

# 8th GRADE: BULLYING

## LESSON 3 OVERVIEW

### Training Your Brain to Be Compassionate



#### Lesson Time:

30 Minutes

#### Materials Provided:

- Video: "[The Great Opportunity of the Teen Brain & Empathy](#) - Dr Daniel Siegel" (Cued to the 3:36 mark, end at 8:20)
- Handout: "Their Shoes" (printed one per student)

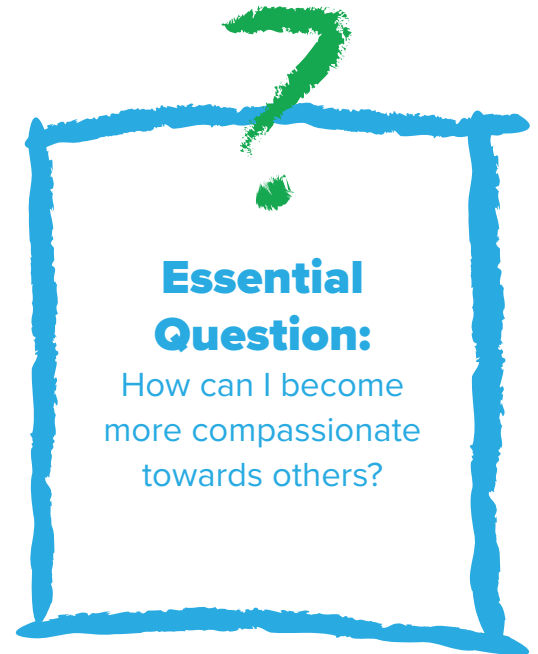
#### Materials Needed:

- Projector with Video/Audio Capability
- Dry erase board and marker

#### Objectives:

Students will be able to...

1. Reflect on the meaning of compassion.
2. Understand that we have the power to change our brains.
3. Engage in activities found to expand the brain's capacity for compassion.



# Training Your Brain to Be Compassionate



## Lesson Introduction: (2 minutes)

Have you ever noticed how different you are now from a few years ago? (*Take responses.*) This is because your brain is going through so many changes and so quickly! During adolescence, our brains grow and change more than any other time during our lives. During this time of rapid growth and change, we have the power to implement improvements -- or establish poor habits. It's important to recognize that we have this power; therefore, it's an important time to do all we can to create well-being in our lives.

American Romanticist Henry David Thoreau once said: "A single footstep will not make a path on the earth, so a single thought will not make a pathway in the mind. To make a deep physical path, we walk again and again. To make a deep mental path, we must think over and over the kind of thoughts we wish to dominate our lives." When we do something over and over again, we get better at it. It is because we are creating a pathway for our brains...let me show you.

*(Draw a rough sketch of a brain on the dry erase board. Mark a point A on one side of the brain and a point B on the other. Lightly draw a line from point A to point B. Explain that the very light line is like doing something one time. Draw the same line again, a little darker this time; again, draw the line darker; and again, draw the line darker.)*

## Activity 1: Video - The Great Opportunity (7 minutes)

Let's watch a short video that demonstrates and explains this concept of creating new pathways and habits. (*Play [The Great Opportunity of the Teen Brain & Empathy - Dr Daniel Siegel](#) - Start at 3:36 and end at 8:20.*)

Earlier in his video, Dr. Siegel defines compassion as:

1. The ability to "feel" another person's feelings.
2. The act of considering what you might do to ease the suffering of another person.
3. Taking action to actually reduce the suffering of another person.

He coined the word "mindsight". A person with mindsight has insight into their own feelings, empathy or compassion for others and integration or the honoring of individual differences. We learned in the video that practicing something makes doing that task easier. It doesn't matter if it is a physical activity such as playing ball or playing the tuba, or if it more of a mental activity such as learning multiplication tables or even how to spell. Building the skills to be compassionate and empathetic takes practice, as well. Practicing makes possessing these skills and qualities easier.

## Activity 2: Compassion Exercise (3 minutes)

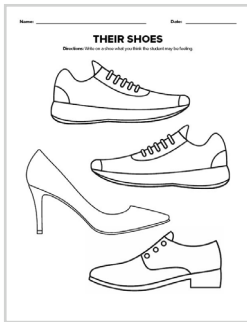
We are going to practice being compassionate by completing this Compassion Exercise. I want you to close your eyes and visualize someone you know. It does not have to be a close friend, or even a friend at all. It may simply be someone you meet in the halls on a regular basis or someone with whom you have class but don't always speak. Now, with your eyes closed and your attention on visualizing this person, I want you to say to yourself:

1. "Just like me, this person is seeking some happiness in his/her life." (*Pause 10 seconds*)
2. "Just like me, this person is trying to avoid suffering in his/her life." (*Pause 10 seconds*)
3. "Just like me, this person has known sadness, loneliness, and despair." (*Pause 10 seconds*)
4. "Just like me, this person is seeking to fill his/her needs." (*Pause 10 seconds*)
5. "Just like me, this person is learning about life." (*Pause 10 seconds*)

You may open your eyes. This may seem like an abnormal thing to do or unusual thoughts to have, but that's only because it is a new thing to you. If we practice these thoughts, then just like Thoreau's pathway through the woods, this path will become worn. Compassion will become a normal behavior, an automated reaction. You can see how this would take intentional practice, but it would be life changing.

