



## Assembly 1: Introduction to empathy

### Aim:

- To introduce the word and concept of “empathy” and the role of stories in developing our empathy skills.

### Preparation and resources:

- ‘Washing line’ letters spelling out EMPATHY
- The book **I Do Not Like Books Any More** by Daisy Hirst [*if you don’t have this book, use another story illustrating a similar point. The aim is to help children explore how a character is feeling, why, and what other characters could do about it*]
- The poem **Outside in Summer** from **Hopscotch in the Sky** by Lucinda Jacob
- Visualiser if available to share the book with the children as you read

*Today we are going to tell you about some very important work that this school is going to be doing in the next few weeks/ this term/year.*

*We are going to be developing a brand new skill! In fact, I’d call it a kind of super-human power, because this skill means each of us individually and, more importantly, together, can achieve extraordinary things! Let’s find out what that super-human power is.*

Ask some children to come and help you turn the letters on the washing line around and together read what they say (EMPATHY).

Get the whole school to repeat the word a couple of times, encouraging children to become familiar with it.

*Can anyone tell us what the word means?* Take answers and congratulate them for what they know.

**SLIDE 2:** *Mark Ruffalo and Murray from Sesame Street have been discussing this too* (Show the Sesame Street film about empathy.)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9\\_1Rt1R4xbM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_1Rt1R4xbM)

*Empathy is a special super-power, because when you have empathy it means you can understand how other people are feeling. You can know how to help them and make the places we live and learn in much better and happier. There are three parts to empathy.*

### **SLIDE 3**

- *Experiencing for yourself how other people are feeling*

- Working out why people are feeling the way they are
- Doing something about what we have discovered.

We are going to spend time building this super- power. And we have something very special to help us. Stories! **SLIDES 4 and 5**

Can anyone guess why stories are good to help people develop empathy?

Take answers and praise the responses.

Because when you read about characters in stories you can start to understand how they are feeling and that helps you understand how people in real life might be feeling.

A: **SLIDE 6** Read the book **I Do Not Like Books Any More** up to the point where Natalie says 'I do not like books any more'. **SLIDE 7** I want you to stop and think about this and to step into Natalie's shoes for a minute. Hear those words. How do you think Natalie is feeling? Does she really not like books? What could Alphonse say to make her feel better?

B: **SLIDE 8** Alternatively if you have older children in assembly read the poem '**Outside in summer**' from the poetry book **Hopscotch in the Sky**. I want you to stop and think about this poem and step into the child's shoes for a while. How do you think he is feeling? What does he want? Why is he on his own? What could the children playing on the other side of the wall do to make him feel better?

Discuss.

So isn't it great? When we're reading stories we can practice developing our empathy skills! We can think about how characters are feeling and what has happened to make them feel that way and what characters in the book (or us in real life) might do about it. What's more, stories can introduce us to experiences, people, ways of seeing things that we might not otherwise meet in our own lives.

If time, finish reading the story. [There may not be time to finish the story in the assembly, in which case this could be finished in classes].

Encourage children to start to 'explore' as classes and as individuals

- to look at other people in pictures, at home and in the classroom to work out how they feel
- to look out for stories that help them understand how someone else is feeling and why.

#### Whole school actions following assembly

- Teachers should be prepared after this assembly to share examples of stories that have helped them understand someone else (how they feel, why they feel that) and how it changed them/ their thoughts/ attitudes/ behaviours; and to begin exploring books in class that are good 'empathy books'. Use EmpathyLab booklists.
- Classes could create their own collections. There could be a prominent school

display where classes add book covers/titles they want to recommend as being good 'empathy books'.

## Assembly 2: Perspective-taking

### Aim:

- To help children to understand what perspective-taking is and to practice seeing things from another person's point of view. As part of developing our empathy skills

### Preparation and resources:

- **SLIDE 10** Before this assembly, take a picture of children sitting in their class rows at a previous assembly. As they children come in, project the photograph on a big screen rotated by 180 degrees so it's upside down. It will make children laugh and intrigue them.
- Use **Daft Bat** by Jeanne Willis [*if you don't have this book, then you could use another story that illustrates a similar point, helping children see that there are different perspectives to many situations*]
- Visualiser to share the book with the children as you read

NB continue to have the EMPATHY washing line at the front whenever you do a specific empathy assembly. This helps reinforce that the assembly will be all about empathy.

### **Link to previous assembly:**

- *How have you been getting on with using your empathy eyes? Have you been looking out for how people are feeling and why? And have you read any stories that have helped you understand how people feel in different situations?*
- Briefly check in with the collections/recommendations developed since last assembly. Depending on how your school has done this, this could involve a couple of brief recommendations (shared by children or teachers) or you could highlight the school display (if not in the assembly room, share a photo of it).

**SLIDE 11** Show them the picture of old woman/young girl. Ask what they see. When you get different views, ask the school who is right? Show how both are right. Explain that sometimes people see things differently.

**SLIDE 12** Share the book **Daft Bat** by Jeanne Willis and Tony Ross

Check children know the meaning of "daft".

Go back to the page where the animals tell Owl why they think Bat is daft. Ask children if they have ever seen things differently to other people, or if other people have seen things differently to them. Ask if they have ever thought those people were mad (or wrong). Ask them to think how easy it is to presume that the way you see things is the RIGHT way, when actually it might just be OUR way. Often there is more than one way of seeing things - it depends which angle or position you are looking at things from.

Refer back to the original image you had displayed (of assembly upside down). *This is what the world must look like to Bat. It's different to what we see but that doesn't make it wrong or right.*

Tell the children that looking at the world from different perspectives is part of the super-power 'empathy'.

