

Word Clouds of Care

This lesson has students define rumors and gossip and explore how they experience these in their everyday life. The lesson gives students an opportunity to have good discussion on what rumors and gossip are, how they feel when engaged with that kind of talk, and how they can stand up for themselves and others in an assertive yet caring and respectful manner. The final activity gives students a chance to affirm one another in ways that will remind them of their specialness and connection, which will hopefully help kids think twice before spreading gossip or rumors about their classmates.

Caring Sub-Concept(s)

Compassion, Empathy, Kindness

Lesson Timeframe

35-40 minutes

Required Materials

- PBS Gossip and Rumors clip:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=98SChJzflD4>
- Sheets of white paper (preferably cardstock or construction paper; something that will hold up) - one for each student
- Scissors
- Writing utensils
- String to hang clouds (if desired)

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:

- Identify rumors and gossip.
- Reflect on ways they can respond when they hear information that is untrue or unkind.

Teacher Connection/Self-Care

In the first unit we talked about the importance of self respect as a building block for respect within our world. This unit's focus is on Caring, which incorporates compassion, helpfulness, gratitude, and empathy. Caring is defined as feeling and showing concern for yourself and others. With this definition in mind, try to evaluate how you care for yourself.

Self-Care is a vital tool to ensure we have time to reboot. It is not selfish to provide time each day to just focus on YOU. What do you do just for you each day? If the answer is difficult to identify, brainstorm some ideas on how you can care for yourself daily. If you've already started this process, attempt to expand or deepen your self-care to include long term goals (such as working out or taking a fun class). If you don't care for yourself, how can you expect to provide solid care for others?

Tips for Diverse Learners

- Drawing a gossip diagram on the board that shows how rumors spread. For example, you could draw stick figures of two people talking about a third and what happens.
- Another option would be to create laminated figures that you could use to illustrate points during the discussion.



Share

3-5 minutes

In this unit, we focus on what it means to care or show concern for ourselves and for others. We are going to look at this topic largely through how we communicate with each other. We will first talk about a really important topic that will only get more important as you get older: rumors and gossip.

Can anyone tell us what a rumor is and what gossiping means?

Have a few students share their ideas with the class. Consider jotting notes on the whiteboard or type them up on the smart board for visual learners.

If you have ever been a part of a group that spreads a rumor or shared gossip, how did it make you feel?

You may receive a variety of responses here; guide students to the idea that spreading rumors or gossiping may make them feel connected or “cool” for a while, but ultimately, it makes us feel bad because we know we have treated another person badly.

If you have ever had a rumor or piece of gossip spoken about you, how did it make you feel?

Good! We will talk more about this throughout the lesson, but spreading rumors or sharing gossip is not how we care for others or for ourselves.



Inspire

Telephone Game

5-7 minutes

We are going to start with a game of telephone. I want you all to sit in a circle. I will choose one person to go first and that person will think of a phrase or sentence. Whisper that phrase to the person sitting next to you. Then whisper it to the next person and so on until the last person has heard the phrase or sentence. The last person says the phrase or sentence out loud. Do the activity. Then ask the following questions:

- *Ask the person who went first if that was their phrase. Did anything change?*
- *Why do you think it changed?*
- *Do you think this can happen in real life? In what way?*

As we saw from this activity, it can be easy to get something wrong when we communicate. Now this was a game so it didn't really matter. But what would happen if you told someone a story and they told someone else but forgot some important facts or changed them on purpose? How would you feel? That is how rumors and gossip get started.

Allow students time to respond.



Empower

20-25 minutes

Video Clip and Discussion

Let's watch a video about gossip and rumors. Show PBS Gossip and Rumors clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=98SChJzflD4>

Then ask any of the following questions:

- *Was there something the students said that you agree with? Did you disagree with anything they said?*
- *How do these students' definitions of gossip and rumor compare with ours that we discussed earlier?*
- *Why do you think people gossip about others or spread rumors?*
- *When you hear gossip or a rumor, how can you show respect and care for the person talking and also the person who is being talked about?*
- *What can you do if you hear gossip or rumors? How can you be assertive in that situation? Define assertive.*

If you can't play the clip: Write the following statements on the board or project them on a smart board. The Public Broadcasting System created a video about Gossip and Rumors. We can't watch that today, but I'd like to explain some of the information that students your age said about Gossip and Rumors in the video. While I read, think about whether you agree or disagree with the statements:

- Gossip is when people talk about others behind their back.
- Gossip can be between a couple of people, but doesn't need to get spread around.
- Gossip is also when you say something to someone's face they don't want to hear.
- Rumors can be true or untrue and are spread by anybody.
- A rumor is when something happens and someone tells someone else and as it spreads, it turns into something that is inaccurate.
- Rumors are spread deliberately to get someone in trouble or hurt their feelings.
- Most of the time, neither rumors nor gossip is true. In thinking about what to do when you hear a rumor or gossip, people should go ask the person being talked about if it is really true. You shouldn't tell anyone else because it's probably not true.
- If you hear about a rumor and think it's not true, just ignore it or ask the person who said it why they said it.