# Core Lesson (cont)

## Slide/Handout



## Lesson Script/Talking Points

### Handout: Their Shoes (17 minutes)

Many times we think of empathy as walking in another's shoes, so I am giving you someone else's shoes. (*Distribute "Their Shoes" handout.*) This is another means of exercising compassion. I am going to read some stories from students who have been bullied. After each I want you to write on a shoe what you think they may be feeling.

*(You may choose to use these stories or some of your own. Time remaining will determine how many stories you share. After each story, give students time to write their feelings then include a sharing time and invite students to add what they might do to help the student feel better, to ease the suffering. Additional stories may be found at <https://pacerteensagainstabullying.org/advocacy-for-others/real-teens-speak-out/>)*

### Story 1

I am in 8th grade, and I have suffered from some bullying. Rumors have swirled around about me a lot, and I have been name called so much that I don't remember the last time there was a day without someone saying something to me. My big gap between my two front teeth has always been the biggest joke for the boys, but for the girls it was my outfits. Every day boys would say how they could park huge cars between my teeth, and every day someone asks me when I am gonna get braces. But with girls it's so much worse. Even though the boys are picking my biggest insecurity, the girls have made my choice of outfits my new biggest insecurity. I used to feel good about my style. Every day girls tell me that I dress ugly or what I am wearing is gross. I wear jeans and do not cuff them once, and they make a big deal out of it. My 'friends' call me Bob the Builder and tell me my outfits are 'unique,' but the same friend once told me that when she thinks outfits are ugly, she calls them unique. I have this clothing app on my phone, and I put something on my private Snapchat story about what my style should be rated out of 5 stars. Only two people answered. One rated 3 out of 5 stars and the other rated 3 out of 5 stars. I think the rest of the people on my private story did not want to be mean even though they are at school. I cry all the time - at school, at home, in the car, everywhere. My life is not the best outside of school, and school has not made it any easier.

- Write in the shoe what this girl might be feeling and what it's like to be in her shoes.
- Someone share what you think she's feeling? (*Allow students to respond.*)
- What could someone else do to help this person? (*Allow students to respond.*)

### Story 2

All through my elementary school life I was very social and had many friends. But then it all hit me when middle school started. I wasn't physically bullied or anything. But this one girl - let's call her M - she ruined my life. We had been friends ever since 5th grade. And she tricked me into doing things. When I didn't do them for her, she hurt me. By the end of my 6th grade year, all the 7th and 8th grade girls that used to be my friends turned away from me. I am currently in 7th grade and I had to switch schools.

- Write in the shoe what this girl might be feeling and what it's like to be in her shoes?
- Someone share what you think she's feeling? (*Allow students to respond.*)
- What could someone else do to help this person? (*Allow students to respond.*)

### Story 3

I'm 15 right now and I have been bullied since Grade 2. When I was little, I was bullied for not being strong and athletic. I worked really hard and soon got good at sports, but it didn't stop. I could make one mistake, and

## Core Lesson (cont)

people would use that against me. In my 6<sup>th</sup> grade year, I started being bullied because I was still short. People went along with it and all 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders in my school would bully me. They made jokes about me, laughed at me, chose me last, called me stubby, and got other people to make fun of me too. Last year, a kid set me up to prank me for a reason that I don't understand. He had help with it and his friends made everything worse. I am still being bullied to this day and can't shake them off. I have always been a target, but I do nothing wrong to them. It's just like they picked me and have never moved on.

- Write in the shoe what this boy might be feeling and what it's like to be in his shoes.
- Someone share what you think he's feeling? (*Allow students to respond.*)
- What could someone else do to help this person? (*Allow students to respond.*)

### Story 4

I haven't been outright bullied in the usual ways, but there's this person who excludes me constantly. Whenever I'm around her, I get this feeling of insecurity. Her presence alone makes me feel that way. She's really popular and her body language tells me I don't belong. She looks the other way whenever I speak and completely ignores me. She always makes me feel shoved aside. Sometimes after school, she walks right past my house with her friends and even if I'm standing right there, she never invites me to join them. It's like I'm invisible. I tried to tell myself that I was just being paranoid or that it was all in my head. But it's not. This is real.

- Write in the shoe what this girl might be feeling and what it's like to be in her shoes.
- Someone share what you think she's feeling? (*Allow students to respond.*)
- What could someone else do to help this person? (*Allow students to respond.*)

### Closing: Essential Question (1 minute)

**How can I become more compassionate towards others?** (*Allow students to respond.*)

In conclusion, the way to make true difference is for every person to create the habit of showing compassion. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness: Only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: Only love can do that." This quotation is featured at [JamariTerrellWilliams.org](https://www.jamarterrellwilliams.org) to remind people that the solution to ending all of this hurt and hatred is love and kindness. In these lessons we have learned to recognize types of bullying, to speak up for those in need, to help those who are struggling, and to be more compassionate toward everyone. I will close by telling you that Jesse Jackson once said, "Never look down on anybody unless you're helping them up." Let's live to help people up!

### References:

1. Mind with Heart. (2015, January 3). The Great Opportunity of the Teen Brain & Empathy – Dr. Daniel Siegel [Video] YouTube. Retrieved January 12, 2020, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6dZJsi9QPkE>.
2. Pacer Center's Teens Against Bullying. (2020). Real Teens Speak Out. Retrieved from <https://pacerteensagainstabullying.org/advocacy-for-others/real-teens-speak-out/>.

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# THEIR SHOES

**Directions:** Write on a shoe what you think the student may be feeling.

