

MODULE

4

**BUILDING
EMPATHY**



MODULE 4

Building Empathy

MODULE OVERVIEW

If students completed Modules 1 to 2, they uncovered three key attributes and skills that contribute to kindness: Self-Awareness, Empathy, and Relationship Skills. While there are many skills and attributes that support kind behaviors, these three are particularly powerful. Exploration of these skills allow students to scaffold up to potentially challenging or vulnerable acts by following a natural learning progression:

- **Self-Awareness:** I understand what's going on *inside of me*.
- **Empathy:** I understand what may be going on *inside of you*.
- **Relationship Skills:** I can use empathy and caring communication to *build relationships* with others.

The majority of Modules 3-5 focus on the immersive experience of each skill, rather than learning about each skill. Each module can be implemented individually, or in part, or can be taught as a scaffolded learning progression.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will be able to exercise the Self-Awareness skills of Identifying Emotions and Accurate Self-Perception.
- Students will be able to identify, explain, and exercise the Social Awareness skills of Empathy and Perspective-Taking.

STANDARDS AND CORE COMPETENCY MAPPING

- (CASEL) Self-Awareness - Identifying Emotions, Accurate Self-Perception
- (CASEL) Social Awareness - Empathy, Perspective-taking, Respect for Others
- (CASEL) Relationship Skills - Communication



Estimated Total Time

60-80 minutes

Module 4 consists of 5 parts that can be completed in one extended session, taught individually over 5 days, or combined as needed.

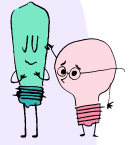


Materials

- Student Journals
([pdf download](#) | [copy Google Slides](#))
- Whiteboard, Smartboard, Digital Presentation Tool, or Chart Paper
- [Name the Emotion Deck](#)
- (Optional) [I Am Human by Susan Verde \(printed copy or read-aloud\)](#)
- (Optional) [Miro](#) Brainstorming Tool

FACILITATION TIPS

Module 4 consists of 5 parts that can be completed in one extended session, taught individually over 5 days, or combined as needed.



If you are facilitating virtually, Learn Kind recommends that:

- Parts 1–4 may be facilitated *synchronously* in whole group virtual sessions if possible, given the nuanced aspects of nonverbal cues and perceived emotions.
- *If needed*, however, some introductions and modeling can be done *asynchronously* via recorded video, and some discussion can be facilitated through tools like Flipgrid, Google Docs, or other discussion board platforms.

Note: See *Teacher Rx, Section 2* for student accessibility tips.

Prior to facilitating this module, it will be important to revisit the Classroom Commitment and Discussion Guardrails you established through the Kind & Connected Classroom Community resource, or other community guidelines you’ve put in place.

Reflection Options: Throughout the module you will see a number of opportunities for students to reflect on their learning. These opportunities are included in the Student Journals, but you may choose to facilitate reflection in a variety of ways. Consider small group discussions, exit tickets, recorded responses, discussion boards, and others. Consider the major takeaways you want your students to have, and facilitate reflections accordingly.

PART 1

Introduction to Empathy



Estimated Total Time
10–15 minutes

SEL Skills: Social Awareness: Empathy, Perspective-Taking

1. INTRODUCTION (Whole Group)

Self-awareness is a powerful piece of the kindness puzzle, but for students, it's just the beginning. The next step is to build on the understanding of our own internal processes, and realize that everyone has their own inner orchestra playing as well.

Tell students, “We each have thoughts and emotions inside of us all the time. Even though there are many similarities between us, it's important to know that each person is unique and may think, respond, and feel differently about something than you do. We need to be able to ‘put ourselves in other peoples’ shoes’, and imagine what they may be thinking, feeling, or needing in order to truly show kindness.”

“The ability to share someone else's perspective and feelings is called **empathy**.”

- **(Optional) Read-Aloud:** For additional context, read the book *I Am Human*, by Susan Verde or use this [read-aloud](#).

2. WHOLE GROUP DISCUSSION

Choose one of the following prompts:

- “Think of a moment when you were feeling a certain way (sad, excited, frustrated), and you felt totally understood by another person.”
- “Think of a moment when you were feeling very strongly, and someone helped in the exact way you needed.”

Allow students to share. Explain that when they felt understood or cared for, the other person was demonstrating empathy. How did it feel?

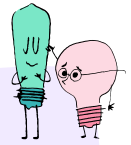
3. TEACHER MODELING

Explain that we are able to develop empathy by observing (noticing) someone's words, facial expressions, tone of voice, body language, and actions. As we do, we begin to understand what their perspective or feelings may be. Take a few moments to demonstrate this to students, modeling your own thoughts, feelings, and actions as you empathize with someone.

- **Story:** You might share a story and explain what you noticed going on with the other person, what you imagined they may be feeling, and what sorts of behaviors/actions it led to. Prepare your story in advance.
- **Role-Play:** You might ask a student to act out a scenario with you, giving them an emotion or situation (excitement, sadness, loneliness) to demonstrate. As they act out the given scenario/feeling, role-play your response, describing your observations, thoughts, and feelings.

