

Introduction To Compassion & Empathy

Compassion

Caring

Empathy



Compassion

Compassion is feeling pain at someone else's undeserved bad fortune



Empathy

Empathy is being able to see something from somebody else's point of view and to understand what they are feeling.

Activity 1



Aim(s)

- To introduce the virtues of compassion and empathy.



Resources

- *Introduction to Compassion and Empathy* Power Point. **OPTIONAL**
- Internet connection to play YouTube videos.
- Post-it notes and pens.



Delivery Guide

Ask the young people to give a definition of compassion. What do they think it is? Show them the definition:

Compassion is feeling pain at someone else's undeserved bad fortune.

Ask them to think about when someone might feel compassion:

- An advert on TV for a charity?
- When someone they love is having a difficult time?
- If someone is a victim of a crime?
- If someone loses a wallet?

If possible, show some examples of things in the media which are trying to generate compassion. For instance, charity adverts such as:

If you do not have internet access or a computer, find some charity adverts from magazines or newspapers to look at.

Ask the young people to think about how the adverts bring out compassion in people. They may mention:

- the sad images;
- the detail of the stories;
- the focus on one person's story (for instance, the WaterAid advert focuses on 'Jean' having to walk miles to reach water rather than telling a more general story of a whole village and their struggles to get water);
- the narrator's efforts to put the viewer in the main character's place (for instance, in the Macmillan advert the viewer is put in the patient's position when he's been told he has cancer – he can't hear what the Doctor is saying and his surroundings go blurry, and what the viewer can see and hear reflects that).

To be able to feel compassion, you need to be able to feel empathy. Ask the group what empathy means.

Empathy is being able to see something from somebody else's point of view and to understand what they are feeling.

You need to be able to see someone else's perspective and to understand what they feel before you can feel compassion.

You can discuss the following questions:

- Do you think you need to understand how someone else is feeling before you can feel compassion for them?
- How can you try and put yourself in someone else's position? How can you try and see things from their point of view? Things that might come up include:
 - Imagine the thing that has happened to them has happened to you. Imagine how you would feel.
 - Ask questions.

Points to highlight

- Compassion is feeling pain at something bad happening to someone when they don't deserve it. If they do deserve it – maybe they failed an exam because they didn't study as they were going out too much – you feel pity.
- Empathy means to put yourself in someone else's shoes, and you can't feel compassion for someone without doing that.

Activity 2

Hot Seating

Aim(s)

- To practice empathy.

Resources

- *Hot Seating Scenario Cards.*

Delivery Guide



This activity is easily completed with any size group of young people, including 1-2-1.



Facilitators can take part in this activity along with the young people, taking their turn at being hot seated.

Look at the *Hot Seating Scenario Cards*. Add to them with some scenarios that are relevant to your young people; these could be fictional characters or historical people, and could link into other classes and things they are studying. Give the young people one scenario each. Get them to read it to themselves and make sure they understand what it is. Tell them to think about the person in the scenario and what they would be thinking, feeling and doing. What action would they be planning?

Ask a young person (or get a volunteer) to sit in the 'hot seat' first. They are going to 'be' the person in their scenario and answer questions as that person.

Either ask as the facilitator or nominate a couple of other young people to ask the following questions, giving the person in the hot seat enough time to think and answer the question as their character.

- What happened?
- How are you feeling?
- What are you thinking?
- What are you going to do?

Then open the floor to the other young people to ask a few questions, possibly to probe the previous answers a bit further. When other young people have had a chance to ask questions, ask the person in the hot seat if they want to add anything else.

Ask them how they – not their character – felt. Was it easy to take on the position and feelings of the character?

Give someone else a chance to take the hot seat.

If you haven't done hot seating with your young people before, it might be a good idea to try it with one person first, or one facilitator, to give an example. It might work well for you to be the

first person to take the hot seat!

If you have a big group you could do this in pairs (one in the hot seat and one person asking questions, then swapping over) rather than one person in the middle and everyone else asking questions.

Points to highlight

- Hot seating is a good way to put yourself in another person's position and to think about how they might be feeling or what choices they might make.
- Practising empathy can help you feel compassion.



Further Resources

An animated video of Brene Brown talking about empathy. www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Evwgu369Jw
(available 8/16)



Links to Other Areas of the Curriculum

Various:

The *Hot Seating* activity can give you the opportunity to explore dilemmas and characters from subjects such as English and History. For instance, you could hot seat a suffragette to explore the pressures from her family and her commitment to the cause, or to explore a character from literature.

Media Studies & English:

Exploring how media adverts on TV and in print get their message across can link to media literacy and English.

