

UNIT 6: SOCIAL SKILLS FOR BULLIES

LESSON 21 – **Expressing Empathy and Understanding for Others**

PART II SOLVING THE PROBLEM	OBJECTIVE	To help students recognize that when they express empathy and understanding for others, it helps develop and strengthen relationships, and makes kids less likely to hurt or bully others.
	MATERIALS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Handout: “Sanjay and Justin” story• Handout: “How Empathetic Are You?” reflection sheet• Skill poster (from CD)
	STEPS	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Ask students to think about a time when they were sad or upset.2. Have them recall if anyone stopped to talk or show concern for them.3. Ask students, “How did that make you feel?” (Allow for a three-minute discussion.)4. Read the “Sanjay and Justin” story out loud to your students or hand out copies of the story and ask students to read it silently to themselves.5. After you or the students have read the story, introduce the skill of “Expressing Empathy and Understanding to Others” to the class. Display and discuss each step and ask students to tell how each step relates to the story. (You can use the comments below as a reference.)6. “Expressing Empathy and Understanding for Others” Skill Steps:<ul style="list-style-type: none">❶ Listen closely to the other person’s feelings. With Sanjay and Justin, neither really listened. Justin replied to Sanjay’s questions with questions about his own dad, and Sanjay didn’t pick up on the fact that his friend was stressed out and didn’t want to hear about weekend plans or science class.

STEPS

(continued)

2 Express empathy by saying something like, “I understand....”

Sanjay’s way of telling Justin he understood his feelings was when Sanjay said, “That stinks,” after Justin told him about not getting to see his dad very much. Sanjay’s nonverbal behaviors (making more eye contact and really listening to his friend), especially after they argued, also showed empathy. Actions can communicate empathy as much as words can.

3 Demonstrate concern through words and actions.

Sanjay showed his concern by apologizing for his behavior. He could see his friend was upset, and he felt bad that he pushed and yelled at Justin.

4 Reflect back the other person’s words by saying, “It seems like you are saying....”

Sanjay didn’t use this step with Justin. You might not always do this step, especially when what you hear is so simple or clear that it’s impossible to misunderstand what was said. Sometimes when it’s obvious, repeating what was just said is awkward and unnecessary.

However, if Sanjay had been confused by what Justin said or Sanjay wanted to make absolutely sure he understood, he could have said something like this: “I’d hate it if I didn’t get to see my dad much. I guess that’s why you’re a little freaked out now, huh?” Remember though, if you’re unsure or want to be absolutely positive you understand what someone said, just repeat what you heard using your own words.

5 Offer any help or assistance you can.

Sanjay couldn’t change the fact that Justin and his dad didn’t see each other very much, and Sanjay couldn’t make Justin’s dad show up. But there was something Sanjay could do. He could keep his friend company until Justin’s dad came – and that’s what Sanjay did.

STEPS <i>(continued)</i>	<p>7. Now, pass out the “How Empathetic Are You?” reflection sheet to students. Ask them to answer all questions honestly. Let them know no one will read their responses. The purpose of this activity is for students to self-reflect and determine if they need to become more empathetic and understanding to others.</p>
OUTCOMES/ HOMEWORK/ FOLLOW UP	<p>None</p>
EXTENSIONS/ ALTERATIONS	<p>None</p>

Sanjay and Justin

I'm Sanjay, and I had a shouting match with my friend, Justin, because neither of us listened to the other. It happened on a Friday after school. I walked outside and saw Justin standing at the corner. He looked mad. He usually smiles a lot but this time he wasn't. He kept looking up and down the street like he was watching for someone.

I went over and asked him what was up. He told me he was waiting for his dad to pick him up, and that he should have been here by now. I shrugged and didn't think it was a big deal. I figured his dad was just late. That's when I started telling him about what I was going to do on Saturday.

I asked Justin what he was doing that weekend but he didn't say anything; instead, he asked me, "Why isn't my dad here yet?" I was like, "Geez, just chill out." Then I started telling him about a girl in my science class. I wasn't sure if he knew her so I asked him. He didn't say anything, so I figured that meant he knew her. I kept talking about how she broke two glass beakers in the lab.

While I was talking, he said something like, "Where is he?" And I said, "Where's who?" That's when he turned and looked at me and yelled, "My dad!" He was crying a little. I'd never seen him cry before. I asked him, "Dude, what's your problem?" Then he shoved me in the chest and yelled, "Haven't you been listening?" That made me mad so I shoved him back and yelled, "Were you listening to me?" It was wild.

I couldn't believe we got into a fight, and I didn't even know over what. Justin was crying even more. It sort of freaked me out. I felt bad and told him I didn't mean to be a jerk. Neither of us said anything for a while. Finally, Justin said everything was okay. He said he doesn't get to see his dad very much and he was scared and mad his dad had forgotten to pick him up.

I told him, "That stinks," and I said I would wait with him until his dad came. I didn't ask Justin why he never sees his dad but I did say Justin could come and hang out at my house if his dad didn't show up. Justin thanked me, and we both laughed a little. A few minutes later, his dad finally drove up.

"How Empathetic Are You?" Reflection Sheet

Directions: Circle one answer.

1. When others around you seem upset, does it affect your mood?
 - Always
 - Sometimes
 - Never

2. Do you ever get emotional when watching a violent or sad movie?
 - Always
 - Sometimes
 - Never

3. If a friend texted you and said he or she flunked a test, you would:
 - Reply right away with words of encouragement
 - Ignore the text
 - Reply with a “snarky” comment, like “sucks 2BU” or “awesome job”
 - Send a reply about something completely unrelated
 - Reply a day or two later

4. If you saw a homeless person under a bridge, your first thought would probably be:
 - Get a job, loser.
 - I hope he’ll be okay.
 - Nothing. It doesn’t bother me.

5. Do friends seek you out when they have problems?
 - Always
 - Sometimes
 - Never

Expressing Empathy and Understanding for Others

- 1** Listen closely to the other person's feelings.
- 2** Express empathy by saying something like, "I understand...."
- 3** Demonstrate concern through words and actions.
- 4** Reflect back the other person's words by saying, "It seems like you are saying...."
- 5** Offer any help you can.