

# Compassion Connection: The Path to Compassion

This lesson provides students with the opportunity to build skills surrounding compassion and being kind towards how others are feeling. This lesson focuses specifically on how we show compassion when we recognize basic emotions in others; it also elaborates on the differences between empathy and sympathy. This lesson is the second part of two parts.

## Caring Sub-Concept(s)

Compassion, Empathy, Kindness

## Lesson Timeframe

45 minutes

## Required Materials

- ❑ Two superhero-style “Compassion Capes”, which should be made in advance of the lesson; these can be made of paper, pillowcases, or other material. You could put an S on one for Sympathy, and an E on the other for Empathy. Keep it simple!
- ❑ Masking or duct tape to create “paths” on the floor. You can use the same tape to create the “compassion center”. This should be a triangle shape with compassion at the top center, mirror the opening image.
- ❑ The Path To Compassion visual for ease of set up (see below)

## Standards Map

This lesson aligns with CASEL Competencies, National Health Education Standards, and Common Core State Standards. Please refer to the [Standards Map](#) for more information.

## Lesson Objective

Students will:

- Apply their understanding of basic emotions to their understanding of compassion, empathy, and sympathy.
- Predict how others may feel in response to different situations.

## Teacher Connection/Self-Care

Compassion and Empathy go hand in hand. When you experience that tug of compassion, you are often able to express empathy simultaneously. Last week we focused on paying closer attention to the frequently forgotten in your community. This week, the challenge goes even deeper. Pick one person in your community to empathize with and place yourself in their shoes for one day.

What is his/her day like? What struggles might he/she encounter? What might be the highlight of the day? If possible, try and live one day the way that person would. If this isn't possible, try visualizing the day or journaling about it. Compassion leads us to feel emotions. However, true empathy allows us to place ourselves squarely in the place of the other person, with all of the highs and lows, struggles, and celebrations. This simple exercise can help you practice empathy more readily with all different people both locally and internationally.



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See last page for details.



## Share

5-7 minutes

*In the last lesson we talked about basic human emotions. There were eight of them! Can anyone remember what these emotions are?*

Invite student responses. Write their answers on the board or project them on the smartboard. (Answers should be: joy, sadness, fear, anger, disgust, trust, surprise, and anticipation.)

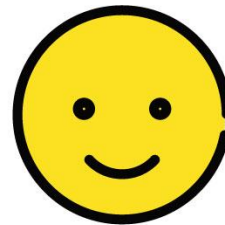
*Good! These are the emotions that everyone feels, no matter what family, school, city, state, or country they come from. We also studied people's faces so we could determine which emotions they were feeling. Two lessons ago, we talked about helping. How might emotions and helping be connected?*

Invite student response, but this could be challenging to answer, so it is okay to go on if students aren't sure.

*The connection is that when we see someone who is struggling or who is sad or hurt, we want to help them, right?*

*The feeling that makes you want to help is a superpower emotion that we have called compassion. Compassion means caring when others are hurt, sad, or in need. When we show compassion to others, we are showing them kindness. ALL of us have this superpower inside of us, though sometimes we need to work hard to activate it.*

Write the word Compassion on the board at the top (or use the image below if using a smartboard).



**COMPASSION**  
"I want to help you!"



## Inspire

12-15 minutes

*Now, if we were looking at a map, and compassion was where we wanted to go, we would see two PATHS to get to compassion.*

*These paths are called emPATHy and symPATHy.*

Write Empathy and Sympathy in a triangular formation under Compassion as shown below; underline, bold, or highlight the word "path" in both words.



**COMPASSION**

"I want to help you!"

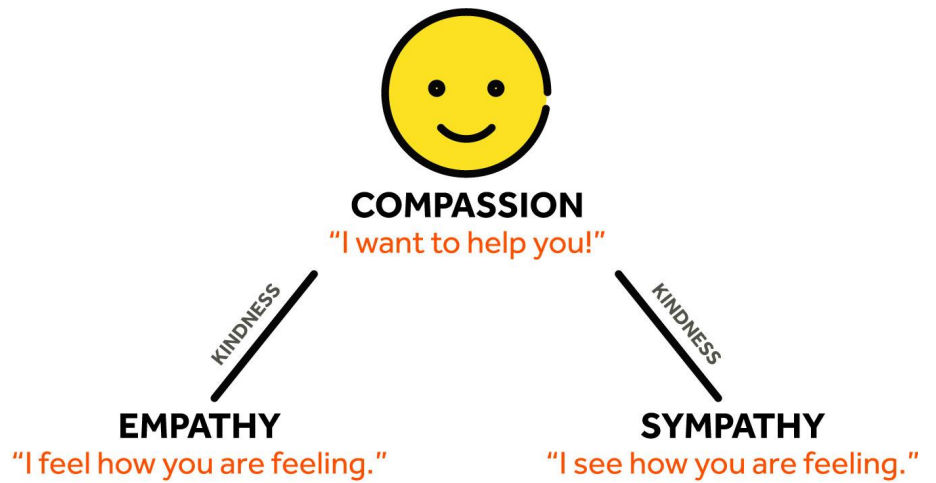
**EMPATHY**

**SYMPATHY**

*When you understand another person's feelings because you have had the same experience, you take the path of empathy to care for them. To have empathy you must also have experience, or at least a similar experience! You can feel what someone is feeling because you have been there!*

*When you understand another person's feelings because you can see they are sad or upset or scared, you take the path of sympathy to care for them. You can have sympathy for someone even if you have never had their same experiences.*

Draw lines from empathy and sympathy up to compassion. Add "kindness" to each line.



