

Lesson Nine — Feeling for Others

Objective: Students will consider feelings and experiences shared by humans and nonhumans.

Materials Required

Copies of the two lists in Activity Two to hand out to each student

Copies of the quiz in Activity Three for each student

Copies of the list in Activity Four for each student

Photos for Activity Four: Pictures of many different nonhuman animals and a few humans of different ages, genders, and races cut out of newspapers and magazines (Hakol Chai or the teacher will provide these.)

Photos for Activity Five: Photocopies of juxtaposed photos (to be provided by Hakol Chai or the teacher), enough copies so each student can have one page. See details at the beginning of the activity

Background Information

Every culture and religion has some form of the saying "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." There are many reasons to care for those around us, including preserving the health and balance of our planet's environment, and experiencing the mental and physical well-being that are our reward for demonstrating empathy.

By redefining "others" to include all humans, animals, plants, and all life, we can live in a way that respects and cares for those around us and heals our external and internal worlds. Scientific studies have demonstrated a strong link between the way people treat nonhumans and humans. Violent criminals often began by harming animals when they were children. Because no one took these acts of violence seriously and got help for the children, as soon as they grew up, they transferred their aggression to humans and committed acts of violence against them. Violence plants seeds of violence, while peaceful, caring acts plant seeds of peace. It may take years, generations, or just minutes to see the rewards of planting nonviolent seeds, but if we never plant the seeds, we will never reap the rewards.

Activity One

Ask students to close their eyes and read the following to them:

Imagine being held against your will in a very small space. Your friends and family are not around you. You are not allowed to choose what you eat or drink and you have no entertainment. You must eat, drink, and do only what your owner decides. If you disobey in any way, you are beaten or denied food and water. What does this feel like? How long do you think you could live like this? How would you react to the situation? What if you could never get out of this situation? Open your eyes.

Discuss students' thoughts and feelings.

Ask students to keep a journal for one week and record in it every time they see a human or nonhuman animal living in conditions similar to this. For their first entry in the journal, ask them to write about how it would feel to be in the imaginary situation described above, without choices and with no ability to escape.

Activity Two

Hand out copies of the following two lists to students:

List 1

1. On a very hot day, you are left outside in the sun, handcuffed and wearing two heavy coats that you cannot remove. You have no water.
2. On a very cold winter night, you are left outside with no coat, wearing only shorts and a sleeveless top. You are not allowed back in the house.
3. You are left in a small room all day and all night with nothing to occupy your thoughts, no one to talk to, and very little room to move around.
4. You have a friend who you enjoy spending time with, but you are not allowed to see your friend.
5. You are taken from your family and friends and do not know why. You never see them again.

List 2

1. A dog is alone on the street with no food and no water.
2. A donkey is tied up on a hot, sunny day with no shade and no water.
3. A donkey is born, taken from his mother, and sold to someone in another community, where he lives alone. (Remember from the other lessons that donkeys are very social animals and like to be with at least one other living being to feel happy and secure.)
4. Two goats are born and are taken away from their mother immediately so her milk can be sold as milk, yogurt, and cheese for humans. If they are males, the baby goats are driven to a farm and will be killed for meat within a year.
5. A donkey is tied outside in winter with no shelter.
6. Two donkeys have lived with a flock of sheep their entire lives. One of the donkeys is sold to a man who keeps him in a dark stall except for the hours he is carrying heavy loads over rocky land to market.

Ask students how each scenario would feel and why.

Then ask students to match each scenario on List 2 with a scenario on List 1 that comes closest to being a match. Discuss why each was chosen.

Activity Three

Quiz

Make enough copies of the list and the 31 stories below so each student can have one copy. Hand out the copies to the students.

African Grey Parrot
Cat
Chimpanzee
Dog
Dolphin
Elephant
Goldfish
Gorilla
Horse
Human
Hyena
Mosquito
Orangutan
Orca
Otter
Pigeon
Satin Bowerbird
White-winged Shrike-tanager (bird)

Ask students to guess which of the species on the list each story is talking about (red in story). Some stories may include more than one species. Some species may be the same for several stories. Students may remember some of the accounts from other lessons.

1. The doctor said, "Bonnie, I need to give your baby an injection so she will get better." Bonnie brought her baby to the doctor. Even when the baby screamed loudly in pain from the injection, the mother held the baby still because she trusted the doctor and assumed he was helping.
2. When Charlene walked by the baby and his mother, Brigitte, she noticed that the baby had milk on his face after nursing. She said to his mother, "Brigitte, bring him here so I can wipe off his face." Brigitte brought over her baby and held his face up to Charlene.
3. A prisoner found a piece of wire and used it to pick the lock to escape from his cell. He hid the wire between his upper lip and his gums to avoid being caught with it during inspections.
4. These kids like to play hide and seek. When someone tells them they are getting closer, they know they are on the right track. When told they are getting farther away, they go in a different direction.
5. When his partner was close to giving birth to their baby, this man checked her belly and sensed there was something wrong. He was so upset, he intentionally banged himself against the wall. Two hours later, his partner gave birth to a stillborn baby.
6. The person caring for the two of them offered them treats to entice them to come in for the night. First one then the other came in, ate some of the treats, then went back outside. They knew that as long as they were not both in the house at the same time, they could stay out longer and get more treats.

