

# ***Growing Anti-racist UU's: A Curriculum for Children***

[www.uucharlottesville.org/anti-racist-curriculum/](http://www.uucharlottesville.org/anti-racist-curriculum/)

## **Empathy - Lesson 3 for Grades 3-5**

by Linda Dukes

### **LESSON OVERVIEW**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

##### **Thoughts to Ponder:**

I know everyone has feelings, and I want to get along with people who are similar to and different from me.

##### **Big Question:**

Can I imagine what someone else might be feeling, even if they are different from me?

#### **GOALS**

- To appreciate other people's experiences and feelings
- To understand being kind to others can make a big difference in their lives (and mine)
- To desire to get along with people who are both similar and different from me

#### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Participants will:

- empathize with the characters in the story
- explore what a difference they can make in others' lives by being kind
- practice empathetic responses

#### **LESSON-AT-A-GLANCE**

Opening	8 minutes
Activity 1: Story	15 minutes
Activity 2: Practicing empathetic responses	20 minutes
Closing	7 minutes

#### **LEADER PREPARATION**

There is some evidence that our brains do not react the same way when we watch people from other ethnic groups as when watching people like us. Whether or not this study holds true universally, it helps us to practice seeing others as like us, realizing that they have similar needs and feelings, and to feel empathy for them. This is not meant to negate the very real differences in each other's lived experiences.

“Compassion hurts. When you feel connected to everything, you also feel responsible for everything. And you cannot turn away. Your destiny is bound with the destinies of others. You must either learn to carry the Universe or be crushed by it. You must grow strong enough to love the world, yet empty enough to sit down at the same table with its worst horrors.”

— Andrew Boyd, *Daily Afflictions: The Agony of Being Connected to Everything in the Universe*

“Racism is not merely a simplistic hatred. It is, more often, broad sympathy toward some and broader skepticism toward others...”

— Ta-Nehisi Coates

“I call him religious who understands the suffering of others.”

— Mahatma Gandhi

“In the white community, the path to a more perfect union means acknowledging that what ails the African-American community does not just exist in the minds of black people; that the legacy of discrimination - and current incidents of discrimination, while less overt than in the past - are real and must be addressed.”

--Barack Obama

“If we are to love our neighbors, before doing anything else we must see our neighbors. With our imagination as well as our eyes, that is to say like artists, we must see not just their faces but the life behind and within their faces. Here it is love that is the frame we see them in.”

— Frederick Buechner, *Whistling in the Dark: A Doubter's Dictionary*

We need somebody who's got the heart, the empathy, to recognize what it's like to be a young teenage mom, the empathy to understand what it's like to be poor or African-American or gay or disabled or old - and that's the criterion by which I'll be selecting my judges.

-- Barack Obama

## **MATERIALS FOR LESSON**

- McKissack, Patricia C. *What is Given from the Heart*. Illustrated by April Harrison. NY: Schwartz & Wade Books, 2019. Print.
- Sornson, Bob. *Stand in My Shoes*. Golden, Colorado: Love and Logic, 2013. Print.
- Posters in the room showing people with a variety of skin shades
- Poster of emotions (if possible), such as Child Feelings Poster by Child Therapy Toys
- Sticky notes (at least 3 x 4”) cut into “talking bubbles”—enough for each child to have approximately 5
- Pencils
- Copies of “Taking it Home” for this lesson.  
(Also plan to email to families after the session.)

- Chalice and LED/battery-operated candle or matches and candle

## LESSON PLAN

### OPENING (7 MINUTES)

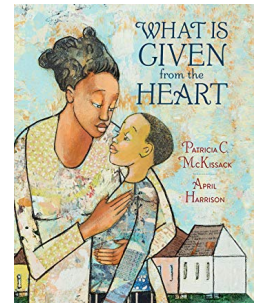
#### Description of Activity

Sit in a circle and follow the class's usual opening procedures (check in, chalice lighting, listen to chime until silence for centering, opening words, etc.).