Role Play ideas:

- You scored the game-winning goal for your team.
- You lost your favorite toy.
- You got sick and have to miss a party you've been looking forward to.

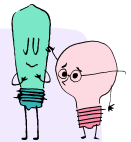
**FACILITATION NOTE**

You may be working through unique challenges while facilitating this activity. If you are virtual, you won't have the benefit of seeing all of the body language and nonverbal cues of your students. If you are in-person and do not have the benefit of full facial expressions, it is still possible to gain enough understanding to develop empathy! No matter what situation you are in, speak to these dynamics explicitly so students can begin to navigate these skills even in challenging circumstances.

4. DISCUSSION

Facilitate a discussion using the following questions:

- What are some ways we can try to understand what another person may be thinking or feeling, even when...
 - people are wearing masks and we can't see their facial expressions?
 - you're communicating virtually, either on a computer, tablet, or a phone?

**FACILITATION TIP**

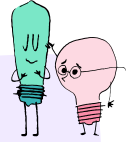
It's important to note that while empathy is usually discussed in the context of negative emotions (sadness, loneliness, fear), it's also important to be able to empathize with positive emotions and situations (excitement, joy, optimism). In fact, the ability to empathize with positive emotions can create greater connection than empathizing with negative emotions.

Wrap-up: Tell students, "Perhaps the most important attribute or skill under the umbrella of kindness, is this ability to *empathize* with other human beings, and step into their shoes for a time. There's always more going on under the surface than we realize - just like you may be feeling a certain way or dealing with something that no one in this class knows about. But if we pause and observe closely, we can find a lot of opportunities for empathy."

5. (OPTIONAL) STUDENT REFLECTION

Have students reflect on the following question in their journal:

- Describe a moment where you recently felt empathy for another person or have been able to “put yourself in their shoes”.



FACILITATION TIP

You may choose to facilitate this reflection in a variety of ways. Consider small group discussions, exit tickets, recorded responses, discussion boards, or other strategies. Consider the major takeaways you want your students to have, and facilitate reflections accordingly.

6. (OPTIONAL) VIDEOS

You can show students the following videos to further explain and model empathy.

- [Inside Out Listening with Empathy](#): This is a great demonstration of what empathy and non-empathy look like in action. Have students discuss who is showing empathy (Sadness) and who isn't (Joy).

PART 2

Empathy Charades



Estimated Total Time
15-25 minutes

**SEL Skills: Social Awareness: Empathy, Perspective-Taking;
Self-Awareness: Identifying Emotions**

1. INTRODUCTION (Whole Group or Partners)

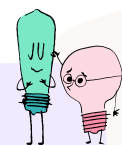
For this experience, students practice demonstrating and interpreting a variety of emotions. The practice of embodying each emotion themselves, while interpreting the emotions of others, provides a safe opportunity to deepen empathy and build emotional literacy.

2. PROCEDURE

- ① As a class, create a list of different feelings we can experience.
- ② Write student responses on the board or another visible space.
 - **Note:** You can use the Emotions Vocabulary List from Module 3 as a reference or help.
- ③ Explain that when playing charades you cannot talk, and must use facial expressions and body language to communicate (model and explain if necessary).
- ④ Model the activity by choosing an emotion and having the class guess what emotion you are trying to express.
- ⑤ Students will raise their hand when they think they know which emotion you are expressing. Call on students one at a time to share their guess and have them explain why they chose that emotion. The student with the correct guess gets to choose a new emotion and act it out for the class. If playing as a class, continue through five or six more emotions (or as many as time allows).
- ⑥ **Optional:** Partner students in socially distanced pairs. Allow enough time for them to practice a several different emotions.

FACILITATION TIP

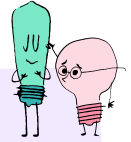
If you created an emotions anchor chart in Module 3: Building Self-Awareness, it may be helpful to display and review it as a class prior to beginning this activity.



3. GROUP DISCUSSION

When finished, reflect with students on the following questions.

- Did your classmates or partner express emotions differently than you do?
- What was difficult about this activity?
- Why is it important to be able to interpret facial expressions and body language?

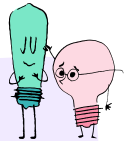


VIRTUAL FACILITATION TIP

If needed, some of the reflection prompts can be added to your digital discussion board for written or recorded responses after the completion of the activity.

4. STUDENT REFLECTION

In their journals, have students respond to the following question (write or draw): “What are some ways I can show empathy, and why is this important?”



FACILITATION TIP

You may choose to facilitate this reflection in a variety of ways. Consider small group discussions, exit tickets, recorded responses, discussion boards, or other strategies. Consider the major takeaways you want your students to have, and facilitate reflections accordingly.

PART 3

Empathy Mapping

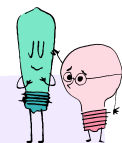


Estimated Total Time
10-15 minutes

SEL Skills: Social Awareness: Empathy;
Self-Awareness: Identifying Emotions, Accurate Self-Perception

1. INTRODUCTION (Small Group)

In this activity, students will answer several prompts that map emotions and thoughts to attitudes, behaviors, and actions, and then reflect and share. Whether virtual or in person, be sure to have students share responses because, as they find both similarities and differences, students will experience a deepening sense of community, and strengthen their empathy muscles.



