. It isn't about me, it's about him. You can see it in his eyes. The fear, the helplessness, the hurt, the anger - he's inflicting all that on me, but it's also his own. It isn't me. I pity him, I hate him, I can't forgive him – and I can't fight back, can't escape. They're all too powerful – or too weak.

a) Describe how this person was feeling in this situation.

[Students will come up with a variety of emotions. Ask how they could tell the person was feeling this way: if they didn't hear the person saying this how would they know how they felt? What signs told them? Have them use a thesaurus or dictionary if needed.]

b) Describe why this person was feeling that way.

[What caused the victim to have these emotions? The specific actions of the bully are not listed. Students may indicate a number of **Physical**, **Verbal** or **Social** actions that may be **Direct** or **Indirect** which would lead to these feelings. This question is meant to promote recognition that regardless of the action, there is a real consequence, and one action may be as damaging as another.]

c) What actions did this person take?

[How did the victim respond to being bullied? What did they do about it? In this monologue, the victim doesn't do anything, but students might suggest a variety of ways the victim may respond.]

d) What other options did this person have?

[What options can the class come up with? Discuss the possible consequences of these actions in terms of getting the bully to stop. What are the consequences of a confrontation? Fighting back? Telling a teacher? Walking away? Doing nothing?]

e) Why didn't this person get help from someone else?

[This question helps student awareness that someone might need their support to stop a bully.]

f) Describe how you could intervene and help in this situation.

[Students may have a variety of responses. Discuss the impact and consequences of their intervention. Some positive options might be: telling the bully to stop bullying, not walking away and leaving the victim alone with the bully, leaving with the victim and talking to a teacher. Many students will not intervene because they are afraid of losing face or of being bullied themselves. You may wish to talk about the consequences of not taking action. In the majority of cases, a bully will stop if told to do so by a peer; this may be because bullies may not want to lose face, want the support and approval of their peers, or prefer easy targets who will not challenge them.]

2 The teacher called me up to his desk. He asked me why I hadn't told him about this before. Didn't he know? Was he blind? Couldn't he see it in me - in them? Why was he making me tell him? It's as if it's my fault, my responsibility - isn't it his job to stand up for me, for what's right? And why do I have to be the nark, the tattletale? Maybe I shouldn't do this. What will they do when he talks to them? They'll know it was me, even if he doesn't let on - they *will* know. "Always tell the teacher if you have a problem"? Yeah, right.

[Answers for the following sections may be similar to the answers for section one. These additional monologues are offered to support and reinforce the concepts, and get the student to practice their empathy skills.]

a) Describe how the person was feeling in this situation.

[See 1a]

b) Describe why the person was feeling that way.

[See 1b]

c) What actions did this person take?

[See 1c]

d) What other options did this person have?

[See 1d. If students find they don't get results by talking with one teacher or adult, they should be encouraged to be persistent and talk to a number of adults until they get help. Teachers may not witness

bullying events which occur outside of the classroom, and may interpret bullying behaviour as isolated events. Bullying is repeated and persistent. If a student has trouble convincing one adult, they can keep a log of incidents and present it to a number of adults. Once a teacher is aware, that teacher can document the bully's behaviour as well, in order to address the issue appropriately and follow up over an extended period of time. Bringing the bully and the victim together to sort out the issue can be counterproductive.]

- e) Why didn't this person get help from someone else?

[See 1e]

- f) Describe how you could intervene and help in this situation.

[See 1f]

3 Please don't look - *don't look!* Nobody needs to know – they don't need to see. It's just a stupid test, what does it matter, does everyone else need to know? I feel like shrinking into my seat – I want to disappear. Why did I come to class today – why didn't I just stay home?

[You can ask students if they think the person has high academic achievement or not – does this person usually get high marks or not? Low and high achievers may be at risk in this situation.]

- a) Describe how the person was feeling in this situation.

[See 1a]

- b) Describe why this person was feeling this way.

[See 1b]

- c) What actions did this person take?

[See 1c]

- d) What other options did this person have?

[See 1d]

- e) Why didn't this person get help from someone else?

[See 1e]

- f) Describe how you could intervene and help in this situation.

[See 1f]

4 I went to the front door. I put my shoes on. I went out the door, down the front walk, and looked across the street, across the playground. Ten steps to the fence, a hundred steps across the grass - then the school. I stood there for what felt like an eternity. It was a warm spring day, but my feet were frozen to the sidewalk. The buzzer echoed in the distance, giving me a tight knot in my stomach. So I walked back inside, into the coolness and dark of the basement, turned on the TV, and escaped into a horror movie.

[Students who are bullied may have a higher rate of absence from school. This may affect their school performance and increase their level of isolation.]

1) Describe how this person was feeling in this situation.

[See 1a]

2) Describe why this person was feeling this way.

[See 1b]

c) What actions did this person take?

[See 1c]

d) What other options did this person have?

[See 1d]

e) Why didn't this person get help from someone else?

[See 1e]

f) Describe how you could intervene and help in this situation.

[See 1f]

Empathy Activity: Follow-Up, Reflection, and Discussion

[You may have students answer these questions on their worksheet or in a journal. You may also use this activity as a springboard for further research into bullying or other projects.]

- 1) What do you think you learned about bullying from this activity?
- 2) Why do you think people who are being bullied might need your support and help to make it stop?
- 3) How do you see your role in getting a bully to stop?



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