

Resources for Learning about Empathy on Valentine's Day

By Matt Davis for *Edutopia*

Valentine's Day creates a lot of excitement for students, and of course, there are plenty of teachable moments around the day. You might cover the history of the holiday, some V-Day-themed math, or a fun, heart-shaped art project. The opportunities are endless. But Valentine's Day is also a great time to talk with your kids about compassion and caring.

Social and emotional learning (SEL) has been one of the George Lucas Educational Foundation's primary strategies for learning since its inception. And in honor of Valentine's Day, we wanted to pass along some valuable SEL-themed resources from around the web. The good news is that if you're running short on time this month, these lesson plans, tips, and toolkits can be used throughout the year, and they provide inspiring context for students, parents, and teachers. We'll start with a quick animated video that answers the question: what's the difference between empathy and sympathy?

- [Greater Good SEL Resources](#): UC Berkeley's Greater Good Science Center offers a ton of great resources for teachers. Their education section features valuable content on the latest trends in and science on SEL. One you might want to share -- "[Six Habits of Highly Empathic People](#)" -- is a great primer for anyone interested in empathetic thinking. Teachers will also find links to plenty of useful tools in the center's [resources bank](#).
- [Common Sense Media Digital Literacy and Citizenship Curriculum](#): Empathy and digital citizenship go hand-in-hand -- and that's one reason I included this resource from Common Sense Media. The curriculum on cyberbullying, with different lessons for every grade level, focuses on digital empathy. (Just click the purple cyberbullying icon for selected lessons.) Another great resource from Common Sense: "[4 Games That Encourage Empathy](#)."
- [Toolkit for Promoting Empathy in Schools](#): Start Empathy, an initiative of Ashoka, published this free comprehensive guide (available for PDF download) featuring strategies for bringing empathy into the classroom. There is something here for every stakeholder -- teachers, administrators, parents, and counselors -- and the guide provides ideas for small steps that can be taken today. Start Empathy also features links to a variety of all-star social and emotional learning resources. Their [tips section](#) offers links to insightful articles from around the web.
- [Lesson Plans for Developing Empathy](#): This package from Teaching Tolerance offers several different grade-appropriate lessons that cover empathy. Each lesson includes learning objectives, necessary materials, and suggested activities, with ideas for extended projects. For the early grades, there's a quick activity designed to help students understand empathy and identify ways to understand others' perspectives, and there are additional lessons for grades 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12.
- [Character Education Lesson Plans](#): Produced by Character Education Partnership, this collection of lesson plans covers all aspects of character education and empathy. There are lessons plans for bullying prevention, business ethics, philanthropy, patience, and much more. Lessons are available for all grades.
- [Lesson Plans for Teaching Kindness, Compassion, and Empathy](#): Looking for ways to bring kindness into your classroom? This collection from the Random Acts of Kindness Foundation is a great place to start. The lessons -- which are free when you register a free account -- provide

ideas and strategies for helping students in every grade practice kindness, caring, and compassion at school. Plus, there's also plenty of useful information in RAK's [additional classroom materials](#).

- [Philanthropy Education Lesson Plans and Resources](#): This rich collection of lessons from Learning to Give is designed to help introduce charity, community service, and other philanthropy-related topics to students of all ages. To get started, you should check out the site's great [Teacher Resources](#) section.
- [A Quick Lesson on Viewing a Different Perspective](#): This lesson idea comes from The Corner on Character blog, written by elementary counselor and character coach Barbara Gruener. In this guest post, author Tanya Kirschman shares an empathy lesson that encourages students to think about a situation from a different perspective. It's a short and sweet activity that encourages younger students to develop their empathetic-thinking skills.

Additional SEL Resources from Edutopia

Edutopia has featured some great blogs covering SEL over the years. Here are a few recent posts. But first, start with this nine-part series from Randy Taran on the Project Happiness Curriculum, "[Activities to Build Social and Emotional Skills in Elementary Students](#)."

- "[8 Pathways to Every Student's Success](#)," by Marilyn Price-Mitchell (2015)
- "[New Class Roles: Building Environments of Cooperation](#)," by Lori Desautels (2014)
- "[Why Teaching Kindness Is Essential to Reduce Bullying](#)," by Lisa Currie (2014)
- "[How to Bring Listening Circles to Your Class](#)," by Shane Safir (2014)
- "[How Reading Literature Cultivates Empathy](#)," by Elena Aguilar (2014)
- "[Five-Minute Film Festival: Videos on Kindness, Empathy, and Connection](#)," by Amy Erin Borovoy (2013)
- "[Empathy: The Most Important Back-to-School Supply](#)," by Homa Tavangar (2013)
- "[Empowering Students Through Empathy and Collaboration](#)," by Jose Vilson (2013)
- "[Teaching Students to Turn Empathy Into Action](#)," by Maurice Elias (2011)
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Matt Davis, a freelance writer and blogger from Florida, was raised in a family of educators.

http://www.edutopia.org/blog/valentines-day-learning-resources-empathy-matt-davis?utm_source=SilverpopMailing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=021115%20news-A%20%20compassion%20ngm&utm_content=&utm_term=feature2hed&spMailingID=10614375&spUserID=MjcyODEzOTQ0NzQSI&spJobID=480831245&spReportID=NDgwODMxMjQISQ