7. Karen was swimming in a pool with a **friend** who spoke a different language. Her son, Ted, loved to ride on her friend's back. Several times, the pair swam past Karen. Once when they swam by, Karen called out, "Hold on tight and hold your breath." Even though they did not speak the same language, her friend understood what she had said. He went under the water and Ted held his breath, just as his mother told him to do.
8. The sign-language teacher saw that her **student** was arranging the white towels but making the sign for red. The teacher repeatedly corrected her and tried to get her to make the sign for white. Finally, the student laughed, made a big sign for red, and showed the teacher a tiny piece of red lint on the towel.
9. **Marie** lives with Sally and an Amazon parrot named Paco. Marie saw Sally take a cooked small chicken out of the microwave and joked, "Oh no! Paco!"
10. These **prisoners** learned to trade stolen goods for special foods or favors.
11. The **prisoner** began digging his way out of his cell, careful to hide the spot where he was digging. It took him four years, but he made a successful escape.
12. When the telephone rings in this university professor's home, his wife always knows it is her husband because their **child** runs to the phone while it is ringing and knocks it off the base, but only if he is the one calling.
13. Car thieves stole a car, not realizing that ten-year-old **Blake** and four-year-old **Roy** were in the back seat. When they discovered the boys, the thieves left Blake and Roy on the side of the road and took off. Though Blake and Roy were almost 97 kilometers from where they lived, in an area they had never been to before, they found their way back. It took them five days to walk home.
14. Ken and Sarah, who live in California, were **Barry's** foster parents until Barry was adopted by a family in Connecticut and taken there by plane. One day, Barry was missing. A lengthy search turned up nothing. One month later, a dirty, skinny Barry appeared at Ken and Sarah's home, over 4,800 kilometers away.
15. A **prisoner** who did not like getting his feet wet made slippers out of hay to walk around in after his cell was washed.
16. **Alex's** mother was away for a number of weeks. When she returned, Alex asked her to tickle him. She tickled him, and he bit her because he was angry she had been gone so long. Then immediately, he said "I'm sorry."
17. **Chantek** steals cookies off the plate and then rearranges the remaining cookies so no one can see the empty spot where the stolen cookies were.
18. A **guy** yells to the **picnicking group** that someone is about to attack them so that the others will run away and he can eat all the food.
19. **He** loves classical music. When he hears it, he knocks on the door and asks to come in, and then he just lies down and listens to the music.

20. The only way **he** can attract a woman friend is to build a big, beautiful house for **her**. He decorates the house with fancy items, hoping she will choose him over the others.
21. **Stacy** broke a plate. Carefully, she placed the pieces next to each other, close enough so she could put them at the bottom of a pile of plates in the cupboard. The bottom plate was not discovered for over a year!
22. The **baby** was in danger and just out of reach of the man trying to rescue her. The baby's **father** moved himself under his baby and let the **rescuer** stand on his shoulders to reach her.
23. This **therapist** thinks the best thing she can do for **children** with autism is to let them ride around on her back.
24. The **parents** taught their **child** to use a hammer.
25. His **mom** kept a sign on their trailer door. When they were not home, she flipped it over to read "We are out." One day, **he** met some people he thought were dangerous. He ran to the trailer and flipped the sign to read "We are out," then he went inside and hid in his bed with the covers over his head.
26. In the city **they** built, the main roads run north and south, and the smaller roads run east and west.
27. The **rescuer** went into the burning building again and again to get people out safely. After saving so many people over so many hours, he, himself, was severely burned and could barely walk.
28. This brave **mother** in New York City returned to a burning building five times to save her five **children** from the blaze. She carried the children to safety outside the building. By the time a firefighter found the family, the mother's eyes were burned shut. As they were rushed to a medical facility, she continued to count her children by touching them, to make sure they were all with her.
29. **He** makes his own paints using crushed berries and paintbrushes from tree bark. He decorates his house, and when a flower fades or a piece of fruit shrivels, he discards it and replaces it with a fresh one.
30. This **youngster** loves having **his** back rubbed.
31. This **being** knows when someone is trying to hurt him and escapes whenever possible.

Answers (Give students multiple choices — the correct answer plus two other possible answers for each question, to make it easier for them to guess a right answer.)

