

DEVELOPING EMPATHY IN THE VICTORIAN AGE

A negotiation education activity created by

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Summary

The focus of the activity is developing empathy through role plays connected to George Eliot's poem entitled Count That Day Lost. Emphasis will be placed upon the hot topic of women's position in Victorian England by shedding light upon specific vocabulary items.

Learning Objectives

Empathy is the main concept I would like students to understand and successfully apply. Yet, while explaining its concept I have to talk about other concepts as well. For instance:

- productive conversation/ non-productive conversation
- maximizing/ minimizing
- bypassing
- listener
- talker

Students will learn key skills like

- inquiry
- advocacy
- acknowledgement

Lead-in / Preparation

(a) Students should be provided with background information about women rank in the Victorian Era to deepen their understanding and enjoyment of the poem and to fuel them with substantial material so they may ask proper questions, show advocacy, show acknowledgement and hold a productive conversation. I believe that equipping students with sufficient vital comprehensible material about the target topic and successfully using/practicing the raw material (the negotiation terminology needed) bring about a productive conversation.



Background Information

- Back then, in the Victorian Era (1837 – 1901) women were denied because of their gender.
- Women could not occupy high-ranking jobs. They could not take on professions like doctors, nurses, accountants, lawyers, poets, etc. The jobs they could pursue were teaching and babysitting.
- Furthermore, women could not vote, have a bank account or own property.
- What is more, in Victorian England it was believed that women belong to the domestic sphere; they were expected to provide their husbands with a clean home, food on the table and raise their children.
- Besides, women were not taken seriously, therefore, the poet used a male pen name which is George Eliot to make sure her literary works will be published and read by the Victorian Society.

(b) Students should also be equipped with diction or vocabulary items closely-connected to the topic of women status. (See Key Vocabulary / Phrases section for lexis)

Estimated Class-Time Required

Two successive lessons for the activity

- Step 1 dictionary definition – 1,5 min.
- Step 2 explaining 6 tips for developing empathy (and talking about relevant concepts I have mentioned in the item of key vocabulary). – 55 min.
- Step 3 listening to a short movie about the importance of empathy – 3,5 min.
- Step 4 acting out – 25 min.
- Step 5 reflection worksheet – 5 min.

Description of Activities

First step: dictionary definition of the negotiation term, *empathy*.

Empathy is defined as being able to share the feelings of someone else, by imagining yourself as that person. (Emphasis is placed upon demonstrating understanding of women feelings and attitude. Yet, agreement or disagreement should not be heard during the conversation held).

Second step: To apply the negotiation principles which I gained from the NESI I will explain or act out the following six tips for developing empathy.

<https://www.negotiate.org/your-resources/negotiation-and-empathy-2>



1. Recognize and identify emotions

Being empathic means you are able to recognize the other party's emotions and inexperienced negotiators are less adept at this. To identify another's emotions it helps if you can easily identify your own. Make it a habit to monitor how you are feeling: [nervous](#), angry, frustrated, stressed, happy, sad? Then it becomes easier to identify another's emotions using the following skills.

2. Be aware of nonverbals

Identifying emotion is helped by reading body language. Particularly look for discrepancies between the other party's words and their body language and note changes in tonality.

3. Employ skillful questioning

It's hard to understand the other party and you can't empathize with their concerns unless [you ask them](#). Do this by creating the right information gathering and sharing atmosphere using open-ended questions. These are the 'how...?', 'what...?', 'why...?', 'where...?', 'when...?', 'which...?' and 'who...?' types of questions. They usefully signal your interest in the other party's response. Avoid using closed-ended questions, usually answered with a one word 'yes' or 'no'. These can cause the other party to feel defensive and to close down.

4. Actively listen to understand

Asking the right [open-ended questions](#) is a good start. To demonstrate empathy requires that you express a sincere interest in the other's responses and try to [fully understand their viewpoint](#). Genuineness and sincerity are critical. Most of us recognize when 'empathy' is used manipulatively to get information. You need to show a keen interest in the other's concerns. Listen very attentively.

5. Remain neutral

When listening, it is hard to really hear another's views without agreeing or disagreeing. Passing judgment is the enemy of empathizing; get into the other's mindset and determine how it makes sense for them. Separate facts from feelings.

6. Demonstrate your understanding

Showing you understand the other's concerns without judging is expressing empathy.

- Nonverbally show you are listening (attentive eye contact, head nod, smile)
- Verbally show you are listening ("Mm-hmm"; "I see"; "Really"; "Right")
- Encourage them to continue ("Go on..."; "And then..."; "Tell me more...")
- Use reflective questioning and summarizing techniques ("So, what you
- Show you understand both the facts and the feelings expressed
- Match your experience with theirs ("If I were in your shoes, I would feel the same way...")

As you demonstrate empathy, enjoy observing how others empathize with you.



Third step: students will listen to an animated short video about empathy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UzPMMSKfKZQ>

Fourth step: role play, (1) one of my class students will take the role of an English woman from the Victorian Era who shows her frustration and anger due to the disregard and underestimation women experience. In return, I will take the role of an active listener who empathizes with her. (2) After that, I will take the role of the persecuted English woman and a different student will be the attentive listener. (3) Next, two other students would volunteer and play both roles.

Key Vocabulary / Phrases

Listener, talker, productive/ stuck conversation, maximizing, minimizing, bypassing, problem solving, inquiry, advocacy, acknowledgement, collaborative work.

Examples of relevant lexis

- marginalized / margin
- persecuted
- underestimated
- dehumanized
- allowed
- disallowed, banned, forbidden, trapped
- freedom / liberty
- civil rights / basic rights
- to privilege
- to appreciate
- to regard somebody highly
- values / morality / ethics
- inferior to
- superior to / superiority
- ultimate power
- masculine Victorian Society
- considerate to
- equality / inequality

Assessment

After the activity, ask students to write a reflection to determine whether they have gotten the concept of *empathy* or not. Also, the students' level of participation might be a good indication.



Reflection



Hand out a worksheet which includes the following questions:

- What is the most important thing you learned in this activity?
- What made you curious?
- If you worked with other students in this activity describe the experience and how do you think it went?
- If you were given the opportunity to carry out the activity, what would you do differently?
- What can you do with what you gained today?



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