

**Tool 5.4**

Mobilizing through art and dialogue

CLARITY Competence Area:

Taking collective action for climate resilience, ecosystem regeneration, and societal transformation

GreenComp Competence Area:

Acting for sustainability

Why use this tool?

This tool is about communicating about climate change and climate resilience, as well as engaging with a diverse audience, in ways that feel exciting, fulfilling and enriching for all parties involved. Some activities mobilize the arts to make environmental issues and climate change tangible, as well as encourage creativity and connection (with each other and with nature), so as to foster local action among the wider community. Other activities acknowledge the difficulty of tackling climate change in a polarized world, with multiple simultaneous constraints weighing on us.

Activity 5.4.3

Communicating with Empathy

Overview

This activity has been crafted to introduce learners to the concept of empathy, and how they can communicate with each other in an empathetic way. As part of this activity, learners will create a 'shoe' and use it to help take the perspective of someone else - i.e., walking in their shoes.

Curriculum linkage

Language & Literature, Civics & Social Studies (Psychology) and Arts.

Competences built

Courage, collaboration, accountability, humility, care, perspective-taking and active listening.

Prep Work

Make the situation cards. These cards can be made with paper or cardboard, and should have written or drawn on them a negative situation that your learners might encounter – for example, feeling like there is nobody to talk to about their concerns regarding climate change. Consider the lives and social dynamics of your learners. What challenges might they face? Try to describe situations that are relevant to them.

Competences/activities to practice first by the teacher

Activity 3.3.1 "Active Listening" can offer a solid foundation for this activity, but is not required.



BASIC INFO

Age range:

7+

Duration:

40-60 minutes

Group size:

Small groups of 2-6

Level of difficulty:

Intermediate

Materials/space required:

10-20 situation cards, whiteboard and/or large piece of paper, markers

Location:

Indoor

Engagement of external stakeholders:

No



Levels in the activity

1. Empathy Shoes
2. New habits
3. Empathy Jar

Level 1: Empathy Shoes

1. Begin by asking the class: "What is empathy?". Allow time for answers and discussion. You may choose to create a mind map of their responses. Then explain that empathy means understanding and caring about how someone else is feeling. It's like stepping into their shoes to see the world from their point of view.
2. Next, ask: "What does it mean to communicate with empathy?" Allow time for answers and discussion. You may choose to add their responses to the mind map. Then explain that communicating with empathy goes beyond speaking and hearing the other person's words – communicating with empathy requires all participants in a conversation to acknowledge the feelings and perspectives of each other. It's like stepping into their shoes just as they step into yours.
3. Make your shoe: give each learner a piece of paper and a marker and have them draw their own shoe. Allow the learners time to personalize the shoe and make it their own. This shoe will represent them, their feelings, and their unique perspective in the world.
4. Situation cards:
 - a. Invite the learners to pair up, and give each pair of learners a situation card.
 - b. Ask the learners, "How would you feel in this situation?"
 - c. Allow the learners time to share and talk within their pairs.
 - d. Have the learners switch shoes with their partner to symbolize them stepping into each other's shoes.
 - e. Give them time to reflect on each other's shoes, and to consider each other's perspectives and feelings.
 - f. Ask your learners to consider how they might feel in the situation now that they are taking on the perspective of the other person – i.e. wearing that person's shoes.
 - g. Give the learners time to reflect and share their thoughts.



- h.** Encourage the learners to have a new conversation about the situation where each partner considers the perspectives and feelings of the other. The two shoes together, now make a pair.

Level 2: New Habits

1. Challenge the learners to practice communicating with empathy for the next week. If applicable, have them record any attempts or insights in a journal.
2. When the week is over, invite learners to share their experiences with the class.

Level 3: Empathy Jar

1. Place a jar with a small hole or slit in a common area of the class. Label this jar the Empathy Jar. Next to the jar, place slips of paper that learners can use to write down their experiences with empathy.
2. Invite learners to include their name or anonymously put the slips into the jar.
3. Once a week, take one slip of paper out and read it aloud for the class to consider and reflect upon.



