

A wrinkled heart — Compassion

EXPLANATION:

Chrysanthemum loves her name but on her first day of school, she gets teased for its uniqueness. But when her music teacher reveals she is naming her baby Chrysanthemum, everyone wants to change their name to a flower! This activity explores the impact of teasing and how showing compassion and care towards others promotes kindness.

YEAR LEVELS: Years 1–3

STUDENT GROUPING: Whole group activity

ACTIVITY LENGTH: 45 mins approx.

LINK TO CURRICULUM:

Learning Continuum of Personal and Social Capability

Social awareness

This element involves students recognising others' feelings and knowing how and when to assist others.

Students learn to show respect for and understand others' perspectives, emotional states and needs. They learn to participate in positive, safe and respectful relationships, defining and accepting individual and group roles and responsibilities. Students gain an understanding of the role of advocacy in contemporary society and build their capacity to critique societal constructs and forms of discrimination, such as racism and sexism. In developing and acting with personal and social capability, students:

- appreciate diverse perspectives
- contribute to civil society
- understand relationships.

SCOPE OF TASK:

Compassion involves feeling emotions such as kindness, empathy, respect and sympathy. It is the desire to help people and includes action. Actions taken help or support another person and demonstrate care for others. This activity assists students to consider their environment as a community of learners who care about each other and do their best to keep everyone safe and comfortable.

1. Activate student's prior knowledge about compassion. Write students definitions about compassion on the whiteboard. Questions could include:

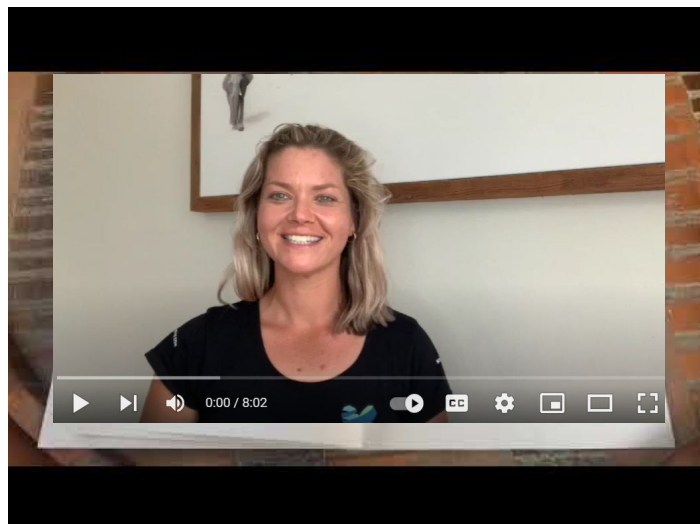
- What does compassion mean?
- Can you think of other words that mean compassion? E.g. Care, concern, consideration
- What does it look like to not be compassionate or show care of others?

2. Show the students the book, 'Chrysanthemum' by Kevin Henkes. Inform students that whilst listening to the story they need to consider how the characters felt and how showing care for others or not showing care can feel. But before reading the book set up the activity that students will engage in while listening to the book. Steps include:

- Give every student a piece of paper with a heart drawn on it – template below or students can draw their own heart. Ask students to use scissors to cut out the heart
- Ask students to look at how beautiful and perfect the heart is – it has no wrinkles
- Inform the students that in the story they will hear characters say things that are unkind
- Each time someone in the story is unkind to the main character Chrysanthemum, ask students to crinkle up a little bit of their heart cut-out



3. Read the book or click on the link to hear the story narrated by Kath Koschel the founder of the Kindness Factory:



4. After the story has been read ask students about the connections between words, actions and feelings. Questions could include:
- How do mean words and actions make people feel?
 - Every time Chrysanthemum's classmates said something mean to her, did the heart get wrinkled a little bit more?
 - Ask students to look at their paper hearts – what do they look like?
 - Ask students to try and smooth out their paper heart - Does their heart go back to the smooth shape?
 - It's stays a bit "wrinkled" – what happens to a person's heart and feelings after you say or do something that is unkind?
 - Can you take back actions and words – can you get the wrinkles out of the paper heart?
 - How do you show care and compassion?
5. Discuss with students how the characters could have shown care and compassion to Chrysanthemum? Write their ideas on a whiteboard so students can review class thoughts about compassion.
6. Reflect with students how they can show compassion to their friends and others. In particular, ask why compassion is important to maintain friendships and help establish a community of kindness.

Remind the students:

**Before you speak,
Think and be smart.
It's hard to fix
a wrinkled heart.**

RESOURCES:

- Heart template for crushing
- Scissors

Henkes, K. (1991). Chrysanthemum. New York: Greenwillow Books.

Online video: The Kindness Curriculum- Chrysanthemum, read by Kath Koschel sourced from: [YouTube](#)