Use these statements to have a short group discussion.

Continued on the next page...

Word Cloud of Care

For this activity, everyone gets a sheet of white paper (preferably cardstock or construction paper; something that will hold up). Have students cut the edges so they are rounded like a fluffy cloud. Have students write their own name in the center in large letters. Collectively, the class is going to make a word cloud for each other of the positive qualities they admire or appreciate about the person whose name is in the middle. Students pass their word clouds around in a line (so it's organized) and students write down one or two words that represent something they respect or admire about the person. Through this, we remind ourselves that every person is special and has positive qualities. Hang the word clouds around the room or from the ceiling using string. Encourage students to remember these clouds whenever they hear gossip or rumors; they should think about how each person matters and how they can use these positive qualities to show respect and caring toward one another.



Reflect

5-7 minutes or longer if you have students answer one or more of the following questions; these could be used as a group discussion, too.

Gossip and rumors can be very hurtful and are often untrue. If you need to know if the rumor is true, ask the person directly. How many of you think you can do that?

Invite students to raise their hands.

Spreading rumors and gossiping about others is not a kind way to treat people. Kindness comes from treating all people with respect. Are there any questions?

Optional:

To gauge understanding of the material, choose from either the evaluation or reflection questions as discussion, writing, or journal prompts. Consider providing additional time for deeper evaluation and reflection as needed.

Evaluation Questions

- What is gossip? What is a rumor?
- Why can gossip and rumors be hurtful?
- What is a respectful and caring way to react if you hear gossip or a rumor?

Reflection

- Write about a time when you or someone you know gossiped or told a rumor about you or someone you know. How did it make you feel? What did you do?
- How can we stop people from spreading rumors?
- How can you respect yourself and be assertive if someone tells a rumor about you?



Extension Ideas

- Do a role play (or send home to do with parents/guardians) acting out situations in front of the class. Here are some options:
 - Brian comes up to you at recess and says that he heard that your friend Dax still sleeps with a stuffed animal and blanket. Then Brian laughs. What do you do?
 - Sami is sitting behind you at lunch. You hear her lean over to Maya, who is sitting next to her, and whisper something about your outfit (which was brand new and that you had purchased with your birthday money). What do you do?
- Have students make response posters to convey words and strategies they can use when confronted with rumors or gossip. Hang these around the room for constant reinforcement.



DESIGNATED BY CASEL
AS A RECOMMENDED
PROGRAM FOR SOCIAL
AND EMOTIONAL
LEARNING.

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/>

Caring

This is the 4th week in the Caring unit. Students will focus on compassion as the natural progression of caring once empathy is identified.

Begin the unit with the whole class lesson and then aim to complete at least two of the mini lessons with your students throughout the week. Each mini lesson is designed to present elements of the main lesson in new and engaging ways.

Main Lesson

Whole Class Lesson
30 minutes



Empathy + Compassion

This is the 4th week in the caring unit. Students will focus on compassion as the natural progression of caring once empathy is identified.
(See page 2 for lesson details.)

Mini Lessons

For Small Groups
15 minutes



Compassion Analysis

Small group discussion: In what ways does our class show compassion to each other? How could we do better? Share your small group answers with the class.

For Partners
15 minutes



Compassion Haiku

With your partner, create a compassion haiku. Reminder: A haiku is a 3 line poem with 5 syllables on the 1st and 3rd lines and 7 syllables on the second line. Make sure your poem connects to the feeling you receive when you give or receive compassion. (Example: Listen to others, I am here for you always, Spoken from the heart.)

For Individuals
15 minutes



Sharing Compassion

Create an uplifting card for a senior in your community. Incorporate kind words, gratitude and compassion through words and pictures. Try to find a time to meet with them and get to know them before creating this card (if possible). What they share with you will most definitely affect what you focus on and include and will have a greater impact in comparison with a non-personalized message.