**Suggested Chalice Lighting Words** (if class is not routinely using another reading):

We light this chalice, symbol of our faith,  
as a reminder to respect each and every person and  
to let Love guide us in our lives.

Share Joys and Concerns.



### ACTIVITY 1: STORY – 15 MINUTES

#### Description of Activity

- Read aloud the book *What is Given from the Heart*, **stopping occasionally to ask how James Otis might be feeling. Go beyond simplistic emotions** like “sad” or “happy” – use an emotions poster for ideas of feeling words or see list at the end of this lesson in Leader Resource 1.
- As you read, also ask about **James Otis’ thought process**. What is he thinking about? If the children don’t say it, point out that he is trying to imagine what Sarah would like—not just what he likes.
- Ask what the children think the pastor (minister) means when he says “What is given from the heart reaches the heart”?

### ACTIVITY 2: PRACTICING EMPATHIC RESPONSES – 20 MINUTES

#### Preparation for Activity

Decide how you want to do the scenarios and if you want to create any of your own.

#### Description of Activity

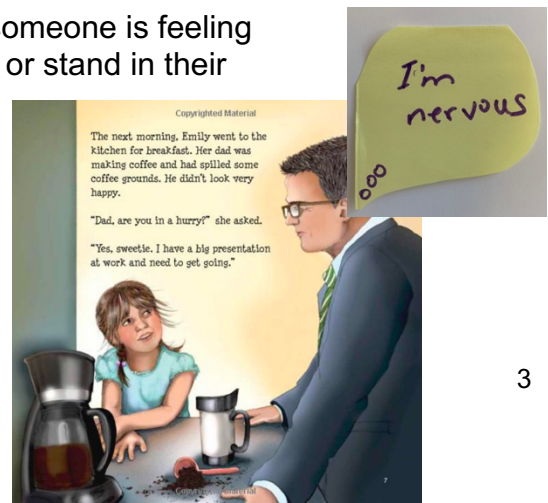
First read pages 4-5 of *Stand in My Shoes* by Bob Sornson, which include this explanation of empathy:



Empathy is when you understand how someone is feeling because you imagine what it’s like to be them or stand in their

shoes. People are grateful when you notice how they feel.

Explain that since not everyone can “stand,” it would include everyone if we say “wear,” so it would be “wear their shoes.”



Use scenarios from the book to have participants **write thinking or talking bubbles** for various characters. Be sure they write as if the character is speaking/thinking (not “*she* thinks . . .”) Then share with a buddy or act out in the group. \* Point out that **we can’t assume we can tell what someone else is thinking or feeling and need to check it out.**

\*If you have a large or particularly active group, you could vary this activity by either photocopying pages of the book or making rough tracings of them (see Leader Resource 2) and positioning them around the room. Children could go to each “station,” stopping to write their thinking/talking bubble sticky note and adding it to the page. This assumes that you’ll have enough adults to be at each station or the children can read a summary you provide of the action on each page.

Examples of scenarios from the book:

- Dad spills coffee grounds before breakfast and looks unhappy. Emily asks if he’s in a hurry, and he replies that he has a big presentation at work and needs to get going. (p. 7)
- A big kid accidentally knocks over a little kid at the bus stop. (p. 10)
- Emily’s teacher wasn’t her usual self and had red eyes. (p. 12)
- A school cafeteria worker struggled lifting a heavy, hot tray of food. (p. 14)
- Art teacher was pushing a big cart down the hall. (p. 15)
- A boy on the playground pushes Emily’s friend out of the line for the tire swing. (pp. 16-17))
- The bus driver greets Emily with a personal greeting, as usual. (p. 18)
- A girl rushes on the school bus when it is almost full and says “Oh, no! There isn’t a place for me.” (p. 20)
- Emily notices that her mom always notices how she’s feeling. (p. 22)



**After this activity, read aloud the end of the book, pages 26-29, in which Emily says that “When I care enough to notice how others feel, something changes inside of me.”**

## **CLOSING (10 MINUTES)**

### **Description of Activity**

Gather children in a circle. Say, in your own words:

Today we talked about empathy and we practiced noticing how other people are feeling. We know we can check with others to see if we understood their feeling correctly and we can do kind things.

