

EMPATHY

Activity 3: Touch and tell!

Activities to promote adults' personal, social and learn to learn skills
Description of initiatives comprised in this handbook.

| Title/name | Touch and Tell! |
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| LifeComp Skill approached | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-regulation <input type="checkbox"/> Flexibility <input type="checkbox"/> Well-being <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Empathy <input type="checkbox"/> Communication <input type="checkbox"/> Collaboration <input type="checkbox"/> Growth mindset <input type="checkbox"/> Critical thinking <input type="checkbox"/> Managing learning |
| Duration¹ | 1-2 hours |
| Type of activity | Storytelling/Reflection/Discussion |
| Short description | <p>This activity is thought to be performed with 6 to 8 but can be extended to a maximum of 10. The activity incorporates elements of social and emotional learning with the objective of practising active listening and understanding others.</p> <p>It stimulates participants' ability to observe, listen, share knowledge and experiences of the participants, thus leading to better knowledge, and understanding of people around them.</p> <p>Storytelling allows us to get in touch with the emotional, spiritual, and physical side of ourselves. Sharing our stories allows people to find common experiences, make connections with each other, and so develop empathy. Telling stories about parts of life that we all share (love, loss, family, relationships, dreams, childhood etc.) allows us to understand each other better and puts us into other people's shoes.</p> |
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Understand the importance of empathy ● Recognise situations which call for empathy ● Discuss situations which provide an opportunity to experience another person's perspective. ● Develop empathy in different life contexts. ● Deepen participants' knowledge of people around them. |

¹ It can be continuously.



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| Setting² | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 facilitator ● 1 room with chairs in circle ● Participants' personal objects or songs/paintings/poems ● Pen and paper |
| Facilitators' Tips³ | <p>Alternatively to an object, the participants can be asked to choose music which they associate with a specific period or experience of their lives.</p> <p>This activity can also be implemented online, with everyone sharing songs, paintings, poems or even objects. In this case, the facilitator asks, after listening to the chosen music, to write or paint the emotions/meaning/experiences that the music evokes for the participants.</p> <p>During the activity, it is a valid option not to write or paint, if participants argue that the object is unknown or has no meaning for them.</p> <p>During the reflection and discussion, the facilitator should encourage participants to ask questions about details of the story or how the other person feels, avoiding judgements or personal opinions.</p> |
| Step by step | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The facilitator asks participants to bring a meaningful object with them and with a story that they would be ready to share. 2. To start the activity, the facilitator explains the concept and importance of empathy (see the Material for facilitator worksheet). 3. Each participant is invited to show the object without saying anything and to pass it through the circle (if face-to-face). 4. The other participants are invited to write or paint something based on what the object evokes for them (e.g., experiences, emotions and meanings related to the object). 5. The facilitator invites the owner of the object ("storyteller") to present the object, while the other participants are invited to listen carefully without asking questions. 6. At the end of the story, the facilitator asks each participant to ask questions and reflect on what they wrote/painted/presented at the beginning and how they would describe the object now in relation to the colleague's story. |
| Debriefing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How did you feel throughout this activity? ● How do you feel after sharing your story? ● How did you feel by hearing the feedback from others? ● How did the object change its meaning before and after sharing the story? ● Did you imagine how the storyteller felt? ● In which way do you think this activity made you connect with the others? |
| References | <p>Diwan, S. (2022). <i>Caring, empathy and compassion: calm, clear and kind teachers (self care for teachers)</i>. Paris: UNESCO.</p> <p>Gulin, W. (2020). <i>Empathy in Social Relations of the Modern World. 21st Century Pedagogy, 1(4), 1-7.</i></p> |

² Materials and resources needed to implement it, including financial, human resources and spaces. In case is needed a worksheet, please use the following document to prepare it.

³ What a person needs to know to implement the activity.



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| | <p>Rosenberg, M. (2006). <i>Comunicação Não-Violenta: técnicas para aprimorar relacionamentos pessoais e profissionais</i>. São Paulo: Ágora.</p> <p>Sala, A., Punie, Y., Garkov, V. & Cabrera Giraldez, M. (2020). <i>LifeComp: The European Framework for Personal, Social and Learning to Learn Key Competence</i>, EUR 30246 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, ISBN 978-92-76-19418-7, doi:10.2760/302967, JRC120911.</p> |
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Touch and Tell! – Material for facilitators

Worksheet – Empathy

- **Definition**

Empathy is the power of putting ourselves in another person's shoes, taking their perspective and acknowledging their emotions

- **According to this concept:**

- Human brains are hardwired for empathy and that the ability to understand and help others has been fundamental for the survival of our species.
- The ability to read non-verbal signals such as tone of voice, gestures and facial expressions and the development of active listening are tools for practising and strengthening empathy.
- It is part of the richness of humanity to recognise and accept that people of different cultures may have different values or have different experiences. We should not judge or criticise others, but try to understand their emotions and points of view.
- By taking the perspective from another person it is necessary to maintain a separation between one's own and others' emotions and experiences.
- It is possible to empathise with someone, and still disagree with their attitudes or values.
- Educational interventions aimed at increasing the capacity of perspective taking, developing self-knowledge and providing positive experiences of otherness helps in developing empathy.

- **Why is it important?**

To regulate prosocial behaviours while inhibiting aggressive and antisocial behaviour

Empathy is thought to provide the foundation for broader social attitudes and behaviours and appears to play a key role in societal functioning

To mediate conflict situations/situations of violence

In a conflict situation, it helps to mediate and communicate in a nonviolent way. When we understand the emotions, feelings and needs of others, we can help to think of other ways that satisfy everyone involved.

Enhance effective communication, interaction and collaboration

The capacity to understand other people's emotions is one of the pillars of social understanding, which is key to effective communication and collaboration. Empathy leads to affective resonance, which is the automatic ability to be emotionally aroused by others' emotions.

It is important for mental health and emotional well-being

The ability to recognise emotions in others is closely intertwined with self-awareness or the ability to identify, label, and describe one's own emotions. Training one's own self-awareness and self-empathy enhances the ability to understand others and to reduce personal distress when confronted with



others' feelings. When we connect with others empathetically, we develop feelings of belonging, connection and trust that can help reduce stress and anxiety.

- **When can it be used in daily life?**

Examples:

- In the professional context, the employer can use empathy to understand the challenges that their employees face and offer personalised solutions that consider the needs and skills of an individual.
- It can help to mediate and find compromises with colleagues, customers, friends, family etc.
- It can give you the possibility to ask for help when you need it. You know that others can feel like you, and you trust that they can also help you.
- It helps us to hear/understand “no” or “I can't” without taking it as a personal rejection.
- It helps to defuse a situation of conflict or imminent violence.
- It helps us to overcome situations of psychological pain when we find someone who can listen to us with empathy.
- Empathy can help educators understand and listen to their learners' needs and challenges and think more effectively about andragogic strategies.