Technology-Focused
15 minutes



Movie Analysis

Group Discussion: Think back to a recent movie you have seen and answer the following questions: How was compassion demonstrated? Was this realistic? Why or why not? How could the characters have increased their compassion for others?

Empathy + Compassion

This is the 4th week in the Caring unit. Students will focus on compassion as the natural progression of caring once empathy is identified.

Lesson Timeframe

30 minutes

Required Materials

- Projector for pictures
- Pictures (see below)

Standards Map

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

Lesson Objective

Students will:

- Explore the need for a combined approach of both compassion and empathy when helping others.
- Examine common assumptions when analyzing situations using only surface level approaches.

Teacher Connection/Self-Care

In our Caring Unit the capstone emotion is compassion, which is the desire to help those in need. How do your students need you today? How do your colleagues need you? In what ways can you show compassion while still maintaining professional and personal boundaries? Remember that being compassionate does not mean you are responsible for solving everyone's problems. You cannot change a student's home life. You cannot magically improve another teacher's classroom management skills. What can you do to show compassion, then, when you see others struggling? You can provide a stable, healthy classroom environment for students to thrive while they are in your care. You can offer strategies, if asked, to help your colleague make small, positive changes in their classroom management. Compassion is about helping where you can and being supportive while recognizing that not every problem is yours to solve. Being present, listening, empathizing, and acting when able are good steps toward showing compassion toward your students and coworkers.



Share

3-5 minutes

We have arrived at our final week in our Caring unit. We have explored self-care, gratitude, and empathy. The last component is compassion. At this point in our lives, we have heard this term before; however, our personal definition has definitely been shaped by our own life experiences.

How would you define compassion? (Invite student responses.)

Yes, all of these answers point to a common ground of kindness. Compassion is defined as feeling empathy for and wanting to help another in need.



Inspire

3-5 minutes

Compassion is often the natural extension after empathy. It is the action that follows the emotional connection we make.

Now, think of a time where you were able to both show empathy and demonstrate compassion. Share your answer with a neighbor. (Allow several volunteers to share their examples with the whole class if time allows.)

There is a level of caution that must be noted here. Compassion without the presence of empathy is often not received in a positive nature. Although your intentions are positive, without the combination of the two (empathy and compassion), the other person may find offense with your actions. Let's think back to the example of the math test from last week. You would have been excited about that C your friend received. You do not stop and take the time to use empathy to understand how they might feel based on their perspective, but instead you assume they struggle with math like you do. You immediately congratulate them, pat them on the back, and invite them to join you and your tutor in your next session so they can get an even higher score next time. What might their response be this time? How might they react when you assume they feel exactly how you feel? Has this ever happened to you?

Remember, true empathy cannot occur by making assumptions. You must engage with the other person whenever possible before moving forward to the action component connected with compassion. You cannot expect to put yourself in someone else's shoes without first getting to know how they view the topic at hand!



Empower

15 minutes

Explain that the class will now explore the necessary combination between empathy and compassion as they examine difficult scenarios within history and possible responses others might have both with and without empathy. Remember, compassion without empathy is not always positive!

Using the pictures provided, guide a discussion on the following:

- What do you see here?
- What is your first idea to "help" this person or people?
- How might they react?
- Now stop and think about how they truly feel. What is their focus? What do they need *from their perspective*?
- How would your approach to helping them change now?

Picture # 1: A woman and her children during the Great Depression

- Common assumptions might include that she is starving and needs a handout of food.
- Encourage the students to look beyond their understanding and exposure to the Great Depression (which frequently focuses on the lack of food). What else might she be thinking about? How might she feel about that food handout? Will it really help her in the long run?

- Other takes on the picture: her husband just left for work and she is sad to see him leave, she has finally found employment and is pondering childcare, she just had word that a family member has come down with a serious illness, etc.
- Encourage solutions that involve a conversation with the person(s) FIRST. You can't experience true empathy from initial judgements and zero conversation!

Picture #2: Boy holding new shoes

- Common assumptions might include that he desperately needed new shoes and money for the other areas of his life that might be difficult for him.
- Encourage the students to look beyond what they can see and dig deeper. What expression does he have on his face? What emotion is he conveying? What else might he be thinking about while holding these shoes? If you give him money and he doesn't view his life as a struggle, how might he react?
- Other takes on the picture: these shoes are a gift he is giving to another child in his neighborhood that is barefoot, the shoes represent the health of his older sibling who couldn't walk before, the shoes represent his father's first sale as a cobbler, etc.
- Encourage solutions that involve a conversation with this child!



