Empathy: Understanding Others

Vocabulary
empathy [em-puh-thee] (noun) the understanding of or the ability to identify with another person's feelings or experiences

Mini Quiz - Self Assessment
Lets start with a short quiz.. Are you empathetic?
Read each item below and circle "yes" if the statement describes you, or "no" if it does not.

1. I often think about other people's feelings?	Yes	No
2. I don't make fun of other people because I can imagine what it is like to be in their shoes?	Yes	No
3. I listen to others about what they are going through?	Yes	No
4. I try to understand other people's point of view?	Yes	No
5. I am aware that not everyone reacts to situations the same way I do.	Yes	No

Discussion Questions:
1. What does it mean to put yourself in someone else's shoes?

2. How can you try to understand how others feel?

3. How can you better show empathy toward others? What behaviors show empathy?

How Would You Feel?
Directions: For each story, choose the smiley face emoji (insert→emoji) or draw a face that shows how you would feel if the story happened to you; also, respond to the question in one-two complete sentences.

1. Mrs Fields handed back Monday's math test.
    Jacob said, "Finn, how did you do?"
    "I got a B," Finn replied.
    "I got a perfect score!" Jacob told him. "My first A plus! I studied all weekend. I hope my mom takes me for some ice cream to celebrate."
    "Stop bragging, Jacob!" Finn yelled.

Smiley Face	**How would you feel if you got an A on a test that you studied hard for?**

2. Durrell threw a paper airplane at Mike. Mrs. Fields saw the paper airplane land on the floor in front of Mike's desk. She thought Mike had thrown it. She made Mike clean the classroom before he could go to recess.
    Durrell ran up to Mike at recess. He said, "I'm sorry I got you in trouble."
    "Don't talk to me, Durrell."
    "I said I was sorry, Mike. Why are you being so mean to me?"

Smiley Face	**How would you feel if you got in trouble for something your friend did?**

Let's stop and think!

In situation one, Finn thinks Jacob is bragging, but if he stopped to think about how he might feel in Jacob's situation, what might he realize about how Jacob is feeling? When we try to understand other people's feelings, we're putting ourselves in that person's shoes. If Finn was really listening to Jacob, he might have better understood that Jacob is proud to have gotten his first A+ after having studied all weekend.

In situation two, Durrell thinks that Mike is being mean to him, but if Durrell put himself in Mike's place, what might he realize? If you got into trouble for something a friend did, you might be angry. The same is probably true for Durrell.

Re-Write: Now choose your favorite of the two stories you just read. Rewrite the story so that it illustrates being understanding of someone else's feelings (e.g., if you're rewriting story #1, you will change how Finn acts so that he is showing understanding toward Jacob). You may write the story in any format you wish (e.g., comic strip, skit script, short story).

Reflection: Think about your past actions.
1. Did you show empathy? Explain.

2. Why is it important we don't make fun of others, and care about others feelings?

3. How could you act differently in the future?

OPTIONAL EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

PRACTICE: Now you are going to practice what you've learned about being empathetic. Pair up with a classmate, or adult you are working with. Tell your partner one of the following: an embarrassing moment, a time you were scared or something that made you sad. If you are not comfortable sharing a real-life experience, you may pretend to be a fictional character and tell his/her story. Your partner should practice being empathetic as he/she is listening to your story. Then, switch roles: Practice being empathetic as your partner tells you what he/she experienced.

DRAWING : Thinking about your story, make a poster that shows how to be more understanding of other people's feelings.