



- EMPATHY: HEARTACHE & HEALING -

WHAT

Empathy is the ability to be aware of the feelings of others and imagine what it might be like to be in their position (or in their shoes). Having empathy means you can step back from the way you see a situation and think about how someone else might feel from their side of the story.

WHY

Empathy is a capacity that can be built by focusing on how well we can imagine what someone else is going through, as well as what they may be thinking or feeling. Empathy is a key ingredient in positive friendships and relationships. It reduces conflict and misunderstandings and leads to helping behavior, kindness, and greater success in many of life's goals.

Building Empathy directly results in:

- + Healthy relationships based on nurturing, caring and understanding
- + Better conflict resolution skills
- + Effective teamwork within groups and organizations
- + Stronger performance in the workplace
- + Enhanced leadership
- + Humanitarian efforts

HOW

STEP 1: Hand out one piece of tissue paper to each learner and explain that you will be doing an activity to explore how empathy can help to begin healing

STEP 2: Brainstorm a list of things that people can say or do that could hurt our feelings. Also brainstorm a list of acts of kindness that can show that we care.

STEP 3: Have a few students read out the items that can hurt our feelings. As each item is read, have the students crumple up a piece of their tissue paper.

STEP 4: Next, have a few students read out the kindness items. As each item is read, have the students unfold a piece of their tissue paper.

STEP 5: Once the papers have been completely opened, have a class discussion using questions such as:

- + *What happens to our hearts when people are hurtful towards us?*
- + *What happens to our hearts when people are kind towards us?*
- + *How do our "hearts" look different from how they began?*
- + *If we want people to trust us and be open with us, what do we need to do?*