

“Batang Isnabero”

Peace Concept: EMPATHY

I. OBJECTIVES

- To be able to define empathy;
- To be able to discuss the importance of empathy in relating with others;
- To be able to give examples of being empathetic.

II. SUMMARY OF EPISODE

Farida, a 10-year-old girl, and her friends, Majid, Ato and Lorena, do not have problems making new friends until they are challenged by Alex, their new classmate. Alex is obnoxious and unfriendly. They are really puzzled by his behavior. Once, they saw him angrily hitting empty cans with stones. In spite of this, they still try to befriend him but all they get is rejection, insult and the destruction of their garden plot. When Alex destroys their garden project, all four friends run after him. They keep running after him until they get to a charred village where nothing is left but burned wood frames and furniture. There they all realize that one of the burnt structures was Alex’s previous home. Alex tells them there was an armed confrontation between the rebels and the soldiers which resulted to the burning of the whole village and the death of his family.

Farida realizes how much they misjudged Alex. After finding out what happened to him and his family, she understands why Alex is unfriendly and at times obnoxious. She learns that it is natural and even expected to hate someone who is nasty. With Alex, she learns that sometimes one needs to go beyond the usual reaction. She and her friends are glad they got to know the real Alex beneath his loss, anger and confusion.

III. SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

A. Pre-viewing

To introduce empathy as a peace concept, children should first be able to “read” and understand the feelings of others. How would be it be like in their shoes?

How does it feel like?

Younger Children

Cut out colored pictures of facial expressions depicting negative and positive feelings such as happy, angry, scared and excited. Ask the children to identify what the person in the picture is feeling? Then agree on what label to put for each picture. Use the pictures to help them recall the times they felt these emotions. When do you get angry? When do you feel scared? What makes you excited and eager? How do you show your happiness?

Older Children

Ask them to share their experiences.

- **Did you ever feel misunderstood? What happened?**
- **Why do you think your friends (family) reacted that way towards you?**
- **How would you have wanted other people to react to you?**

Conclude the sharing by saying that today we will watch the episode “Batang Isnabero” which is about a young boy who, like you, was also misunderstood.

B. Post-viewing

For the discussion, it is important to allow the children to share what they think without feeling that there is a right or wrong answer. Such atmosphere is important so the children can honestly share what they understood, what they felt, and what they thought. The integration after the sharing can be used to explain and to clarify the concepts that we want them to understand. The following questions for discussion are being suggested:

1. **Why did Alex behave the way he did?** (*He was rude, nasty and unfriendly.*)

2. **How did Farida and her friends misjudge Alex? What did they find out about him?**

3. **If you knew someone like Alex, how would you relate to him?**

This episode has a powerful message. We tend to react negatively because the person deserves it. This story teaches us a different way to react. It teaches empathy, the willingness to understand a person beyond the usual reflex-like reaction. It is being able to “feel” what the person is feeling so one gains a deeper understanding of his situation. It is taking a step further to find out why a person behaves the way the does.

Show Me How

Empathy can be learned by starting to be considerate of others. Give examples of real-life situations children can easily relate to. Discuss how they can show empathy.

HELPING OTHERS

- You are in a hurry to finish your chores so you can go out with your friends but you see your mother busy in the kitchen.
- Your younger brother cannot understand his or her homework even when you repeat it several times. You cannot understand why he cannot get it. It was so easy for you to understand the lesson when you were his or her age.
- You like it when you use the toilet after your mother used it. It is always clean.
- Your classmate clumsily falls down on his chair.

LISTENING TO OTHERS

- Your friend is telling you his or her problem. You are listening attentively but suddenly you receive a text message and you immediately look at it and reply.
- While your mother is talking to you about the things you need to do before she leaves, you continue to listen to loud music.
- You keep nodding while talking to your uncle but actually you are not listening to his stories.

Journal Writing

Head, Heart, Feet. Ask the children to draw a whole person on a page in their Peace Journal. Let them use the drawing to integrate their learning about empathy. On the head part, they can write what empathy means. On the heart part, they think about how the lesson on empathy changed their attitude? What are the things that they could change about themselves to improve? On the feet part, ask them to plan the steps will they do to be show more empathy to others.

IV. EMPATHY AS PEACE CONCEPTS

Empathy is very subtle but when it is practiced or shown to us, we are deeply touched. It means that this person made

the effort “to stand in our shoes,” to feel what we are feeling, to see things from our perspective and to listen sincerely to what we said. Likewise, when we show empathy, there is a strong connection or bond that is established. When we understand what the person is going through, our reaction or conclusion about him or her will change. This vicarious experience opens up our eyes and heart to the things that we did not understand and the things that we have missed regarding a situation or another person.

When a person can act, react, decide or think not only for his or her best interest but for the benefit of the greater good, this person practices empathy. Empathy is one of the tools in building a supportive and peaceful community.