Reflect

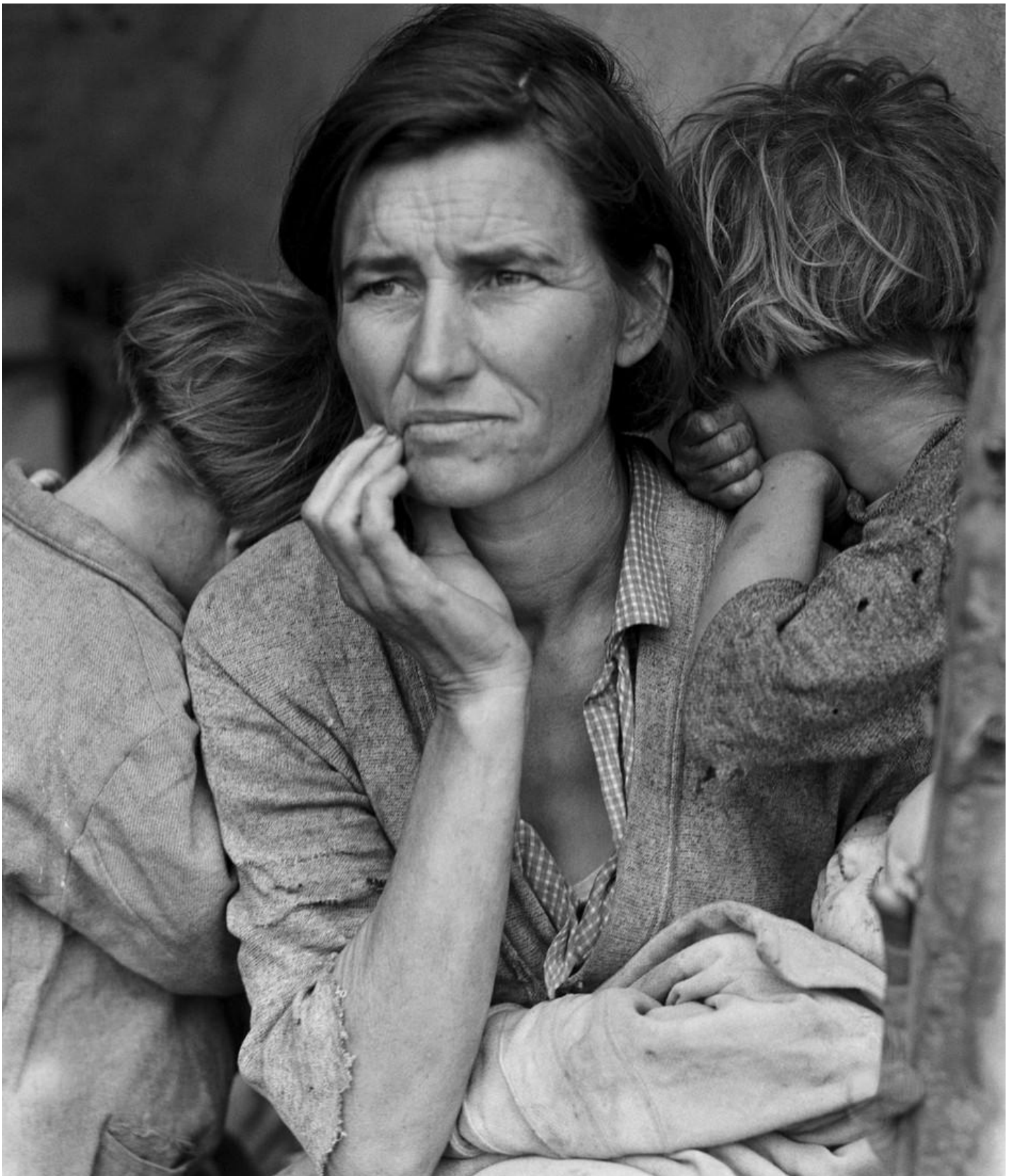
5-7 minutes

As a class, discuss the challenges of pausing to find the empathy BEFORE responding with compassion.

- Why is it hard to wait when our first response is to DO SOMETHING?
- How might a conversation with the other person/persons change my compassionate approach?

When you truly empathize with someone, it takes courage to follow through and help them through their situation. Your compassion just might be the positive turning point to a really difficult situation!

Picture #1: Mother in Great Depression



Picture #2: Boy Holding New Shoes

