

Empathy



Empathy is the ability to identify and understand other's feelings. Building an understanding of others feelings is an important part of bullying prevention. The bully often doesn't understand the impact of their actions. When bystanders to bullying understand how others feel they are more likely to intervene rather than participate. The following scenarios encourage the exploration of what it feels like to be bullied.

Read each scenario 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 is wrong - why do they do it? I'm helpless despite my strength. It isn't about me, it is about him. You can see it in his eyes... the fear... the helplessness... the hurt... the anger... all that he is inflicting on me is his fear... his helplessness... his hurt... his anger. It isn't me. But still, I pity him, I hate him, I can not forgive him – but I can not fight back, I can not escape it – they are all too powerful – they are all too weak.

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

b) Describe why they were feeling that way.

c) What actions did they take?

d) What other options did they have?

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

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

Empathy (cont.)

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? Couldn't he see it in them? Why was he making me tell him – it is like it is my fault, my responsibility, isn't it his job to advocate... to protect... and I have to be the nark, the tattler too, double jeopardy! Maybe I shouldn't be here – what will they do when he talks to them – they will know it was me even if he doesn't let on – they will know.....sure always tell the teacher if you have a problem...ya right!

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

- b) Describe why they were feeling that way.

- c) What actions did they take?

- d) What other options did they have?

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

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

3

Please don't look! DONT LOOK! Nobody needs to know – they don't need to see – it is just a stupid test – what does it matter – does anyone 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 the person was feeling in this situation.

- b) Describe why they were feeling that way.

- c) What actions did they take?

- d) What other options did they have?

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

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

Empathy (cont.)

4

I got to the front door. I put my shoes on. I stepped out the door and walked down the sidewalk to the street. I looked across the playground. 10 metres to the fence – 100 metres of grass – the school. I stood for two minutes – eternity – my feet frozen to the sidewalk – cool fall silence in the air – paralysed. The buzzer echoed in the distance but I didn't hear it – I wasn't listening - I walked back inside – into the basement – into the welcoming dark – to turn on the television and escape into the numbness of the afternoon horror movie.....

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

- b) Describe why they were feeling that way.

- c) What actions did they take?

- d) What other options did they have?

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

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

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) What do you see your role is in getting a bully to stop?

Empathy: Teachers' Version



Empathy is the ability to identify and understand other's feelings. Building an understanding of others feelings is an important part of bullying prevention. The bully often doesn't understand the impact of their actions. When bystanders to bullying understand how others feel they are more likely to intervene rather than participate. The following scenarios encourage the exploration of what it feels like to be bullied.

Read each scenario and answer the questions that follow.

[Extra space has been included in the first monologue to allow for students to come up with ideas on their own and to follow up in a group discussion. You may wish to have students work on sections of this assignment individually, in small groups, or together as a class. You may want to ask some groups to change the gender of the characters in their monologues or, after you complete one section, ask them to change the gender and reconsider their responses. This is to emphasize the point that a bully can be male or female and the victim may be male or female. How they bully 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 is wrong - why do they do it? I'm helpless despite my strength. It isn't about me, it is about him. You can see it in his eyes... the fear... the helplessness... the hurt... the anger... all that he is inflicting on me is his fear... his helplessness... his hurt... his anger. It isn't me. But still, I pity him, I hate him, I can not forgive him – but I can not fight back, I can not escape it – they are all too powerful – they are all too weak.

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

[Student 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 might indicate that they were feeling this way? Have them use a thesaurus or dictionary if they need to.]

b) Describe why they were 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 focus on the idea that regardless of the action, there is a real consequence, and one action may be as problematic as another.]*

c) What actions did they take?

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

d) What other options did they have?

[What options can the class come up with? Discuss the possible consequences of these action 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 they get help from someone else?

[This is to get students to think about why 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 more positive options are 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 being bullied themselves you may wish to talk about the consequences of this. In a majority of cases a bully will stop if told to by a peer – this may be because the bully may not want to lose face, wants the support and approval of their peers or they prefer easy targets who will not challenge them .]

Empathy: Teachers' Version (cont.)

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? Couldn't he see it in them? Why was he making me tell him – it is like it is my fault, my responsibility, isn't it his job to advocate... to protect... and I have to be the nark, the tattletale too, double jeopardy! Maybe I shouldn't be here – what will they do when he talks to them – they will know it was me even if he doesn't let on – they will know.....sure always tell the teacher if you have a problem...ya right!

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

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

[see 1a]

b) Describe why they were feeling that way.

[see 1b]

c) What actions did they take?

[see 1c]

d) What other options did they have?

[see 1d. If student find they don't get results by talking with one teacher or adult they should 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 of their issue they can keep a log of incidents and present it to a number of adults. Once a teacher is aware, they too can keep a log of the bully's behaviour 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 a counter productive response.]

e) Why didn't they 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! DONT LOOK! Nobody needs to know – they don't need to see – it is just a stupid test – what does it matter – does anyone 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.

[Ask students if they think the individual was a high performer or a low performer? Both may be at risk in this situation.]

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

[see 1a]

b) Describe why they were feeling that way.

[see 1b]

c) What actions did they take?

[see 1c]

d) What other options did they have?

[see 1d.]

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

[see 1e]

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

[see 1f]

4

I got to the front door. I put my shoes on. I stepped out the door and walked down the sidewalk to the street. I looked across the playground. 10 metres to the fence – 100 metres of grass – the school. I stood for two minutes – eternity – my feet frozen to the sidewalk – cool fall silence in the air – paralysed. The school buzzer echoed in the distance but I didn't hear it – I wasn't listening - I walked back inside – into the basement – into the welcoming dark – to turn on the television and escape into the numbness of the afternoon horror movie.....

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

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

[see 1a]

b) Describe why they were feeling that way.

[see 1b]

c) What actions did they take?

[see 1c]

d) What other options did they have?

[see 1d.]

e) Why didn't they 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 to springboard 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) What do you see your role is in getting a bully to stop?