



SESKAT. Development of Social and Emotional Skills in Adult Training  
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# Empathy Journal

**SESKAT Training  
Toolbox**

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## Description

In the Empathy Journal exercise, participants will practise gaining empathy towards others in the workplace, especially towards their students. The exercise involves putting themselves in the shoes of their students, empathising with what they may be going through and identifying ways in which they can better support them. It is mostly a written exercise and can (and should) be rather personal.

This is an exercise that can be done at home as well and does not necessarily have to be done in a group setting; however, sharing perspectives with others can help the participants gain insight into their students' experiences and a deeper understanding of how their actions in class affect the people around them.

## Objectives

- To develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of the challenges and experiences faced by their students, fostering a sense of empathy towards their perspectives
- To become better equipped to support students' emotional needs
- To gain self-awareness about their actions and how they affect others



# Connection with Soft Skills and Emotional Intelligence

Through the process of stepping into the shoes of their students and articulating their thoughts and feelings, participants engage in a heightened awareness of emotions—both their own and those of others. This aligns with the core principles of emotional intelligence, particularly of self-awareness and empathy. The exercise cultivates participants' ability to understand and share the experiences of their students, fostering a deeper emotional connection between them.

Furthermore, the exercise contributes to the development of soft skills which are highly important for effective interpersonal communication and relationship building. Improved communication skills emerge as participants consider the impact of their words and actions on students' emotions and experiences. By identifying tailored support strategies, participants hone skills related to adaptability and problem-solving. The exercise also encourages participants to explore and apply empathy in their teaching practices, aligning with soft skills such as collaboration, adaptability, and relationship management.

## Resources and Materials

For this activity, participants are only required to have paper and something to write with.

# Steps



01

Introduce the concept of the activity to the participants. Let them know that they will be doing some journaling in order to better understand their students and how to support them. Ask them the following warm-up questions to discuss as a whole class: *When you were a student, what is the worst thing a teacher ever did or said to you? What happened and how did it make you feel?* If a participant shares, ask them or the whole class what the teacher could have done to show more empathy.

02

Put the participants into small groups and ask them to write a list of challenges that students in their institution are facing. They should consider what students may find particularly challenging and how it affects their emotions (and subsequently, their performance in class). After they have created a list, ask each group to share. Write their suggestions on the board. Presumably, some challenges will be repeated, so put a tally mark next to any challenges that were mentioned more than once. The tally marks will signify the most common challenges.

03

In the same groups, ask the participants to come up with one potential solution or means of support for each of the challenges faced. Start with common challenges and move to less common ones if time allows. Afterwards, discuss the responses as a whole class.

**04**

In their journals, ask participants to write a letter to themselves from the perspective of a student facing a difficult situation. Ideally, they can even write it from the perspective of someone who they consider to be a 'problem student.' In this way, they should hopefully develop a sense of empathy towards this person. If they don't have a 'problem student,' they can choose another real student who they believe is struggling in some way, or write from the perspective of an imaginary one. This letter should include thoughts, emotions, and potential actions the student might take.

**05**

Ask the participants to share excerpts from their letters (not necessarily the whole letter if they are long). For confidentiality, they should not reveal the student's name if it is a real person. As the participants listen to the excerpts, they should offer insight and advice as to how to best support the student based on the situation and emotions expressed in the letter.

**06**

As a closing activity, the participants will formulate a personalised action plan for supporting students' socio-emotional needs. They should identify and write down at least 3 specific actions they plan to take to integrate empathy into their daily interactions with students.

## Learning Outcomes

By the end of this exercise, participants will:

- Develop a heightened sense of empathy towards their students by reflecting on their own past experiences as learners and by considering the challenges faced by students in their institution
- Identify and analyse challenges faced by students
- Create a tangible plan of action to integrate empathy into their daily teaching