

# Social and Emotional Learning

## Lesson Title: Advice Column, Part 2

### Grade Level: Middle School

#### Project and Purpose

Students assume the role of advice columnists and write a response to a letter seeking advice.

#### Essential Question

How is writing an advice column response an exercise in empathy?

**Note:** This is part 2 of a two-part lesson. Students should be familiar with letter writing.

#### Materials

- Copies or slide of advice column examples (provided in part 1 of lesson)
- Paper or computers with writing programs and access to printers
- Envelopes

#### Teacher

1. Review the information about advice columns from the previous session and ask if anyone has any questions so far.
2. Post the word *EMPATHY* and ask students to define the word. They should come up with any/all of the following: *the ability or capacity to share and/or understand feelings and experiences of others; understanding or feeling what another person experiences; able to put oneself in another's position; walking in another person's shoes; being able to imagine what it would be like to be in another person's situation.* Make sure students understand that empathy is NOT sympathy which is feeling sorry for someone but not necessarily experiencing the same emotions.
3. Ask students how empathy helps advice columnists write their responses to letters. What do they think the columnist does to empathize with their writers?
4. Offer the following possibilities for practicing empathy to their list of ideas:
  - Read the letter carefully and identify the problem and the situation presented.
  - Make sure you understand both sides of the problem.
  - Imagine yourself in the same position as the writer. What would you be feeling? What would you be thinking?
  - Take a moment to think about how the words you choose to write and how the solutions you present show you care.
  - Come up with at least two possible pieces of advice. One might be very challenging for the person who wrote the letter, such as having them ask themselves a difficult question or apologize to the other person in the conflict. The other might be something they can do to make themselves feel better.
5. Take out your example letter and read it or post it on a screen for the class to read. Go through the steps of empathy to craft a response to the letter. Talk out a possible response letter that you would write as an advice columnist.

