

The story of Derek Redmond and his Dad - Empathy

EXPLANATION:

Empathy is understanding another person's feelings or situation and imagining what it might be like to experience these things yourself. Can you put yourself in Derek Redmond or his Dad's shoes?

YEAR LEVELS: Years 11–12

STUDENT GROUPING: Whole and small group discussion

ACTIVITY LENGTH: 40 mins approx.

LINK TO CURRICULUM:

Link to General Capabilities in the English curriculum:

Information and communication technology (ICT) capability:

There is a particular focus in *English* on ICT through the use of digital texts and on understanding and creating multimodal texts. For example, students explore the effects of sound and image as they consider how ideas are communicated in digital texts. They use digital technologies when they access, manage and use information and when creating their own texts. They develop skills in reading, viewing and responding to digital and multimodal texts and analysing the effects of the use of different mediums on meaning and interpretation.

Personal and social capability:

Students develop personal and social capability in *English* by enhancing their communication skills, teamwork and capacity to empathise with and appreciate the perspectives of others. Close study of texts assists students to understand different personal and social experiences, perspectives and challenges. Students identify and express their own opinions, beliefs and responses by interacting with a range of texts. *English* actively assists students in the development of communication skills needed for analysis, research and the expression of viewpoints and arguments. Students work collaboratively in teams and also independently as part of their learning and research endeavours.

SCOPE OF TASK

Set the scene: Summer Olympics of 1992. Quarter finals of the 400-metre sprint. British athlete Derek Redmond was a favourite for the gold medal. The starters gun fired and the athletes burst out of the blocks. Almost halfway through the race Derek Redmond was in the lead and then disaster struck. He tore his hamstring and he collapsed on the track. The whole stadium could see the agony and distress so evident in his face and movements. Medical attendants ran to assist him but all became aware, as he waved them away and struggled to his feet, that he was going to finish what he had trained for his whole life. No one seemed to know what to do — even the race officials.



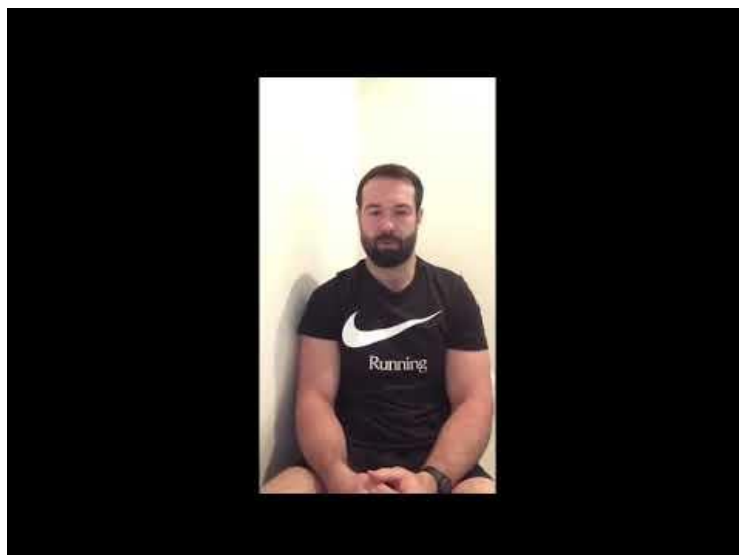
As the entire stadium looked on, an old elderly man jumped the track barriers and ran onto the track. As officials attempted to stop him, he pushed them away. The man was Derek Raymond's father, Jim. He ran up beside Derek and put his arms around him saying, *'You don't have to do this son'*. Derek replied, *'Yes, I do'* — to which his father responded, *'Then we'll finish this race together, son.'*

Supported by his father with agony yet strength etched on Derek's face they continued down the track. Tears streamed down his father's face. More officials approached and Jim waved them away — he would not let them stop his son.

Soon the crowd was on its feet and the crowd roared. To their defending applause Derek crossed the finishing line.

This example of strength, determination and love has become a defining moment of the modern-day Olympics.

1. Gather the students together in a group. Share with them the introductory video from Aaron Woods. Aaron Woods is an Australian rugby league footballer who plays as a prop for the Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks in the NRL and Australia at international level. He shares his experiences of empathy and introduces the activity:



2. Share the story and then play the YouTube clip of the event:



3. Ask the students to reflect on the video – how did it make them feel?
4. Ask students what empathy is (**Empathy** is the capacity to understand or feel what another person is experiencing from within their frame of reference, that is, the capacity to place oneself in another's position). Ask a student to scribe on the whiteboard people's ideas
5. Define the task for the students: You are going to break into two groups and put yourselves into the shoes of either Derek or Jim (his Dad):
 - Can you consider how they felt?
 - What might they have felt?
 - What do you feel for that person?
 - What do you feel for the winner of the race?
 - What do you feel for the officials – are these feelings different?
 - Why is the event so emotive?
6. After a 10 -15 mins discussion bring the students back together and compare the various ways they felt for the different people involved.
7. Ask students to relate empathy to their daily experience – have they felt empathy for others – can they give examples?
8. Finish the discussion with highlighting the importance of empathy in our everyday engagements.

RESOURCES

Online video: Derek Redmond's Emotional Olympic Story - Injury Mid-Race | Barcelona 1992 Olympics, Olympics channel sources from: <https://youtu.be/t2G8KVzTwfw>