Hand out Take it Home sheets and article as parents/caregivers arrive.

## **LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING**

When class ends, please stop for a minute with your co-teacher to . . .

- Take a deep breath together and acknowledge that you have done one thing today for racial justice. Sometimes the problems seem so huge that we need to find specific actions we can take, and this is one of them.
- Discuss if any children weren’t fully included in the lesson and how they might be in the future.

- Note any issues that you want to follow up on in the next class.
- Note any issues that you want to mention to your congregation's racial justice curriculum planners or your religious educator.

## **TAKING IT HOME**

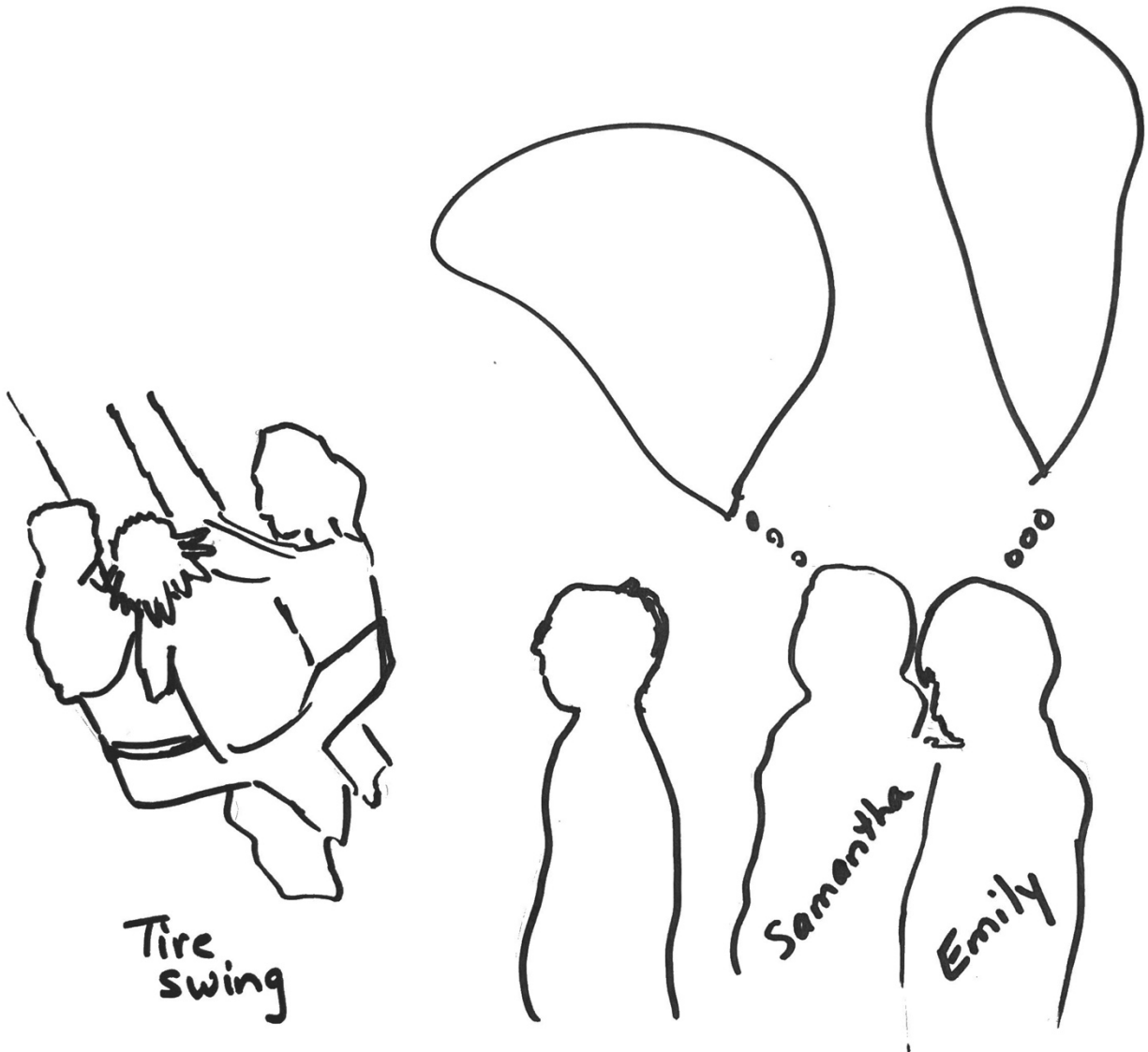
*(see Handout 1)*

**Children's List of Feeling Words:**

<b>GLAD</b>	<b>SAD</b>	<b>MAD</b>	<b>AFRAID</b>	<b>OTHER</b>
content		bugged	uncomfortable	shy
glad	blah	annoyed	startled	curious
pleased	blue	irritated	uneasy	sassy
playful	gloomy	mean	tense	weird
