



DEVELOPING EMPATHY AS A TOOL FOR JUSTICE

A MASTERCLASS FACILITATION GUIDE FROM THE SULLIVAN FOUNDATION

SESSION DESCRIPTION

Most people have no desire to change. Our brains have outdated wiring causing us to avoid the discomfort of growth.

This instinctual desire to maintain the status quo is a direct threat to justice, and excuses individuals and communities from doing the hard work of including, respecting, and empowering everyone.

Humans don't like to change - but we can. We can shift our perspectives, evolve our opinions and mature our mindsets when we practice empathy and pay attention to the experiences of others.

This session will guide participants through a dialogue on default mindsets, examine how fear prevents us from growth, and provide strategies for developing empathy as a tool for justice.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Identify default mindsets
- Identify helpful vs. unhelpful mindsets
- Notice where you might upgrade your mindsets and use self-awareness to create empathy

RESOURCES | LINKS

- [Masterclass Replay](#)
- [Surfing Video](#)
- [School of Life Video](#)



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FACILITATION GUIDE | 90-MINUTE CLASS



Watch Masterclass Video Replay | 25 mins



Reflect on Masterclass Replay | 5 mins

Invite students to individually reflect (on paper or their laptop) on the Masterclass replay they just watched - feel free to use these questions as prompts:

- What idea(s) stuck out to you?
- What did the video make you curious about?
- What did you agree with and/or disagree with?
- How might the ideas presented apply to your life or relationships?



Share Reflections with the Class | 10 mins

Ask students to share one of their reflections they wrote down with the class. If virtually, invite them to share responses in the chat.

After a few share, drill down deeper into a few of the shares. If virtually, call out students by name who shared interesting reflections in the chat to come off mute and share with the group.



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When Have You Changed Your Mind? | 15 mins

Ask students about times in their lives they've changed their mind because their current mindset no longer suited them.

Start with something simple like their mindset about exercise, then move into more complexity like when they changed their mind about a long held belief.

Examples might be:

- What is right and wrong
- What they want out of life
- What success looks like
- A political or religious viewpoint
- Someone they used to dislike or like

After a few minutes of individual reflection, invite a few to share, closing with the thought:

"So we've all decided to change our minds at some point or another when we realized we couldn't carry our old mindsets with us anymore."



Examining Your Current Mindsets | 20 mins

Remind students the learning from the video that we all have default mindsets which affect the way we see the world and interact with others.

To begin, ask them to reflect individually on some of their default mindsets. To help them zero in on this, try offering the following prompts:



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Examining Your Current Mindsets | continued

- People should always...
- People should never...
- To be a good person you should...
- I can't stand it when others...
- I have a hard time accepting _____ about myself
- I just don't understand people who...
- I'm tired of having to listen to conversations about...
- I'll never be able to...
- I always be the kind of person who...

After some time to reflect, ask a few students to share, making sure to mention we're not here to judge their mindsets, we're only trying to raise our "antennae of awareness" as we discussed in the Masterclass video.

10

Ten Years From Now... | 5 mins

Invite students to imagine what kind of world they want to inhabit ten years from now. Invite them to reflect on the following phrases:

- I want to believe these things about myself...
- I want to believe these things about others...
- I want to live in a society where...
- I want every single person I encounter to feel...

Invite a few students to share.



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Tying it All Together | 10 mins

SAY: Let's look back on what we've discussed so far:

- Moments in your past when you've changed your mind because your growth depended on it
- Your current mindsets about yourself, others and the world
- What you want the world to look like ten years from now and who you hope to become

To tie this all together let's recall what was mentioned in the Masterclass video about our own self-awareness and its connection to empathy:

- We advance when we're aware
- We evolve when we empathize

Empathy drives us away from our old, unhelpful mindsets which close us off to the experience of others because we feel fear and shame.

When we apply the self-awareness we've practiced today and choose to upgrade our mindsets to include the experiences of others, we open up, find freedom from fear and become agents of justice and belonging.

Now, invite students to reflect individually on:

- **A mindset** they currently hold which might be closing them off to the experience of others because of fear or shame
- **The future** they want for themselves and how they might need to grow in order to realize that future
- **How it feels** to be understood by someone else and how they might give that gift of understanding to others by opening up to their experience and abandoning mindsets which have previously closed them off



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What Small Shift Will You Make? | 5 mins

Give the students one minute to consider an action they might take based on the previous reflection.

Then, go around the room (or virtual meeting) rapid-fire by calling on each student to ask them to share one small shift they can make with regard to their own mindsets about others who might think differently than them which could lead toward more empathy, understanding and justice for every individual.

