

Lesson plan

Me and the others

Empathy and support

1. **Theme:** Me and the others: Empathy and support
2. **Grade:** 5th
3. **Lesson type:** for acquiring new knowledge
4. **Duration:** 45 min.
5. **Basic terms:** empathy, support, emotions, feelings, beliefs, traditions, kindness
6. **Pedagogical methods:** storytelling, presentation, discussion, dialog, reflection, group work
7. **Means:** board (interactive or otherwise), markers, laptop/computer, multimedia (screen/projector), ppt presentation, flipchart (optional), sheets of paper, pencils/pens/markers
8. **Goals:**

○ Educational:

The students

- ✓ Are able to define the terms empathy and support and recall examples from the lesson or their own lives
- ✓ Explain why empathy and support are important in the classroom and in society
- ✓ Identify real-life situations in which empathy and support can be shown and demonstrate appropriate responses
- ✓ Compare and contrast different ways of showing empathy and support across various religions
- ✓ Reflect on their own behaviour and assess how their actions can positively or negatively affect others' feelings
- ✓ Compose a short story (comics), that expresses empathy and support in everyday life

○ Formational:

The students

- ✓ Listen attentively and show interest in discussions about empathy and support
- ✓ Discuss acts of empathy and support in various religions
- ✓ Express appreciation for acts of kindness and recognize empathy as an important personal and social value
- ✓ Display willingness to be empathetic and supportive towards others
- ✓ Demonstrate empathy and support consistently, showing that these values have become part of their personal attitude and classroom behaviour

9. Cross-curricular connections: Social studies, Religious studies, Literature

10. Intra-subject connections: with the lesson plans on the themes: I support others, Me and my environment and the other modules from the theme Me and the others

11. Expected results:

- ✓ Students can explain the meanings of empathy and support and can identify examples from their own experiences
- ✓ Students apply their understanding by describing or role-playing real-life situations in which empathy and support are shown towards people, animals, or nature
- ✓ Students analyze how empathy and support are expressed in different religions
- ✓ Students listen attentively and participate in discussions and activities, showing genuine interest and respect for others' feelings and ideas
- ✓ Students demonstrate empathy and support through their words and actions in class, such as helping classmates, using kind language, and showing inclusion
- ✓ Students internalize empathy and support as personal values, expressing a willingness to continue practicing them in everyday situations at school, at home, and in the community

12. Preparation

○ For the teacher: Reading the theoretical base, downloading the presentation, and preparing sheets of paper and drawing tools for the students

13. Structure of the lesson:

Me and the others: Empathy and support

1. Empathy and support in society
2. Empathy and support
 - What is the meaning of these words
 - Why are they important?
 - How to show empathy and support?
 - Traditions about empathy and support in different religions
3. Activity: The Empathy comics
4. Reflection and discussion
 - The students are prompted to answer several questions on the subject, reflecting on their thoughts and feelings and engaging in a discussion.

14. Structure, content and timeline

1. Introduction (4 min.)

- Teacher activity:

- Actualization of prior knowledge on the subject: What do you think empathy means?; Why do you think it's important to care about how others feel? How can we tell what someone else is feeling, even if they don't say it in words? How can we show support to others? (2 min.)

- Introduction of new information and terms: (2 min.)

Every day, we meet many people: our friends, teachers, family members, and classmates. Sometimes, they are happy and smiling; other times, they might be sad, worried, or upset. Just like some days we are happy, and others we feel sad or angry. If we want to understand others and have good communication with them, we should be aware of our own feelings and emotions, and those of the people around us. We can do that with empathy and support. One of the most important qualities that helps us live together peacefully and kindly is empathy. Closely connected to it is support, which is how we show care through our actions. Today, we'll learn what empathy and support mean, why they are so important, and how we can practice them in our daily lives.

- Student activity:

- Participation in the dialog, asking questions, active listening

- Methods and tools:

- Methods: dialog, storytelling

- Tools: board, marker or an interactive whiteboard (for outlining the theme and the terms; optional, for writing down student's ideas, thoughts)

2. Stating the theme of the lesson: Me and the others: Empathy and support (36 min.)

- Teacher activity:

- Short presentation, focused on empathy and support and traditions that outline empathy and support in different religions (6 min.)