cheerful	rotten	crabby	anxious	confused
giddy	sad	cranky	worried	moody
calm	unhappy	grumpy	concerned	small
comfortable	empty	grouchy	timid	quiet
cozy	_____	_____	_____	jealous
safe	_____	_____	_____	embarrassed*
relaxed				guilty*
confident*				responsible**
strong				concerned**
peaceful				ashamed*
_____				caring**
_____				bored
				_____
delighted	disappointed	disgusted	alarmed	
jolly	hurt	ticked off	scared	
bubbly	lost	mad	afraid	
tickled	sorry	angry	frightened	
silly	ashamed	smoldering	fearful	
frisky	lonely	hot	threatened	
happy	down	frustrated	trembly	
proud*	hopeless	impatient	shaken	
joyful	discouraged	_____	disturbed	
excited	awful	_____	_____	
thankful	_____		_____	
great	_____			
loved/loving				
blissful				
grateful**				
satisfied				
_____				
_____				
alive	miserable	fed-up	dread	
sparkly	crushed	fuming	panicky	
wonderful	helpless	infuriated	terrified	
ecstatic	depressed	destructive	horrified	
terrific	withdrawn	explosive	petrified	
jubilant	heartbroken	violent	_____	
_____	unloved	enraged	_____	
_____	_____	furious		

