

Lesson One: ***What does compassion look like?***

Learning Objectives:

Students will:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the concept “**compassion.**”
- Identify elements of compassion shown in various images.
- Begin to develop a vocabulary of words related to compassion.

Introduction / Opening:

Select five to eight images that show compassion in action.

Examples:

- Acts of kindness and caring.
- Acts of helping others.
- Acts of empathy.
- Acts of reaching out to others.

Guide class discussion about what they see and what all the images have in common. Suggest that the word that describes what is happening in all the pictures is “**compassion.**” Write the word on the board.

Engage students in a discussion about compassion to determine their pre-existing knowledge on the subject and to introduce them to a vocabulary of words related to compassion. Add your own definition to the examples given below:

- Compassion is an understanding of how another person feels.
- Compassion is caring about others.
- Compassion is showing concern through kind thoughts, words and actions.
- Compassion is helping and giving.
- Compassion is listening and being patient.
- Compassion is a response to suffering.

Activity:

Ask:

- *Where do we see compassion in our school?*
- *What does it look like? Feel like? Sound like?*

Take two to three suggestions from students. Encourage them to describe acts of compassion in specific behavior terms.

Examples:

- Kids including others who are left out of their game on the playground
- The nurse helping a hurt child.
- The principal making sure that a new student feels welcome.
- The teacher helping a student at recess who is struggling.

Divide students into groups of three.

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Give groups 10 minutes to think of an example of “*what compassion looks like.*” Plan a way to share it with the class by acting it out, writing a poem, describing it in words, drawing a picture, singing a song etc.

Wrap-up:

Have groups share as time allows.

Encourage students to continue to notice acts of compassion and to add them to the class bulletin board (described below).

Follow-up:

Bulletin Board: “*What does compassion look like?*”

Set aside some space on the bulletin board. Ask your students to begin to identify examples of compassionate acts. Cut out pictures of compassionate acts they find in the newspaper or magazines.

Make a bulletin board with three sections:

- What does compassion look like? [behaviors]
- What does compassion sound like? [words]
- What does compassion feel like? [emotions]

Encourage students to continue to add examples to the board.

Optional Chapter Book Read-aloud: “*The Hundred Dresses*”

Introduce “*The Hundred Dresses*” by Eleanor Estes, Louis Slobodkin, and Helena Estes (**Teacher note:** “*The Hundred Dresses*” is being presented as a play by the Seattle Children’s Theater from February 22 –April 6, 2008.)

This story was written a long time ago – in 1944 – about a young girl and her experiences with her classmates. The story helps children think about the need for compassion and the role that forgiveness plays in furthering compassion.

Read: Chapter One of *The Hundred Dresses*

Discuss:

- *What words would you use to describe Wanda?*
- *How do you think the other students feel about Wanda? What are the clues in the story that make you think that?*
- *How do you think Wanda might feel about the other students in the classroom?*
- *Peggy and Maddie looked for Wanda because they wanted to “have some fun with her.” What do you think that might mean?*

Lesson Two: *Why is compassion important?*

Learning Objectives:

Students will:

- Understand that compassion is being able to recognize when someone is suffering and to respond to the suffering in sensitive ways that recognize the needs and feelings of the person suffering.
- Understand that compassion begins with feeling empathy with how another is feeling.
- Recognize the lack of compassion.

Introduction / Opening:

Read this quote from His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama:

- *“I believe that this suffering is caused by ignorance, and that people inflict pain on others in pursuit of their own happiness or satisfaction.”*

Discussion:

- *What does it mean to suffer?* (Dictionary definition: To feel pain or distress. To experience loss, injury, harm, or punishment.)
- *Do you agree with the quote from the Dalai Lama – that some people cause suffering in others because they are only thinking about themselves?*

Encourage students to describe situations in their community or school where people might be suffering.

- *Where do we see suffering in our community?*
- *Where do we see suffering in our school?*

List examples that students offer.

Have students discuss how people might be feeling in these examples.

- *When we understand how another person feels, that is called having empathy.*
- *Compassion starts with empathy – the ability to know and understand how another person is feeling.*

Activity:

Read aloud this short story about a child who is bullied:

Marko is new at school - he just moved to the neighborhood with his mother, older sister and grandfather. He rides the bus every day and every day he is miserable. There are three boys who bully him at the bus stop, on the ride to school - even in the lunchroom. They make fun of his name, the way he talks, his skin color, his size, what he eats for lunch. The leader is named Harlan – who also pushes Marko and threatens to make him miss the bus. There are others – girls and boys who are bystanders – who don't do or say anything to help - in fact, they stay away. But they watch – and they see what is happening. Most days

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Marko stands alone and often feels like crying but he knows that would just make it worse. He feels ashamed so he hasn't told his parents or teachers. So, he goes to school every day – suffering with his head down – hoping that this might be the day that the other boys stay home; that this might be the day that he meets a new friend like his old best friend, Aaron.

