Empathy Lesson

Standing in Other People’s Shoes

**Materials Needed:**

1. Computer/Internet Access
2. Book: Stand in My Shoes by Bob Sornson
3. Bags with shoes and typed scenarios in them

**Define Empathy:**

* Empathy is the experience of understanding another person's perspective.
* The capacity to recognize emotions that are being experienced by another.
* One's ability to recognize, perceive and directly experientially feel the [emotion](http://psychology.wikia.com/wiki/Emotion) of another.
* You place yourself in their shoes and feel what they are feeling.

**Show YouTube video: Take A Walk in Someone Else’s Shoes**

* <http://youtu.be/oQ3LnuQ-nE0>

**Read the book: *Stand in My Shoes* by Bob Sornson**

**Teach Empathy through Role Play**

* Explain to the students that we’re going to walk in other people’s shoes. As we’re doing this we are going to record the difficulties, frustrations, and emotions associated with each situation. Most importantly we want to learn how to respond to our empathy. How are we going to act differently in the future because of it?
* Call on a student to come to the front. Have them open the bag and read the scenario out loud.

**Bag #1:**

1. Arm wrap from the nurse
2. Typed Scenario: I fell off the monkey bars last week and broke my arm. I have to keep it wrapped and can’t use it for three weeks.

I helped the student wrap her arm and asked her to do common tasks: tying her shoe, writing her name, putting her hair in a ponytail, carrying a heavy backpack, playing at recess, etc.

**Bag #2:**

1. Blindfold
2. Typed Scenario: I was in a bad accident and lost my vision. Now I cannot see.

I blindfolded the student and asked him to do normal tasks: walk to his desk to get his pencil, line up for lunch, play a board game, etc.

**Bag #3:**

1. Pair of Shoes
2. Typed Scenario: I saw some friends from school outside playing. I put my shoes on and ran out to join them. When I got to them they said, “Uggg, no one invited you. We don’t want you to play with us.”

The student took off her shoes and put on the shoes from the bag.

**Bag #4:**

1. Pair of shoes
2. Typed Scenario: My mom lost her job so we had to move. I have been in the same school with my same friends since kindergarten. I have to go to a new school on Monday.

The student took of his shoes and put on the shoes from the bag.

**Bag #5:**

1. Pair of shoes
2. Typed Scenario: Last night the police showed up at my apartment and arrested my dad. He went to jail. I don’t know what he did or why they took him.

The student took of his shoes and put on the shoes from the bag.

**After each scenario we discussed how it felt to be in that situation.**

1. What was hard?
2. How did you feel?
3. What would you want others to know?
4. How would you want others to treat you?
5. What are you going to do the next time you see someone in this situation?

I explained to the students that it is hard to imagine how a person feels when they are going through something that we haven’t ever experienced, personally. In order to show empathy we must put ourselves in their shoes.

We also discussed that the shoes they pull out of the bag might not fit them or they might be shoes a girl would wear. It’s okay- they’re not **YOUR** shoes. They don’t belong to you- you are just wearing them for a little while to understand what that person is going through and how they feel.