

## Extend your circle - Empathy

### EXPLANATION:

The science of kindness suggests that empathy increases self-esteem, compassion, builds relationships and a sense of community. Sometimes we become comfortable sitting in our close relationship circle. This activity assists students to reflect on who is inside and outside their circle and how building empathy and understanding helps to expand the circle of friendship and relationships.

**YEAR LEVELS:** Years 11–12

**STUDENT GROUPING:** Whole and small group discussion

**ACTIVITY LENGTH:** 40 mins approx.

### LINK TO CURRICULUM:

**Link to General Capabilities in the English curriculum:**

***Personal and social capability:***

Students develop personal and social capability in *English* by enhancing their communication skills, teamwork and capacity to empathise with and appreciate the perspectives of others. Close study of texts assists students to understand different personal and social experiences, perspectives and challenges. Students identify and express their own opinions, beliefs and responses by interacting with a range of texts. *English* actively assists students in the development of communication skills needed for analysis, research and the expression of viewpoints and arguments. Students work collaboratively in teams and also complete tasks independently as part of their learning and research endeavours.

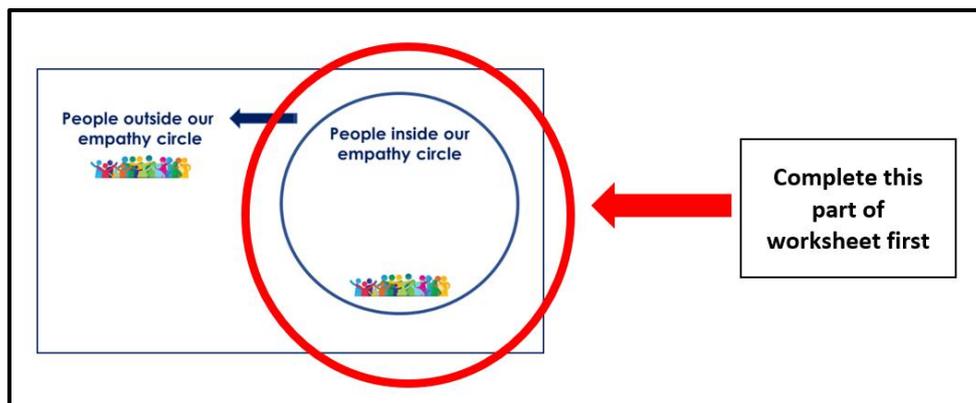


## SCOPE OF TASK

### Information about empathy:

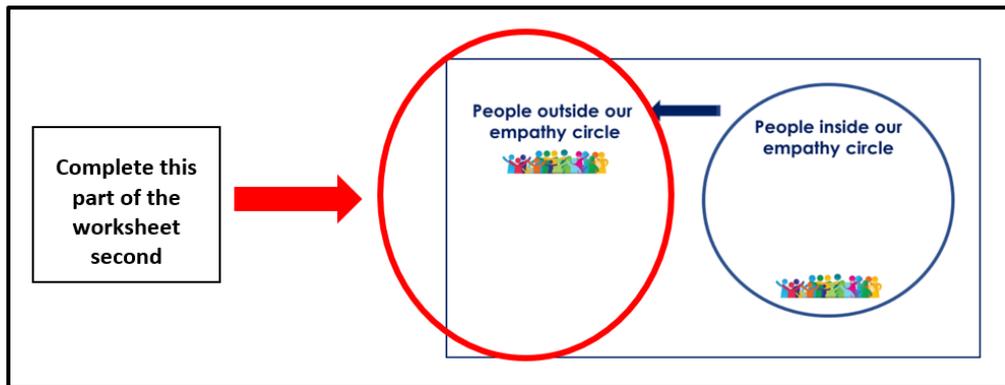
Empathy:

- the ability to understand and share the feelings of another
  - a concerned response to another person's feelings
  - to understand things from another person's perspective
  - noticing and understanding others' feelings as well as caring and valuing them
  - a key element of Emotional Intelligence - the link between self and others
1. Gather the students together in a group. Ask them questions to establish their understanding of empathy and their engagement with empathy (students' ideas can be recorded on a whiteboard). Initially ask students to share their understanding of empathy. If students need to expand their understandings, an internet search can occur (remind students of safe internet use practices).
  2. Give each student the worksheet below (or something similar can be made or drawn). Ask students to consider the people who surround them, for whom that they feel empathy. Ask them to reflect and then list the names of those people. These people are often described as part of the inner circle and are well known to an individual or with whom they have strong relationships and connections.



Discuss with the students who they identified as part of their 'inner circle' and for whom they have empathy. Did other students identify similar groups of people in their 'inner circle'? Highlight that often people have empathy and compassion for people that they relate closely to - friends, family, loved ones and people they know well.

3. Building empathetic understanding with people in the wider community has a large beneficial impact on the community creating connection. Discuss with students who are others in the community they might have empathy for and why. Ask students to complete the other half of their worksheet identifying people who might be outside of their 'inner circle' but for whom who they might have/could have empathy.



4. Once students have completed their worksheet reflect as a group on the types of people that have been categorised in the different groups. Ask questions that encourage students to think about how they can extend their empathy and possible empathetic action:
  - Who are people not in your 'inner circle' but you might have empathy for?
  - Why would you have empathy for these people?
  - Why is it important to extend your empathy to others?
  - How can empathy support relationships and community?
5. In conclusion share with the students the importance of empathy and how it can assist establish and build social connections with others. Some points to make include:
  - Empathic people have an interest in others so talk to people outside our usual social circle (remind students about safe engagement practices)
  - Curiosity expands our empathy when we, encountering lives and worldviews very different from our own
  - Challenge yourself to have a conversation with people you may not normally, for example different students at school, a neighbour or a new person at a sports club
  - When engaging in a conversation listen and hear what the other person is saying – understand their perspectives
  - Adhering to safe online practices - follow different people on social media who have diverse backgrounds who share different perspectives and viewpoints

## RESOURCES

- Whiteboard
- Worksheet (or similar class made version)

**People outside our  
empathy circle**



**People inside our  
empathy circle**