Ask students to imagine what it might be like to be Marko.

- *How do you think he is feeling?*

Help the students name the feelings that Marko might be having.

Ask students to imagine what it might be like to be one of the bystanders.

- *How do you think the other kids who are watching might be feeling?*

Help the students name the feelings that the bystanders might be having.

Join students into groups of four.

Talk about, and in two to three sentences, describe what you think the bystanders might do that could help Marko feel differently.

Wrap-up:

Have each group share their ideas of what might help Marko. (Include behaviors of the bystanders, of possible adults, what Marko might do, as well as the behavior of the kids who are bullying.)

Discuss how the suggestions are examples of showing compassion.

Optional Chapter Book Read-aloud:

Read: Chapters Two and Three of *The Hundred Dresses*

Discuss:

Think about Wanda in her classroom.

- *Discuss how Wanda might be feeling from her point of view about being part of this classroom.*
- *Where was compassion lacking?*
- *What could compassion have looked like in her classroom?*

Lesson Three: *Who are the heroes of compassion?*

Learning Objectives:

Students will:

- Describe characteristics of one who is a hero of compassion.
- Learn about His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama, and why he is recognized as a hero of compassion.
- Understand that compassion can be shown in many ways – to people, animals, and the environment.

Introduction / Opening:

- *What does it mean to be a hero? A hero is:*
 - Someone who commits an act of bravery, or shows courage, strength of character, or other admirable qualities.
 - Someone who is admired and looked up to for outstanding qualities or achievements.
- *We have learned about what it means to show compassion. What might it mean to be a “hero of compassion?”*
 - Someone who is brave or shows courage or strength of character in being compassionate.
 - Someone who notices suffering around them and acts to try to change that suffering.
 - Someone who is looked up to for being a compassionate person.

There are world leaders who many consider to be “heroes of compassion” because they help bring positive change through their actions to help rid the world of suffering. Some of these leaders will be visiting Seattle in April at a gathering called *Seeds of Compassion*. One world leader who is coming to speak to students will be His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama. Although he has come to the United States many times, this is the first time the focus of his visit will be on children and compassion.

- *Today we are going to learn a little bit about the 14th Dalai Lama.*

Introduce His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama, by sharing photos and reading “*Who is the Dalai Lama?*” See extended resources and photos here:

<http://www.dalailama.com/news.htm> and www.seedsofcompassion.org

Ask:

- *Thinking about our definition of “hero,” why do you think His Holiness the Dalai Lama might be considered a “hero of compassion?”*

There are many ways to be a hero of compassion. The Dalai Lama is a hero of compassion toward people and also toward the environment. The Dalai Lama would like us to think about how we can notice suffering and then act in compassionate ways. We’ve talked about how people might be suffering – but there is other suffering in the world.

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- *In what ways do you think the environment might be suffering?*

Activity:

Divide class into groups of four.

Have students find pictures online or in magazines and newspapers that show examples of the environment – or nature – in crisis. For example: endangered animals, pollution, climate change, overcrowding, etc.

Each group makes a poster of four to six selected pictures.

Under each, create a caption that says:

“We can show compassion to our world by *[specify action]*.”

(Fill in the action that would help address the environmental concern. Examples: Under a picture of a polar bear, students might write “protecting our wildlife,” or under a picture of a polluted stream, students might write “cleaning up our streams,” etc.)

Wrap-up:

Have each group share their posters and captions. Post in the classroom or hallway.

Optional Chapter Book Read-aloud:

Read: Chapters Four and Five of *The Hundred Dresses*

Discuss:

- *What do you think a “hero of compassion” might have done in the story?*
- *Who had a chance to be a hero of compassion?*
- *What happened?*

Lesson Four: *When is it a challenge to be compassionate?*

Learning Objectives:

Students will:

- Understand that showing compassion sometimes takes courage.
- Understand that forgiveness can help us to act with compassion when we have been wronged.

Introduction / Opening:

Draw out stories from the children.

- *Can you think of a time when someone was compassionate toward you?*
- *How did that feel?*
- *When have you been compassionate toward others?*
- *How did that make you feel?*

You have given some good examples of compassion in action. But sometimes it is a challenge to act with compassion. Think about the story of Marko:

- *Who didn't act with compassion?*
- *What are some reasons that it might have been hard for the bystanders to act with compassion and come to his defense?*
 - Bystanders were afraid that they might be bullied.
 - They didn't know what to do.
 - They didn't feel safe.
 - They didn't know Marko.
 - They were embarrassed for him.
 - They didn't think anything would change.
- *What action could make the bystanders a "hero of compassion" for Marko?*
- *What do you think might happen if they all worked together against the bullying?*

