

The Story of Derek Redmond and His Dad - Empathy

EXPLANATION:

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

GRADE LEVELS: 11–12

STUDENT GROUPING: Whole and small group discussion

ACTIVITY LENGTH: 40 minutes approx.

CASEL CORE COMPETENCY: *SOCIAL AWARENESS*

- Taking others' perspectives
- Demonstrating empathy and compassion
- Showing concern for the feelings of others
- You can learn more about the CASEL framework [here](#)

SCOPE OF TASK:

Set the scene: Summer Olympics of 1992. Quarter finals of the 400-meter sprint. British athlete Derek Redmond was a favorite for the gold medal. The starter's gun fired, and the athletes burst out of the blocks. Almost halfway through the race, Derek Redmond was in the lead, but 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 intended 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 older 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 roaring crowd was on its feet. To their deafening applause, Derek crossed the finish 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, who plays for the Australian National Rugby League and for Australia at the international level.



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 record people’s ideas on the board.

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 (Derek's dad):
 - 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?
 - How do your feelings for these people differ?
 - Why is the event so emotional?
6. After a 10–15 minute 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 experiences. 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: "The Kindness Curriculum- Empathy with Aaron Woods," The Kindness Curriculum, sourced from: <https://youtu.be/WkHy7FAfv74>

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