No matter which path you are on, though, you can still show the other person kindness and compassion by helping, listening, including, or doing something else to help them understand that you care.



## Empower

5 minutes

Now we are going to practice identifying which path you might take in certain situations and how you might use your superpower of compassion to help someone in need.

**[Set up the classroom as explained in the Paths to Compassion game handout.]**

Show Picture 1 of a kid in a cast, looking sad (hold up picture or project on smartboard).



(Source:<https://www.thriftyfun.com/Hand-Washing-With-a-Broken-Arm.html>)

Ask students what they think this person is feeling and thinking. Call on students for answers.

Next, ask students to move to either the empathy path or to the sympathy path for this person. (Remind students that they can probably feel empathy if they, too, have broken a bone; if they have not broken a bone, they probably feel sympathy because they can see that he is sad but they don't quite know what it's like to break a bone.)

Give students a chance to move and then ask students on the empathy path why they chose that path. Ask students on the sympathy path why they chose that path.

Finally, ask students what they could do to show compassion and kindness, to be a helper, to this person if he/she was a classmate of theirs. The student (one from each path) you call on puts on the Compassion Cape, walks (or maybe "flies") the path to the "Compassion" center to give his/her answer. Note the similarities and differences in the suggestions.

Have students go back into their original positions before showing Picture 2.

Show Picture 2 of a kid who spilled her milk at a meal.



Ask students what they think this person is feeling and thinking. Call on students for answers.

Next, ask students to move to either the empathy path or to the sympathy path for this person. (Remind students that they can probably feel empathy if they, too, have spilled their milk before; sympathy if they haven't but can understand how this child feels.)

Give students a chance to move and then ask students on the empathy path why they chose that path. Ask students on the sympathy path why they chose that path.

Finally, ask students to think about what they could do to show compassion and kindness, to be a helper, to this person if they were at the same meal with her. The student (one from each path) you call on puts on the Compassion Cape and walks the path to the "Compassion" center to give his/her answer. Note the similarities and differences in the suggestions.

Have students go back into their original positions before showing Picture 3.

Show Picture 3 of a kid who alone or being left out at recess time.



(Source: <http://news.urbansitter.com/blog/how-to-help-kids-deal-with-rejection>)

Ask students what they think this person is feeling and thinking. Call on students for answers.

Next, ask students to move to either the empathy path or to the sympathy path for this person. Don't cue/remind students this time.

Give students a chance to move and then ask students on the empathy path why they chose that path. Ask students on the sympathy path why they chose that path.

Finally, ask students what they could do to show compassion and kindness, to be a helper, this person if they were at recess with him/her. The student (one from each path) you call on puts on the "Compassion Cape" and walks/flies the path to the "Compassion" center to give his/her answer. Note the similarities and differences in the suggestions.



## Reflect

5 minutes

Have students take a seat in the Compassion Center.

*It is important to remember that whether or not you have had the same experience as someone, you can still show people kindness and compassion. If you have never broken a bone, you may not fully understand what someone in a cast is going through, but you can still feel sympathy and be compassionate and help that person by carrying their backpack or picking something up for them that they dropped. If you have been left out of a game at recess before, then you really understand how sad the person in our third picture probably felt. You feel empathy and will be eager to help that person feel included.*

*It might be hard to step up and help someone who is experiencing something difficult. I know we would rather be happy and comfortable. Everybody wants to be happy and comfortable. But sometimes you might see something unhappy or uncomfortable, like someone spilling their milk at lunch. If you can show compassion and kindness to that person, though, not only will you make them feel better, but you will feel better, too! So, today, be on the look out for times when you can put on your Compassion Cape and show compassion and kindness to other people.*



## Extension Ideas

- Instead of using pictures, the teacher may choose to role play these situations (either him/herself or with a classroom helper; or he/she may ask students to role play).
- Have students draw themselves as Compassion Heroes. Their picture can depict a situation (either one they have experienced or not) where they are helping someone in a stressful or distressful situation they might encounter at school. This may help them think about everyday occurrences where they may need to show compassion (that they may have not thought about before).



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AS A RECOMMENDED  
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LEARNING.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has been reviewing evidence-based SEL programs since 2003. Kindness in the Classroom® meets CASEL's SElect Program and is included in the CASEL Guide to Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs.

Kindness in the Classroom® met or exceeded all of CASEL's criteria for high-quality SEL programming. Kindness in the Classroom® received CASEL's highest designation for high-quality SEL programming.

<https://casel.org/guide/kindness-in-the-classroom/>



# The Paths to Compassion

## Classroom visual set-up & instructions