*Everyone sees the world differently; there isn't a right way but it is much better and more exciting when you can understand someone else's perspective. It means you can avoid falling out or getting into trouble and sometimes see things in a better way.*

*We are all empathy super heroes in our own way and we can all use our special Empathy Eyes to look at other people in pictures, at home and in the classroom and try to work out each other's perspectives. What can they see or hear? Is that the same or different from ourselves?*

*Daft Bat had a different perspective from the other animals. Our experience and memories also give us a different perspective. For example, if you are in Year 6 or in Reception you will see things differently, won't you? Or if you have always lived here or if you have just moved here then you might see things differently too.*

*So today and this week I want you to practice - before you make a judgement (maybe you catch yourself thinking someone else's point of view is wrong) – stopping and taking some time to think about what it might look like from their perspective. What might they see/ know that you don't? What experiences or beliefs might they have had/hold that make them feel/think/ see differently from you? What can we learn from that? Might being curious help avoid conflict, resentment, misunderstanding?*

*You might try this with friends on the playground, with your teacher, with parent, carers, siblings at home.*

## Assembly 3: From empathy into action

### Aim:

- To explore how our empathy skills can be turned into positive action.

### Preparation:

- As a staff, consider the ideas about how we can turn empathy into compassionate social action. You might like to consider the differences between empathy/compassion and sympathy or feeling sorry for someone.
- Read the book **Lubna and Pebble** by Wendy Meddour. Consider the children in the school. Are any of them refugees? How might they react to the story? Discuss with class teachers how they might follow up on the assembly in their classes. Are there any children who are refugees in their class? How can their stories be valued and understood? *If you do not have this book, use another story that addresses a social issue, in which children can practice understanding how people might feel in that situation and how others can help or make a difference.*
- Visualiser to share the book with the children as you read

### **The Assembly**

**SLIDE 14** Read the story

**SLIDE 15** stop at the place where Lubna gives Amir the pebble and says “*Tell Pebble all about it*”.

Ask the children to use their special empathy super-power to imagine how Amir is thinking and feeling. What is Lubna feeling as she leaves for her new life?

Continue reading to the end of the story

*You’ve used empathy to explore and understand how Amir and Lubna are thinking and feeling. But there is another aspect of empathy and that is turning your empathy into action. Empathy helps us to understand the world but it doesn’t help anyone else unless we DO something.*

*So what you would do if Lubna sailed to the UK and you saw her standing alone in the playground? Share ideas.*

Summarise what the group has explored: *We have read the story Lubna and Pebble and this allowed us to use our super-power, empathy. There are lots of ways of acting on empathy.* Use the ideas that have been generated by the children. For example:

- Helping someone we know
- Smiling and being friendly
- Telling a teacher if someone is worried or lonely

Reflect upon Lubna and Amir’s experiences. *How can we as a school village/town/country etc. help?*

You might give some examples of how families like Lubna's have been helped on their journeys. What else could we do?

Explain that as part of our work before and on Empathy Day, we will be making Empathy Resolutions about things we can do to make life happier and easier for others.

Possible whole school actions following assembly

- Discuss the story and refugees. Consider what could be done as a result of the empathy felt for Lubna and Amir. The classes might draw up a charter for how they are going to welcome children into their class or what they might do if they see someone sad and lonely in the playground.

## Assembly 4: Empathy Day

### Aim:

- To celebrate Empathy Day, sharing examples of what has been achieved so far and what could come next for individuals or the community.

### Preparation:

- Gather examples of work from different classes' empathy work prior to Empathy Day
- As a staff team,
  - Plan activities to be carried out on Empathy Day and beyond
  - Generate ideas for other things children could do beyond the classroom (Read, Connect, Act)

### **The Assembly**

**SLIDE 17** Introduce Empathy Day, explaining that today is a national day of action dedicated to the skill of empathy. This means that across the UK, individuals and communities (schools, libraries, Scouts and other groups) are marking this day with a celebration of empathy. A bit like a birthday, when we celebrate a specific person's life.

**SLIDE 18** Empathy Day is all about really focusing on empathy and helping us understand each other better.

It is also a day to:

1. Celebrate the empathy-building steps we've taken so far
2. Plan the next steps on our empathy journey

### **SLIDE 19** Celebrating the empathy steps we've been taking so far:

- Share examples of what different classes have been doing as part of their empathy work in the run up to Empathy Day

### **SLIDE 20** Planning the next steps on our empathy journey:

On Empathy Day we want everyone to...

- **Read:** because stories and book characters build our real-life empathy. Empathy Day's organisers want everyone to find and start an empathy boosting book
- **Connect:** practice listening 100% to make new connections with people
- **Act:** put empathy into action, in your home and your community

*Depending on the amount of work your school has done on social action, you may need to elaborate on the 'doing' part – how can you make a difference, what can you actually do? How is this part of the empathy skill?*

**SLIDE 21** Share the activities\* that will be taking place nationally place for Empathy Day

**SLIDE 22 to be completed by individual schools** use this slide to share Empathy Day activities across the school/ in different classes. This might be organised into the three categories of **Read, Connect, Act** if appropriate or in another format of your choosing.

*You could share examples of activities taking place in other schools on Empathy Day to create a sense of solidarity/ shared activity; you could even buddy with another school and video link with them.*

Share other ways in which children can read, connect and do beyond today. For example:

Read:

- Find and share empathy-boosting books – create a library/ dedicated booklist
- Complete a reading challenge, using the EmpathyLab [Read For Empathy Guides](#) for young people
- Follow the special author blog tour; listen to their podcasts at [www.empathylab.uk](http://www.empathylab.uk)

Connect:

- Use EmpathyLab's Listening Switch exercise

Act:

- Make Empathy Resolutions, using EmpathyLab's special cards