

Try on a Fear

As with any skill, if we practice empathizing we get better at it. We can surprise ourselves by finding relevance and connection more frequently in the world around us. This activity helps us practice empathy and perspective taking. It cultivates belonging through story sharing and practicing vulnerability. We will literally try on the fear of another person and explore how it would feel to experience that fear.

Time: 30 - 40 minutes

Materials: paper and writing tools

Group Structure: Whole class

We strongly recommend preempting this experience with:

- a conversation around practicing empathy
- an acknowledgement that we all experience fears with different origins and intensities
- the mirroring activity in the **Routines** section of this lesson
- a teacher demonstration of trying on a fear, how you model for your students will likely set the tone for the whole experience
- Entire class tries on one fear together: students can share out bits and pieces of what someone might feel who holds that fear, in order to develop an empathetic picture

Directions

- Each participant writes down a fear they experience (or have experienced in the past) on a slip of paper. The fears are then collected in a container.
- Now each participant pulls a slip of paper from the container as it is passed around.
- Participants have a few minutes to consider the fear they selected.
 - What does it feel like to be afraid of this?
 - How might I have developed this fear?
 - Can I describe my experience?
- Participants write or speak a few statements, essentially “trying on” this new fear. Whenever possible, do the share out in a circle format.

TIPS

Although there will be inevitable moments of humor in this process, it is important to express the aspects of seriousness and vulnerability this activity asks of us. If students are prepared and feeling safe they can be remarkably transparent and insightful.

Variations

Try on a Hope or long term Dream, Try on an Anxiety, Use the language of phobias versus fears. What are other possibilities?

WHICH CREATIVE RESOURCES ARE WE GROWING?

Authenticity, empathy, vulnerability, sincerity

WHAT KINDS OF THINKING DOES THIS ROUTINE ENCOURAGE?

Perspective taking, idea generation, improvisational, emotional connection

WHEN AND WHERE CAN IT BE USED?

Classroom culture building, How else could this activity be integrated into content areas?



Thanks to Lola Broomberg for sharing this routine!