1. Orangutans
2. Gorillas
3. Orangutan

4. Elephants and human (telling them closer/farther)
5. Orcas
6. Elephants
7. Dolphin
8. Gorilla
9. African grey parrot
10. Gorillas
11. Human
12. Cat
13. Dogs
14. Pigeon
15. Gorilla
16. Alex=parrot; mother=human
17. Orangutan
18. Guy and picnicking group=White-winged Shrike-tanagers (birds)
19. Hyena
20. Satin bowerbirds
21. Human
22. Baby and father=Orcas; rescuer=human
23. Therapist=horse; children=humans
24. Parents and child=both otters and chimpanzees
25. Mom=human, he=orangutan
26. Elephants in the Ndoki Forest
27. Dog who rescued people during the September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Center in New York
28. Cat and her kittens
29. Bowerbird
30. Goldfish
31. Mosquito

For each story, ask students how the action or the values described are similar for human and nonhuman animals. For example, both human and nonhuman-animal:

Parents care deeply about their children

Prisoners seek their freedom

Children play similar games

Species are sometimes deceitful, can feel sorry for their mistakes, and appreciate beauty

Activity Four

In this activity, students will match species of animals with the description they think best matches each species.

Post photos of various species on the wall and make a pocket or put a box underneath each in which students can place slips of paper with the descriptions on them. You can also place the photos on one or more tables or on the floor.

Make enough copies of the following list of descriptions so each student can have one. Ask students to cut up the list so each numbered description is on its own piece of paper. Ask students to place the description that best matches each species in the box

or pocket under the photo of that species.

1. Feels or expresses pleasure
2. Feels or expresses pain
3. Learns
4. Experiences fear
5. Raises and cares for their young
6. Communicates
7. Feels guilt
8. Uses tools
9. Is social
10. Mourns the death of other members of the same species
11. Shows compassion/caring
12. Shows affection
13. Builds things, including home
14. Laughs
15. Is self-aware
16. Shows loyalty
17. Shows gratitude
18. Has memory (short term or long term)
19. Has a sense of the past
20. Has a sense of the future
21. Shows contentment
22. Can be cooperative

Questions for Discussion:

- Do any species not match the descriptions? Why?
- Not all humans are exactly the same. For example, some are loyal, some are not. Do they think all members of an animal species are exactly alike?
- What do they think they have in common with nonhuman animals?

- What do they need that nonhuman animals also need?
- What feelings do they think animals have that they share? (Sometimes we have to guess what other animals feel because they cannot tell us in words.)

Activity Five

Hand out one page of the photocopied juxtaposed photos to each student. Each page shows a photo of an animal working for humans juxtaposed to a photo of the same animal in their natural habitat, in their own community of same-species animals, not working for or "owned by" humans.

The animals included in these photos can be elephants, dolphins, donkeys, horses, dogs (either historical photos or dogs who work today as "service dogs," monkeys (service monkeys or monkeys in laboratories), cats and rabbits (in laboratories), tigers (in circuses), gorillas (in zoos). Children forced to work for others can also be included.

Some of these animals are not officially "working," but they are taken from their habitat and community and placed in an unfamiliar environment to make money for or to be "of use" to humans.

Part One

Ask students to use their imagination to write two stories from the perspective of the animals in the pictures.

Each story might begin something like this, for example: "I am an African gorilla. I live in the jungle with my group. My group includesI spend my daysThe best part of my day is"

And, for the picture of the gorilla in a zoo or a laboratory: "I am an African gorilla who lives in a cage about the size of a small apartment. Members of my family are not here with me. I spend my days"

After they have finished writing their stories, ask them to add which of the two lives they would want to live and why.

Part Two

Call on some of the students to read their stories in class.

After each story is read, ask the class what about the story felt true to them and whether there is anything they might add to the story.

Part Three

Discuss the following in class:

How do we decide who we will use to do our work or make money for us? Include the following questions in the discussion:

- Which people or other species are used and why? What gives some people power over other people or some species power over other species?
- What do the people or species who use others have the power to do or not do to those others?
- What does it mean when we can own another living being (human or nonhuman) as our property?
- How does it affect the beings owned and how does it affect us as owners?
- What are the benefits to us? What are the benefits to them?
- What is harmful to the owners or to those owned or to both?

Part Four

Often those who have the power to destroy or to cause suffering but who choose instead to heal or to create are seen as heroes. People who speak up for those who have no voice are also seen as heroes.

Some cultural heroes are not seen in a positive light until a long time after their actions, when we look back at them throughout history. At the time they took a stand for or against something in their culture, their opinion might have been unpopular with society and/or with those who profited from what they spoke out against.

Ask each student to choose either a current or a historical figure who they think of as a hero, someone who stood up for something they believed in. Ask them to either write about or give an oral report in class about what they think makes someone a hero and what makes the person they chose a hero.

Ask them to include answers to the following questions in their written or oral report:

- Can I imagine myself doing what this person does/did?
- What gave this person the strength to stand up for something they believed in?
- How might the world be different if this hero never took a stand?
- Did/does this hero see beyond what the mainstream culture saw/sees as acceptable behavior?