- Theoretical overview, performed with the presentation:

Empathy means understanding how another person feels and trying to imagine yourself in their place. When we are empathetic, we listen carefully, notice others' emotions, and respond with kindness. We pay attention not only to what people say but also to their body language and expressions. For example, if a friend forgets their homework and feels embarrassed, instead of laughing, we can say something encouraging like, "That happens to everyone. I'll help you next time". Or if someone looks sad during recess, we can ask, "Do you want to talk about it?". Empathy helps us build strong friendships, solve problems peacefully, and make others feel valued. It's like putting on someone else's shoes for a moment and walking their path to

understand what they might be going through. When we practice empathy, we make others feel seen, heard, and understood.

Support is what we do when we want to help someone who needs it. It means turning empathy into action. Sometimes, it can mean giving advice, offering a hand, or simply being there to listen when someone feels upset. Support can be emotional, like comforting a sad friend, or practical, like helping a classmate carry their books or sharing your notes with someone who was absent. Even small actions can make a big difference. Support also goes beyond people – we can show it to animals and nature. Feeding a stray cat, protecting trees, picking up litter in the park, or donating to an animal shelter are all acts of support that show empathy toward other living beings. When we support others, we show that we care, that they are not alone, and that together we can make our world a kinder and safer place for everyone.

Empathy and support make our communities stronger. When people care about each other, they create a friendly and safe environment. In a classroom, this means fewer arguments, more teamwork, and a place where everyone feels welcome. In the world, empathy and support help reduce loneliness, misunderstanding, and conflict. They remind us that we are all connected, and that one kind act can make a big difference.

We can show empathy and support in many small but meaningful ways:

- Listen when someone wants to talk.
- Speak kindly, even when you disagree.
- Notice when someone is left out and invite them to join.
- Offer help when someone is struggling.
- Care for animals by treating them gently and respecting their needs.

Even simple words like “I understand”, “Are you okay?” or “You can count on me” can make someone’s day brighter. With a little imagination, we can try to understand what another person is feeling in a given situation and be there to support them when they feel sad and celebrate with them when they are happy.

Many religions and cultures around the world teach that caring for others is one of the highest values. They also have rituals and celebrations that show empathy and support:

- Christianity: Christians celebrate Christmas and Easter by giving to those in need and showing love and kindness to others, following the example of Jesus’ compassion.
- Islam: During Ramadan, Muslims fast to understand the feelings of those who have less and share food with the poor through charity called Zakat.
- Judaism: Jewish people celebrate Hanukkah and other holidays by gathering with family, helping others, and performing acts of tzedakah (charity).
- Buddhism: Buddhists practice metta, or loving-kindness meditation, to develop empathy and wish happiness for all living beings.
- Hinduism: Many Hindus celebrate Diwali, the festival of light, by sharing joy, helping those in need, and forgiving past hurts.

All these traditions remind us that empathy and support are universal values that unite people everywhere, regardless of their religion or culture. Each of us can practice empathy and support every day, through small actions, kind words, and empathic behaviour.

Activity: The Empathy comics (30 min.)

- ✓ The teacher divides the students into pairs and instructs them to create a short situation (story), presented as a comics (1-2 pages)
 - ✓ The teacher provides sheets of paper and drawing materials to each group
 - ✓ The students should think of a situation that includes showing empathy and support towards someone; it can feature people, animals, or even imaginary characters
 - ✓ The students can draw/sketch/outline the characters and include their short statements in the situation
 - ✓ The teacher provides examples: a classmate is feeling sad because their bicycle got stolen; your friend fears the dark; an imaginary character is feeling worried because they must save nature and they need help.
 - ✓ The teacher encourages the students to include clear feelings, actions, and positive outcomes
 - ✓ Each pair presents their comics
 - ✓ The teacher selects (or asks for volunteers) pairs which would like to role-play the situations in front of the class
 - ✓ The teacher initiates a discussion about the empathetic behaviours and acts of support that were presented:
 - How did your characters show empathy, and what difference did it make?
 - What would have happened if your characters didn't show empathy in these situations?
 - Imagine that in this situation (for a particular one from the presented situations) the characters acted with no empathy; how would you encourage them to be kinder and more respectful?
 - The teacher summarizes the main ideas and conclusions
- Student activity:
 - Participation in the dialog, taking notice of the presentation, asking questions, active listening, thinking of ways to be tolerant and accepting, proposing ideas, working in a pair, reflecting on the activity
 - Methods and tools:
 - Methods: dialog, presentation, storytelling, group work, discussion
 - Tools: interactive board or a screen, laptop/computer, board, marker, flipchart (optional, for writing down students' ideas), sheets of paper, pencils/pens/markers

3. Reflection and discussion (5 min.)

- Teacher activity:

- Posing questions for a discussion:

- ✓ What does empathy mean to you, and why do you think it's important in our classroom and everyday life?
 - ✓ Can you remember a time when someone showed empathy or support toward you? How did it make you feel?
 - ✓ What are some small ways we can show empathy and support every day?
 - ✓ Why do you think it's important to show empathy and support not only to people but also to animals and nature?
 - ✓ How would our classroom (or the world) be different if everyone practiced empathy and support more often?