What about Marko? What can he do? Let me read you the next part of the story:

One day Marko came to the bus stop as usual. He was early, it was raining hard, and he noticed that none of the boys who bullied him were at the bus stop. A few of the other kids were there – but no one said anything to him. Before long, he saw Harlan – one of the kids who bullied him – crossing the street. Just as Harlan stepped up on the curb, he tripped and fell – hitting his head on the sidewalk and spilling his books and papers into the wet road. Marko hesitated just a minute – not sure what to do or what he wanted to do. A car was heading right toward Harlan. Marko took a deep breath, rushed forward, put out his hand, and pulled Harlan out of the way. Then, as Harlan sat on the curb in pain, first Marko – and then the boys and girls who were bystanders - picked up Harlan's papers and books, handed them to him, and helped him to his feet. Harlan looked around the group as they clustered around Marko in silent support and protection. Marko stood tall, feeling like he finally had some new friends. He looked Harlan in the eyes, and

Discussion:

Remember the definition of a hero:

- Someone who is brave, or shows courage, strength of character, or other admirable quality.
 - Someone who is admired and looked up to for outstanding qualities or achievements.
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- *How do you think Marko was feeling?*
 - *How did Marko show courage and compassion?*
 - *Did the bystanders show courage or compassion?*
 - *How do you think Harlan felt?*
 - *What did the bystanders do that might have helped Marko act like a hero of compassion?*
 - *Could Marko's actions or the actions of the bystanders make a difference for how Harlan acts in the future?*
 - *If Harlan changes his actions, do you think Harlan can forgive him?*
 - *What could Harlan say or do so that Marko might forgive him?*
 - *What do you think happened next?*

Activity:

Divide students into pairs.

Think about what happens next. Practice what you think Harlan might say to Marko that would show compassion and help Marko forgive him. Practice how Marko could respond with compassion and forgiveness.

Wrap-up:

Have students demonstrate their skill practice for the class as time allows.

Optional Chapter Book Read-aloud:

Read: Chapters Six and Seven of *The Hundred Dresses*.

Discuss:

- *Why was it a challenge for Maddie to be a hero of compassion?*
- *What did she do to get past the challenge?*
- *When is it hard to feel or act compassionate?*
- *One way we can show compassion toward ourselves or others is through forgiveness - do you think Wanda forgave Peggy and Maddie for their unkind behavior?*
- *What did Wanda do?*
- *How did that make Peggy and Maddie feel?*
- *How do you think it made Wanda feel?*

Lesson Five: *How can you be a hero of compassion?*

Learning Objectives:

Students will:

- Develop plans for compassionate action as part of a class project.
- Demonstrate compassionate actions while implementing that plan.

Introduction / Opening:

We have learned a lot about what it means to be compassionate and how we each can be heroes of compassion in different ways. Today, I would like for us to think about what might help our school be a more compassionate place for everyone.

- *What are some things we can do as a class to make our school a more compassionate place for everyone?*

Create a chart labeled: **“How to be a Hero of Compassion”**

Have class brainstorm ideas for what they each can do to demonstrate compassion. List suggestions on the board or chart. Draw from this list as needed to spark imagination.

How to be a Hero of Compassion

1. Practice simple acts of kindness – give a smile, include others on the playground, say a kind word, apologize, forgive.
2. Share what you have with others.
3. Adopt a pet or do something to take care of animals in nature.
4. Do your part to take care of the environment.
5. Spend time with someone who is lonely.
6. Take time to listen to someone who is suffering or sad.
7. Be compassionate with yourself. Take time for reflection, practice deep breathing and think calming thoughts, to reduce your own anger.
8. Look for the good in others. Stop criticism and negative judgments.
9. Spend time with compassionate people. We catch our attitudes from others.
10. Look for compassion in actions and words around you. Observe how you and others feel when compassion is present. Notice when compassion is lacking and make a small plan to practice it.
11. Volunteer your time and effort to help make your school a better place for everyone.

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Discussion:

Review the list.

Which ideas do you think you could do?

What could WE do together as a class to make our SCHOOL more compassionate?

Activity:

Design a project to spread compassion in the school.

Help students brainstorm possible ways that the entire class could work together on a compassion project.

Examples:

- Adopt a nursing home to visit - send pen-pal notes, or pictures.
- Start a compassion club in the school.
- Write a class pledge of compassion. All sign it and share at a school assembly.
- Make a plan to include others – who might usually get left out – in playground games.
- Read to students in a kindergarten or first grade classroom.
- Mix up the seating during lunch so you get to know different students.
- Develop an environmental project such as cleaning up the playground or school grounds.

Have class choose one collaborative project.

Record the compassionate actions that will take place as a result of the project.

Assign roles and responsibilities for making sure the project is completed.

Wrap-up:

Implement the plan and share your wonderful results!