VIRTUAL FACILITATION TIP

Share a recording of the introduction and prompts through your digital platform or facilitate them during a whole group virtual meeting. Students can work through the prompts on their own or during your whole group virtual meeting.

Tell students, “To understand what kinds of thought processes and emotions other people are experiencing, it’s helpful to work with others who are willing to “pop the hood” and give you a glimpse of what’s going on under the surface.”

2. PROCEDURE

- In their journal, have students complete the following prompts, considering facial expression, posture, body language, tone of voice, and specific actions or behaviors.
 - When I’m feeling angry I _____
 - When I’m feeling nervous I _____
 - When I’m feeling excited I _____

Students can either write or draw their responses.

- Facilitate each question one at a time, with students writing or drawing, and then have them share their responses with the group. Be sure to note similarities and differences as students share their responses.

PART 4

Empathy in Action



Estimated Total Time
10–15 minutes

SEL Skills: Social Awareness: Empathy, Perspective-Taking;
Relationship Skills: Communication, Social Engagement;
Self-Awareness: Identifying Emotions

1. INTRODUCTION AND DISCUSSION (Whole Group)

In this activity, students begin to put empathy into action, starting with a group brainstorm of opportunities for empathy, and ending with an individual empathy plan. To start, facilitate a discussion with students, beginning with a review of what empathy is.

Say to students: “Let’s review. Does anyone remember what empathy is?” (Reminder: “The ability to share someone else’s perspective and feelings is called *empathy*.”) Ask students to share a few real-life examples of empathy. Remind students that empathy is just as important when it comes to positive emotions (like joy and triumph) as negative emotions (like loneliness and grief).

Now say: “Sometimes we say ‘Put yourself in someone else’s shoes.’ This doesn’t mean we actually put on their shoes, but it means to imagine what it would feel like to be that person. This is an example of empathy. What does empathy look like when it’s put into action?” Have students share some ideas and guide them to consider things like facial expressions, tone of voice, body language, and other empathetic behaviors.

2. BRAINSTORM EMPATHY IN ACTION IDEAS

Tell students that it’s time to start thinking about how to put empathy into action. Select a series of emotions (or ask students to share appropriate emotions) that could readily benefit from empathy and have students brainstorm ways they could demonstrate empathy for someone they know who is feeling that way. Some emotions you might select are:

- Loneliness
- Anxiousness
- Joy
- Confusion
- Sadness
- Enthusiasm
- Triumph or Pride (for having met a goal or achieved something)

Use a whiteboard tool or brainstorming tool like [Miro](https://miro.com) to capture students’ ideas for each emotion.

3. STUDENT PLANS

In their journals, have students think about someone they know that may be experiencing one of the emotions discussed. Have them make a plan to put their empathy into action and show kindness toward that person in a specific way that is appropriate for that emotion. Plan to come together as a group (or use discussion boards) to discuss and reflect on the results after students put their empathy plans into action.

PART 5

Reflecting on Empathy



Estimated Total Time
10 minutes

**SEL Skills: Social Awareness: Empathy, Perspective-Taking;
Responsible Decision-Making: Reflecting**

1. INTRODUCTION (Individual)

This activity can be introduced in a whole group setting as a class discussion or assigned as an independent activity.

Guide students to reflect on each of their experiences in the empathy module and consider one or more of the following questions:

- How is empathy connected to kindness?
- What can you do to have more empathy?
- What are some ways you could put empathy into practice right away?

2. (OPTIONAL) ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Get ideas for additional [empathy activities](#).

3. OPTIONAL LITERATURE:

There are wonderful books that provide further exploration and discussion of empathy. If you have access to these books, they can serve as a great extension of this module.

- Those Shoes, by Maribeth Boelts
- We're All Wonders, by R.J. Palacio

Congratulations! You've reached the end of Module 4.

Choose Kindness Now

When it comes down to it, kindness is a choice – and a choice we can make over and over again. Use this simple step-by-step tool at the end of every module, or as often as needed to help students strengthen their internal kindness muscles. Since science tells us kindness is contagious, every choice can create ripples of positive impact.

① **CHOOSE** your kind act from the list below (or choose your own!)

② **PLAN** the WHO, WHEN, and WHERE for your act

WHO – Do it for a friend, family member, teacher, or yourself

WHEN – Choose when you will do the act (maybe it's right now!)

WHERE – Where will you do it? School, home, or somewhere else?

③ **DO** your kind act!

④ **OBSERVE** what happened and how you feel

⑤ **(Optional) SHARE** with the class next time you meet

- | | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|---|
| ☐ Ask someone to play | ☐ Help someone in school | ☐ Pick up litter or trash | ☐ Smile at someone | ☐ Give someone a compliment |
| ☐ Thank someone for something | ☐ Draw a picture for someone | ☐ Help with a chore at home | ☐ Go outside and enjoy nature | ☐ Take a mindful moment for yourself |