

LESSON 2: LEADING WITH EMPATHY



Mindfulness

- Please reference Lesson 1 to read the mindfulness exercise.



Energizer

Facilitator reads instructions to the group:

- Let's stand in a circle and choose one person to begin the activity.
- This person will do a movement, such as a dance move, a stretch, a random motion, anything!
- Beginning with the person directly to the right of her, every person in the circle will copy that exact move.
- When everyone has done the same move, have the next person do a move for every person to copy.
- Keep "passing the moves" around the circle until all participants have introduced a move to the group.

Start the Lesson

Facilitator says: Today the first thing we're going to learn about is **empathy**. Learning empathy will be the foundation for becoming leaders in our community. First, let's make sure that we all understand what empathy means.

The definition of empathy is putting ourselves in someone else's situation and being more sensitive to what he or she is experiencing and feeling. To empathize is to try to understand another person's feelings.

There is also **self-empathy**. The definition of self-empathy is recognizing and understanding your own feelings and needs. Self-empathy is being kind and understanding with yourself.

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As leaders, demonstrating empathy by example is powerful. When children see you making extra effort to help others, they are more likely to do the same. If your peers see you helping others, they are also more likely to do the same.

Story

Facilitator says: Now, let's read a short story about empathy. Who wants to read the story out loud to the group?

Fatima is a wife, mother and teacher. Her life is dedicated to helping her family and students to live the very best life possible. She works hard every day to treat her home and her classroom with as much care and respect as possible so that her family and students can grow and learn together. Fatima loves caring for her family and community but today she is feeling a little sick. Her stomach has been hurting and she just can't seem to be as patient as usual. She was feeling very tired on her way to school and now is feeling distracted when her students ask her questions. She is unable to be as supportive as she would like to be with them. She is worried the other teachers will be upset with her for not being able to participate the way she usually does.

Fatima's fellow teacher, Leila, notices that she is not her usual self and says, "Fatima, I notice you seem a little sad today. Is that right?" Fatima's heart fills with gratitude that Leila is concerned with how she is feeling and smiles, "I am not feeling very well which is making it hard for me to do my work today. Yes, I guess that makes me a little sad." Leila puts her arm on Fatima's shoulder and asks, "Do you want to tell me more?" Fatima realized that just being heard had made all the difference in her day, "I guess sometimes we just need someone to listen to us and share what is happening in our lives, Leila, and you did just that for me."

Story Questions:

1. What examples of empathy can you find in the story?
2. Is there an example of self-empathy in the story?
3. How does Leila express empathy? Is it expressed in her listening or guesses at how Fatima is feeling?