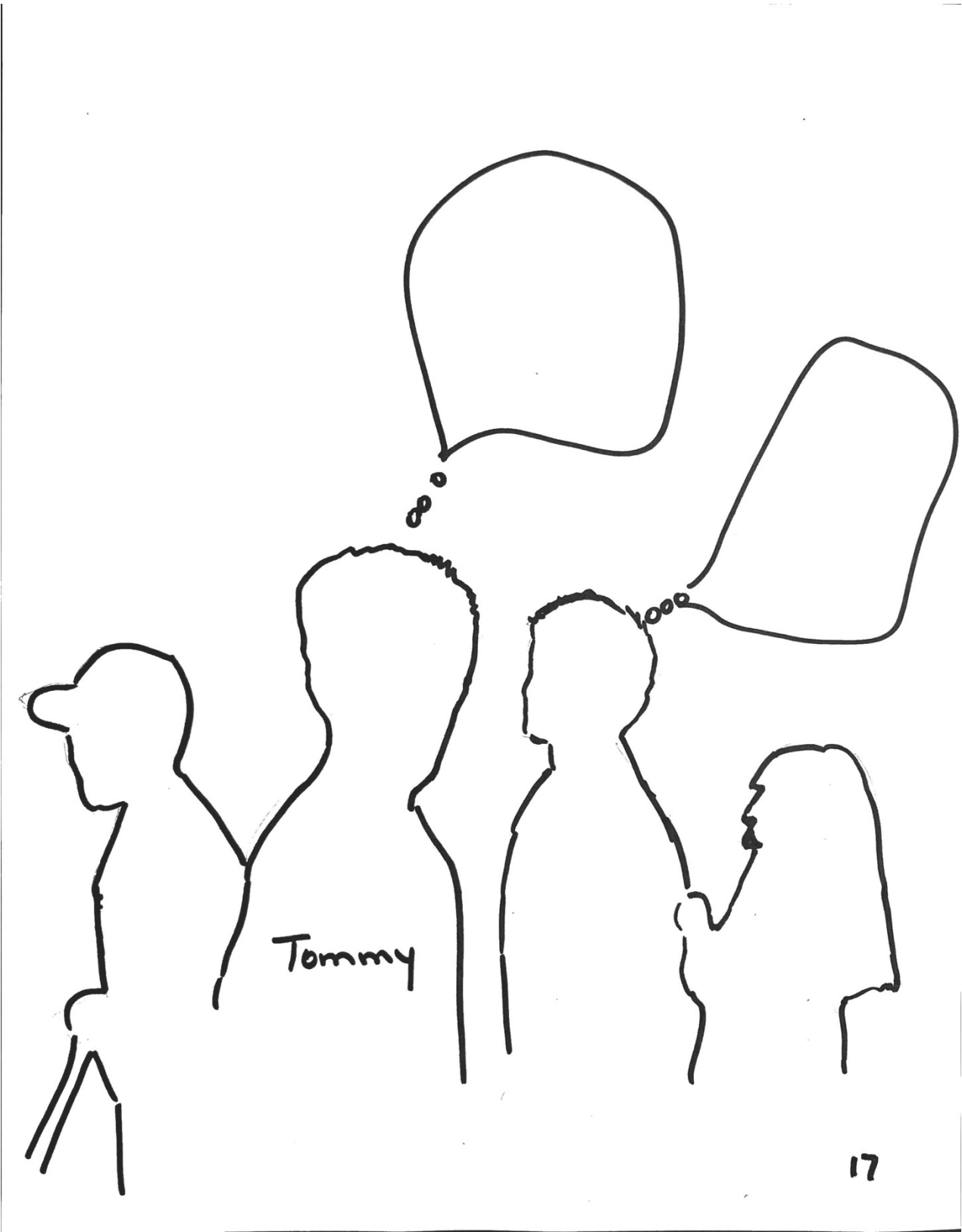
\*self-conscious emotions

\*\*empathic emotions



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## Take It Home! 3<sup>rd</sup> Racial Justice Lesson

In our classes we are learning about **empathy**. We say that “empathy is when you understand how someone is feeling because you imagine what it’s like to be them or wear their shoes.”

Teaching Tolerance’s Social Justice Standards says “Students will respond to diversity by building empathy, respect, understanding and connection” (<http://www.tolerance.org/anti-bias-framework>; click on the link near the bottom).

We read *What is Given from the Heart* by Patricia McKissack.



“Misery loves company,” Mama says to James Otis. It’s been a rough couple of months for them, but Mama says as long as they have their health and strength, they’re blessed. One Sunday before Valentine’s Day, Reverend Dennis makes an announcement during the service– the Temples have lost everything in a fire, and the church is collecting anything that might be useful to them. James thinks hard about what he can add to the Temple’s “love box,” but what does he have worth giving? With her extraordinary gift for storytelling, McKissack—with stunning illustrations by Harrison—delivers a touching, powerful tale of compassion and reminds us all that what is given from the heart, reaches the heart.

We practiced empathy by hearing scenarios and suggesting what a character might be feeling and what could be said to them in a caring way.

We want our children to be aware of other people’s feelings, to understand that they need to check with the other person to see if their assumptions are correct, and to respond to the other person with care.

These goals fit with the second of the Four Goals of Anti-Bias Education, listed below.

### FOUR CORE GOALS OF ANTI-BIAS EDUCATION

From Louise Derman-Sparks & Julie Olsen Edwards, 2010. *Anti-Bias Education for Young Children & Ourselves*

1. Each child will demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social identities.
  2. Each child will express comfort and joy with human diversity; accurate language for human differences; and deep, caring human connections.
  3. Each child will increasingly recognize unfairness, have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts.
  4. Each child will demonstrate empowerment and the skills to act, with others or alone, against prejudice and/or discrimination.
- .....