- Engaging the students with prompts:

- ✓ "What does it mean to show empathy?"
 - ✓ "I remember one day that I was feeling worried, because I had to make a presentation and I was nervous. A friend told me that I was going to be great, and that helped me calm down."
 - ✓ "We can listen to each other, for example. Can you think of other ways?"
 - ✓ "Animals would feel better if we were kinder to them. What other reasons can you think of?"
 - ✓ "I think that people would understand each other better. What else would be different?"

- Answering questions and clarifying information

- Student activity:

- Engaging in the discussion
 - Reflection on their ideas and emotions on the subject

- Methods:

- Methods: reflection, discussion, active listening

15. Variations:

- The proposed activity could be implemented in a different way: The students could work individually on their own comics; The comics could be longer; and/or the works of the students could be displayed on the classroom wall, or in the school hallway; an option is for the activity to be conducted digitally, for example with these (or other) tools: <https://www.canva.com/create/comic-strips/>, <https://makebeliefscomix.com/Comix/>, <https://www.storyboardthat.com/account/logon?ReturnUrl=%2Fstoryboard-creator-r>
- The "Walk in their shoes" activity: The teacher prepares short scenario cards (e.g., "A classmate dropped their lunch", "A new student doesn't know anyone", "A friend's pet ran away"); The teacher divides the students into pairs or small groups; The teacher gives each group

a scenario card; Each group acts out their scenario twice — first showing no empathy, then showing empathy and support; The teacher initiates a discussion, starting with the question “How did each scenario make the characters feel?”

- The “Empathy across cultures” activity: The teacher divides the class into small groups; The teacher assigns each group a religion or culture (e.g., Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism); The teacher gives each group a short text or shows a short video explaining a ritual or celebration related to empathy and helping others (e.g., Ramadan, Christmas charity, Diwali); Each group creates a short poster or presentation about how that tradition teaches empathy and support; The groups present their posters/presentations; The teacher organises a discussion about the shared ideas.

- The “Empathy and support” activity: The teacher instructs the students to sit facing each other; One by one, students can share a time they needed support (it can be small, like feeling nervous before a test); After each story, classmates suggest kind, supportive words or actions that could help in that situation; The teacher encourages the students by emphasizing respect and listening without judgment; The teacher initiates a discussion on the importance of empathy and support.

- The “Letters of support” activity: The teacher instructs the students to think of someone who might need a bit of encouragement — a classmate, a family member, or even someone they admire (like a nurse, animal shelter worker, or community helper); The students write a short, positive letter or card offering support, appreciation, or thanks; The teacher encourages the students to share the letter with the person that it was meant for (if appropriate); The teacher organizes a discussion on the importance of empathy and support.

16. Interesting facts (from Empathy Facts for Kids. Kiddle Encyclopedia, <https://kids.kiddle.co/Empathy>)

- ✓ The word “empathy” comes from the Ancient Greek word “empathia”.
- ✓ We read others' emotions through imitation. When we see someone's body language and facial expressions, we instinctively link them to how we'd feel if we were doing the same thing.
- ✓ Compassion is linked to empathy – we feel compassion when we notice that someone needs help and it makes us want to help them.
- ✓ Sympathy is connected to empathy; it means caring about someone and understanding what they're going through when they're struggling.
- ✓ Children start to show basic signs of empathy around age two.
- ✓ Around age four, most kids gain the ability to understand that other people can think differently than they do. This is called having a “theory of mind”.
- ✓ When children aged seven to twelve witness someone else getting hurt, their brains respond in much the same way as if they themselves were experiencing the pain.
- ✓ Some people are naturally more empathetic than others.
- ✓ Empathy isn't unique to humans. Scientists studying animal behavior have found empathy-like actions in bonobos (a kind of ape) and even in rodents.
- ✓ Empathy has two main parts that work together. First, there's cognitive empathy. This is when you recognize what someone else is feeling, like noticing that your friend is sad or excited. Second, there's affective empathy. This is when you don't just notice their feelings, you actually feel them too, almost like their emotions become your emotions.