

Open•Up

How Are You Feeling!

Empathy comes from an understanding of what other people are feeling. This activity will encourage empathy by helping students recognize the emotions of another person from the situations that person experiences and through his or her expressions.

Mental Health Highlight: This activity may seem somewhat simplistic but it exemplifies a trap many of us get caught in nearly every day—but it doesn't have to be that way. Imagine "Todd" is having trouble completing a math problem. You see he has his clenched fist forged against his head, his face is scrunched in frown, and you remember that yesterday's math class ended with Todd throwing his pencil at the kid next to him. You say to Todd, "Looks like you are frustrated with that math problem." You ask him how he's doing and he says, through clenched teeth, "Fine, leave me alone." You can see that he is rapidly moving from a state of frustration to one of anger so you decide to intervene. You say, "Looks to me by the way your fist is clenched and your face is all scrunched up that you are frustrated. When I get *too* frustrated I sometimes end up getting angry. How about we work through this one together—and avoid those feelings of anger today."

Being able to accurately identify emotions in ourselves and in others and then being able to respond appropriately is probably one of the most difficult things we do but it is *fundamental* to sound mental health. Sure it's easy to see when someone is happy or sad but it can be very difficult to tell the difference between frustration, anger, and outrage. Even as adults we sometimes passively allow our frustration to develop into anger.

Adapt this activity for any age group by adjusting the scenarios and by explaining the core concepts in a way that resonates with the age/maturity of your students. For older students you may want to use scenarios that are "loosely" based on recent situations the students have experienced. The key to this activity is to include scenarios where a full range of emotions can be experienced.

Primary Activity  Emotions in Print	Additional Activities  Scenarios, Part II  Developing Empathy  Role Playing	Open•Up Activities  Illustrating Emotions  Understanding Others
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Activity Key	
 Visual Arts	 Creative Movement and Music
 Experiential and Role-Playing	 Conversations and Discussion
 Creative Writing, Storytelling, and Drama	 Research/Service Projects

How Are You Feeling?

Empathy comes from an understanding of what other people are feeling. This lesson will encourage empathy by helping students recognize the emotions of another person from the situations that person experiences, and through his or her expressions.

Objectives

- Identify emotions behind the expressions of others.
- Describe how emotions can be affected by different situations.
- Demonstrate how to empathize with others.

Materials

- magazines to cut up
- scissors, glue sticks, markers
- 8 ½ x 11 paper (3–4 for each student)
- *Scenario* worksheet – 1 copy for each student

Prepare in advance: Find and cut out faces from magazine pictures to match a few different emotions. Try to find pictures large enough so the class can see the faces clearly at the front of the room or try enlarging them on a photocopier. If neither can be done, make copies of smaller pictures for each student.

Core Lesson

Ask everyone in the class to make faces that express different emotions, for example, a sad face, then a mad face, then happy, then worried. Have the students look around as they do this so they can see each others' expressions.

Now *you* make faces and have the students guess what emotions you are showing. Write their guesses on the board. Next, show them the pictures you have prepared and have the kids guess which emotions they depict. Again, write them on the board.

Read scenario **1a** to the students (see page 9). Ask them how they would feel if they were Johnny, then have them make a face to match that feeling. Encourage them to also use body language if appropriate. Be sure to demonstrate a few emotions accompanied with body language (for example, head down when sad or arms crossed if mad). Continue with scenarios **1b** and **1c**, then **2a**, **2b**, and **2c**. Add your own scenarios if you wish.

Explain that empathy comes from an understanding of what other people are feeling. Write the definition of empathy on the board: *the ability to identify with and understand another person's feelings or difficulties*. If students "put themselves in another person's shoes," and imagine how someone may feel in different situations, they are empathizing with that person. If they keep this in mind, it will help them realize how their own actions may affect others' feelings.

Activity

Tell the class that they are going to do an activity to practice empathy, then pass out all the materials listed in the Materials box. Tell students to follow these directions:

1. Cut out a scenario from the worksheet and glue it to a blank piece of paper.
2. Read the scenario and decide how you would feel if you were the subject of the situation. For younger students, you may need to read the scenarios aloud.
3. Look through the magazines and cut out a face (or faces) with an expression to match the feeling(s).
4. Glue the matching expression on the same piece of paper.
5. Label the emotion(s) you have depicted.
6. Repeat with a separate piece of paper for each scenario.