Dos and don'ts

Do:

Do craft relevant and age-appropriate situation cards, pair up learners in a way that allows them to broaden their perspective.

Don't

Don't craft situation cards that could be traumatic or otherwise inappropriate.

Adaptations:

- If your learners are struggling to understand what to do, then inviting a pair of volunteer learners to model the activity in front of the class is a good way to get them started.
- If your learners already have a foundation in empathy and self-reflection, you can invite them to create their own situation cards.
- If you wish to emphasize the arts and crafts portion of the activity, feel free to get creative with the materials the learners can use to make their shoes.
- If your learners struggle with making their shoes, consider asking prompting questions that might spark their creativity and self-expression.



- If your learners struggle with expressing emotions, consider offering them a pictogram where emotions are expressed.
- We invite you to adapt this activity to the specific needs of your learners, including by taking into account their neurodiversity. When adapting tools and activities for neurodivergent learners, please note it is not about treating others how you want to be treated, but how they want to be treated. Ask, listen, and stay open to different ways of learning and engaging.

Suggestions for situation cards

Here are some examples of situation cards, which you can adapt so they are relevant for your learners:

The Pollinator Advocate

You suggest creating a small pollinator garden on campus/in your community to support local bee populations, but your friends dismiss the idea and decide to spend their free time scrolling social media instead.

Walking in their shoes: How might you feel when your environmental concerns are brushed aside? What support would you need to continue advocating for change?

The Solo Cleaner

You organize a campus/neighborhood cleanup day and show up with supplies, but only two other people arrive while dozens who said they'd come don't show up.

Walking in their shoes: How does it feel to take initiative for environmental action but feel unsupported? What would motivate you to keep organizing despite low turnout?

The Recycling Champion

You've been carefully sorting recyclables at home or in your dorm/shared housing, but you discover your housemates have been throwing everything into the general waste bin, undoing your efforts.

Walking in their shoes: How would you feel seeing your environmental efforts seemingly wasted? How would you approach this situation with your housemates?



The Water Warrior

During a group discussion about rising utility costs, you suggest simple water-saving measures, but someone responds with "We're not in a drought, chill out" and others laugh.

Walking in their shoes: How does it feel when your environmental awareness is seen as overreacting? What would help you continue sharing sustainable ideas?

The Conscious Consumer

You choose to wear thrifted clothes and bike instead of driving to reduce your carbon footprint, but classmates make comments like "Are you broke?" or "That's so extra."

Walking in their shoes: How would you feel when your sustainable choices are misunderstood or mocked? What support would help you stay confident in your values?

The Energy Saver

You suggest turning off lights and electronics when not in use in shared spaces, but your family or roommates say "You're being dramatic, it's not that expensive" and continue wasteful habits.

Walking in their shoes: How does it feel when practical environmental actions are dismissed as unnecessary? How would you want others to respond to your suggestions?

The Plant-Based Pioneer

You decide to try more plant-based meals to reduce your environmental impact, but friends constantly question your choices and make jokes about "rabbit food" every time you eat together.

Walking in their shoes: How would you feel having your dietary choices constantly scrutinized? What kind of response from friends would feel supportive?



The Transport Transformer

You choose to walk, bike, or use public transport instead of driving, but friends regularly complain about your "inconvenient" transportation choices when making group plans.

Walking in their shoes: How does it feel when your sustainable choices are seen as burdensome to others? What would help you maintain your commitment while staying connected to friends?

References

This tool was created and designed by Legacy17 and inspired by the activity Empathy: Put Yourself in Someone Else's Shoes, by The Mustard Seed, found [here](#), which can be used as an additional resource for teachers desiring blank print-outs of shoes. This might be especially helpful for younger learners.

If you are interested in how art processes related to the topic of walking in someone else's shoes can favor social relationships and collaboration, please take a look at this article:

- Martínez-López de Castro, R.; Alvariñas-Villaverde, M.; Pino-Juste, M.; Domínguez-Lloria, S. Designing and Evaluation of an Artistic Experience for the Development of Empathic Capacity: "Stepping into Others' Shoes". *Brain Sci.* **2022**, *12*, 1565. <https://doi.org/10.3390/brainsci12111565>



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