

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

“Walk in My Shoes”

Grades 6-12



EXPLANATION OF THE ACTIVITY

Many grieving teenagers have difficulty communicating the difficult experiences they are facing and many often feel alone at school. However, we know that they are not alone in these feelings of isolation and challenges in communicating difficult emotions.

In this activity, students are prompted to consider the difficult experiences that they have faced and how they can often feel misunderstood and isolated as a result. This activity builds empathy by inviting students to reflect on the universal nature of adversity, and the fact that all students want to be treated with fairness, respect, and kindness.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Construction paper
- Markers
- Crayons
- Colored pencils
- Other writing utensils



TIME NEEDED

30-45 minutes

INTRODUCTION TO THE LESSON

- Start off the lesson by explaining that today is **Children's Grief Awareness Day**, which is a day that is observed nationally to raise awareness about grieving kids to make sure that they know that we support them.
- Start the lesson by reading the following quote:
 - “You never really know a (person) until you understand things from (their) point of view; until you climb into (their) shoes and walk around in them.”
- Ask the class what they think that quote means.
 - “Do you think it means walking in another person's literal “shoes”?”
- Explain that today the class is going to talk about imagining what it is like to go through what another person is going through, especially when they are going through big, difficult challenges in life.

ACTIVITY

- Explain the activity to the class: Each will be tracing their shoe on the construction paper and completing prompts for discussion.
- Partner students together: Consider partnering students who are not desk mates or “best” friends to encourage them to empathize with someone they may not know well.
- Trace: Each partner pairing will help one another to trace their shoe.
- Reflect and write: After the shoe is traced, invite students to spend 10-15 minutes writing:
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- Inside of the shoe: What are challenges that they have faced? What it is like to 'walk in their shoes?'
- Outside of the shoe: Instruct students to write how they would like to be treated when they are going through something difficult.

PAIRED LISTENING

- Once the shoes are completed, ask students to describe how to listen attentively to their partner.
 - Explain that listening requires that we:
 - Pay attention, and put down all distractions
 - Face the other person
 - Do not interrupt
 - Try to imagine what it is like to walk in the other person's shoes
 - Acknowledge and/or thank the person for sharing once done
 - Model this for the class so it is clear.
- Invite partners to take turns sharing the story inside the shoes. Explain that if there are parts of the shoe that they do not want to share, that is okay.
 - Have the listener ask, "How do you want others to treat you?"
- Provide approximately 1-2 minutes per person and then have the partners switch roles. Once both persons have shared, invite students to find a new partner, and repeat the sharing. You can continue to repeat switching partners based on the amount of time available.

DEBRIEF AND DISCUSS HOW TO SUPPORT

- Ask students to share a few highlights of what they learned about their classmates that they did not know.
- Ask if they were able to imagine what it was like to walk in the other person's shoes.
 - How did that go?
- Ask students to share what they learned about how their classmates want to be treated.
 - Write these on a board.
- Ask students what they think they should do for others who are going through challenges, adversities, and losses?
 - Write ideas on the board.
 - A few that you can add:
 1. Show the person respect and kindness.
 2. Show up, ask questions, and listen to how they are doing.
 3. Tell the person you care about them, and you hope they will be okay.
 4. Give the person a hug if they are okay with it.
 5. Spend time with them: Recess, lunch, after school.
- Why are these supportive acts so important?
 - Explain that one of the best ways we can all overcome challenges is by having the support of people who care about us.
- Invite students to think about one person in their life who is going through a challenging situation, and encourage them to think about doing a kind act for them.

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CLOSING OUT

- Wrap up the lesson by inviting any sharing with the whole class about what they learned, and summarize the themes.
- Encourage them to support one another and to be kind to one another through difficult experiences too, because we all go through hard things and need each other.
- Close out by thanking everyone for sharing, and encourage them that it is always okay to come and talk to you when they are going through something difficult.

Routes to Resilience

If you are interested in more lesson plans and activities like this one, please reach out to us and ask about our *Routes to Resilience* social and emotional learning program that is built for all students to build emotional intelligence, resilience, and empathy.