If they have time, have students each create a fourth scenario and repeat the steps above.

Before they start, stress to the students that the pictures they use can be of a boy or girl, child or adult—their goal is to look for expressions that match the feelings expressed in the scenarios. Also, point out the *Emotions List* to give them ideas of feeling words. Read through the list and talk about the meanings of all the emotions listed. Encourage them to look up the definitions of words they may not be familiar with.

Have the students share their expressions with each other when they're finished.

Scenarios for Core Lesson

For each situation, ask how Johnny would feel.

- 1a. Johnny has chicken pox and just found out that he can't leave his house for at least a week.
- 1b. Johnny's sister gave him a comic book he's been wanting. She told him she felt bad that he had to stay in bed for so long, and bought it for him with her own allowance.
- 1c. The morning came when Johnny was finally was able to go back to school. He still had marks on his face from the chicken pox.

For each situation, ask how Sally would feel.

- 2a. Sally just started a new school in the middle of the school year.
- 2b. Whenever Sally walks near two certain girls in her class, they start whispering to each other.
- 2c. Jenny, another girl in Sally's class, invited Sally to sit with her at lunch.

Additional Activities

- 📄 **Scenarios, Part II** – Have each student make up a scenario. Then exchange it with another student to use for the activity above.
- 🗣️ **Developing Empathy** – Ask the students for examples of what they could do to help the people in worksheet scenarios #1 and #3. Point out that reading people’s feelings and having empathy helps us to know when people may need extra support or patience.
- 📄 **Illustrating Emotions** – Have students choose one emotion (or draw one out of a hat) and make a collage of faces cut from magazines depicting that emotion.
- 👥 **Role Playing** – Split the class into groups of 2–3 students. Have each group make up a scenario, with a character for each student in the group, then role play the scenario for the class. After each role play, have the group and/or class discuss how the situation would make them feel.
- 🗣️ **Understanding Others** – Have students write about a situation that happened to them and describe how it made them feel. Have students write about a situation they saw or heard about (this could be from the news) and describe how they think the affected person(s) felt.

Role Playing a Character's Emotion



Carter portrays
Fred's loneliness.



Summer portrays
Ramona's happiness.



Olivia portrays
Henry's anxiety.

Scenario Worksheet

How Are You Feeling?

1. **Fred** is shy. He doesn't talk to his classmates very much because he doesn't know what to say, and he doesn't think the other kids would want to talk to him. He hardly even says "hi," but then no one says "hi" to him either. He'd like to have more friends and be more friendly, but he's afraid of being rejected, so he just stays quiet.

Fred just overheard some classmates talking. They did not realize that Fred could hear them, and they were saying that they thought he was stuck-up. How do you think Fred feels?

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2. It's **Ramona's** birthday today. She's been planning a party to have with her family and friends. She even got to pick out her cake! There's only one thing that's not right. Her grandma moved away a month ago. She misses her grandma a lot and is really sad that she can't be at the party, but there's nothing Ramona can do. Her grandma now lives hundreds of miles away. Ramona knows she can talk to her grandma on the phone, but it's just not the same.

As Ramona got off of the bus after school she noticed a strange car in her driveway. She rushed down the street to her house, hoping everything was all right. Just as she got to the front step, the door flew open and there stood her grandma! How do you think Ramona feels?

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3. **Henry** has always struggled with schoolwork. He tries hard, but he has a hard time concentrating, especially on tests. He doesn't ask questions in class because he doesn't want to look dumb. He already gets teased because he can't sit still and doesn't get very good grades. Sometimes he just feels like giving up.

Henry has a big math test today. He tried to study a lot last night, but he's really tired. He didn't sleep well because he kept thinking about the test. He even dreamed about numbers! Henry's teacher just began handing out the tests. How do you think Henry feels?

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Emotions List

happy	sad	angry	anxious
excited	disappointed	scared	lonely
ecstatic	depressed	terrified	troubled
grateful	exhausted	frustrated	surprised
content	melancholy	devastated	nervous
eager	dejected	envious	worried