

Dear Me: A Letter on Compassion

This lesson gives students an opportunity to look at caring for their broader communities, even when the problems their communities face are large. There is ample time for both group discussion and personal reflection as students watch how one boy developed an organization to address local hunger in his community. Students will empower themselves through a personal letter they will write and the teacher will eventually give back, ideally reminding students of their own ideas and calls to action.

Caring Sub-Concept(s)

Compassion, Helpfulness, Kindness

Lesson Timeframe

30-40 minutes

Required Materials

- Joshua, Feeding Those in Need | Citizen Kid by Disney:
<https://video.disney.com/watch/joshua-feeding-those-in-need-citizen-kid-by-disney-4ff5cac4824697e707b76a1>
- Dear Me worksheet or student notebook paper
- Letter-sized envelopes, one for each student

Standards Map

This lesson aligns with CASEL Competencies, National Health Education Standards, and Common Core State Standards. Please refer to the [Standards Map](#) for more information.



DESIGNATED BY CASEL
AS A RECOMMENDED PROGRAM
FOR SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING.
See last page for details.

Lesson Objective

Students will discuss the concepts of caring and compassion.

- Discuss the concepts of caring and compassion.
- Watch compassion in action through the video about Joshua's Heart.
- Reflect on the main ideas of the video and relate them to their own personal opportunities to show caring and compassion.
- Write a letter to themselves talking about how they might get more involved in caring for their communities

Teacher Connection/Self-Care

Introduce yourself to a new teacher/staff at school today. Remember what it felt like to be new. Friendly faces make it easier.

Tips for Diverse Learners

- Watch the video clips more than one time.
- Show the questions as they watch the clip or listen to you describe the foundation; consider writing the questions on the board or giving the students the printed questions.
- Have students discuss their responses to the questions with a partner before responding to the whole group.
- Allow students to write their letters in their native language if that will help them share their ideas with their parents; ask them to also have a short English version, though, so you can provide feedback.



Share

2-3 minutes

Discuss the word 'community' as a class. What does it mean when we talk about our community?

Invite student responses.

Community can mean many things to each of us. It can be small, like your family and a few friends. It can also be international like those that share your heritage. What really matters is how we are all connected and how we care for each other.

Today, our community will be focused on our school and the city/town it is located in.



Inspire

15-20 minutes

Today we will use compassion to examine the needs present in our own community. Explain that Compassion is the feeling you get inside you when you want to help someone that is in need. This person could be a friend, your teacher, your parents, a sibling, or maybe even someone you have never even met! When a person is sad, in pain, or needs help, we naturally feel compassion for them. Our hearts tell us to help.

How many of you have heard this word before?

Compassion is often something we don't plan to feel; it is simply something that wells up inside us when we see someone in need.

Sometimes, though, we aren't sure how to help, or we don't think we can help, so we turn our compassion meter down

And, sometimes, the problem IS too big for us, but that doesn't mean we ignore it. When you are faced with a problem or when you see someone else in distress, but you by yourself cannot help, what are some things you can do?

Invite student response.

We are going to watch a short video about a boy who felt compassion and the desire to help others in his community but didn't know how to start. Let's watch:

Watch Joshua, Feeding Those in Need | Citizen Kid by Disney:

<https://video.disney.com/watch/joshua-feeding-those-in-need-citizen-kid-by-disney-4ff5cac4824697e707b76a1c>

If you cannot play the clip, here is a synopsis:

One way we can make a difference is by helping people who don't have enough food. Perhaps you have collected canned food at school or brought it to the local food bank. One boy, Joshua Williams, even started his own organization in Miami, Florida, to help stomp out world hunger. When Joshua was four and a half years old, he saw a homeless man on the street and

realized he wanted to figure out a way to help him. With his mom's help, Joshua created the Joshua's Heart Foundation in 2006; since then, he has worked with more than 3,000 volunteers (1,200 kids and 2,000 adults) who have distributed close to a million pounds of food to people in his community! Countless people have been helped and are very thankful that Joshua cared enough to provide them with the food they need.



Empower

5 minutes

Now let's talk a bit about what we watched!

You can do this as a large group or in small groups.

Ask:

- Why do you think Joshua Williams wants to help others?
- From information on this organization's website, we know that Claudia, Joshua's mom, supports what he is doing. How do you think our families or the people we live with can help us learn how to care for others and our community?
- People in the clip seem grateful for the food they received. The video says Joshua and the volunteers have given out 400,000 pounds of food, but it is now closer to a million pounds! Do you think being grateful and thankful for what others do for us is important? Why or why not?
- Do you think it is our responsibility to care for and support others in the community? In what way?

Pass out the "Dear Me" worksheets or invite students to get out a piece of paper if you are not using the worksheet.

You are going to write yourself a letter answering this question: How do you think you could make a difference in your community? It starts with "Dear Me," Remember to include the following ideas:

- *Describe how the video about Joshua impacted you about how you see your community*
- *Explain an issue you see in our own community*
- *Explain your helpful solution to make a change in the community*
- *When you are done with your letter, sign it and put it in the envelope I am going to hand out to you, but do not seal it! Put your name on the outside of the envelope and drop them off in this basket on my desk.*



Reflect

5 minutes

There are small things each of us can do to show generosity and kindness to others in our community and around the world. These small acts can be a ripple in the water that spreads out to other community members. Joshua started with an idea that he wanted to help a homeless man, and now he has helped provide food to hundreds of people. You just wrote down some ideas for how you might care for others around you. I will look over your ideas and I will eventually give these back to you so you can be reminded of how you think you might care for others. I look forward to seeing all of your good ideas; maybe there will be something we can even do together as a class.

RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS FOUNDATION®



Extension Ideas

- If you want to incorporate a research element, these websites provide good ideas for what kids can do to show caring and kindness:

[5 Ways to Help Children Care More About Others](#)

[Ripple Kindness Project: How You Can Make A Difference](#)

- You can return the letters to students in any number of ways and at any time; maybe at the end of the quarter, end of the Inclusiveness Unit (which is closely tied to respect and caring), at conferences or, maybe you mail them to the student at home over a long break. You might also consider writing a personal note to each student commenting on how you've seen the student caring for others at school, encouraging that student to continue the good work.



The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning ([CASEL](#)) has been reviewing evidence-based SEL programs since 2003. Kindness in the Classroom® meets CASEL's SElect Program and is included in the [CASEL Guide to Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs](#).

Kindness in the Classroom® met or exceeded all of CASEL's criteria for high-quality SEL programming. Kindness in the Classroom® received CASEL's highest designation for high-quality SEL programming.

<https://casel.org/guide/kindness-in-the-classroom/>

Dear Me Worksheet

Date_____

Dear Me:

Today we watched a video about a boy named Joshua who started a program that helps feed people who do not have enough food. This is a big problem that one kid decided he could help solve! As I watched the video, I felt:

Here is where I see a need in our community (could be family, school, or general community):

And here are some things that I think I could do to help care for those in our community:

Sincerely,