



EARTHE

Activity 2

Digital toolkit for innovative curriculum and methodological development

Module – Empathy and Resilience

Method - The role of empathy in conflict



Module 6 - Empathy & Resilience

Case study - Transforming Tension: Using Empathy to Resolve Workplace Conflict

Related Method - The Role of Empathy in Conflict

Context and Background

Organisation: A vocational training centre providing employability skills programmes for adults.

Target Group: Adults aged 25–50, mixed gender, including unemployed learners preparing for re-entry into the labour market and employees seeking to strengthen teamwork skills.

Scope: The programme aimed to improve learners' ability to manage workplace conflict through communication strategies rooted in empathy.

Problem / Challenge Presented

Many learners described workplace or community conflicts that escalated due to poor communication. Participants often felt unheard, dismissed, or defensive. Migrants in the group highlighted additional challenges from cultural misunderstandings. Educators observed that learners lacked strategies to pause, listen, and consider others' perspectives during disagreements.

Actions Taken / Method Applied

The centre implemented *The Role of Empathy in Conflict* method as part of a resilience training module.

Key actions included:

- Introducing empathy techniques (paraphrasing, perspective-taking, asking open questions).
- Running structured role-plays where learners acted out conflicts with and without empathy to compare outcomes.
- Using the “Walking in Their Shoes” activity, where learners retold a conflict from their opponent's viewpoint.
- Facilitating group reflections to connect lessons to real-life conflicts.

Outcomes and Results

Learners reported feeling less attacked when conflicts were approached with empathetic listening.

Participants began using paraphrasing (“So what I hear you saying is...”) to check understanding before responding.

Several learners used empathy skills in family or workplace disputes and shared positive results, such as calmer discussions and quicker resolutions.



Migrant participants noted that empathy helped them explain misunderstandings without escalating tension.

Lessons Learned

Empathy does not eliminate conflict, but it changes the tone, making solutions possible.

Role-playing both sides of a conflict builds deeper perspective-taking skills.

Learners need structured reflection to connect practice to their own lives and conflicts.

Key Success Factors

Clear, relatable conflict scenarios drawn from daily life (workload disputes, family disagreements).

Facilitator modelling empathetic communication techniques.

Small group settings that created safety and trust.

Peer observation checklists that highlighted specific positive behaviours

Challenges Encountered and How They Were Addressed

Some learners thought empathy meant “agreeing” with the other person. Facilitators clarified that empathy is about **understanding, not agreeing**.

Some role-plays became heated. Facilitators paused sessions, reminded learners of ground rules, and debriefed calmly.

Migrants sometimes struggled with vocabulary; facilitators encouraged paraphrasing in simple words and validated effort over perfection.

Applicability / Recommendations for Educators

Always begin with low-stakes scenarios to build confidence before moving to sensitive topics.

Emphasise that empathy is a skill, not a personality trait—it can be learned and practised.

Provide structured tools (e.g., empathy cards, sentence starters) to support learners in real-time.

Debrief thoroughly, linking role-play experiences to learners’ real-life contexts.

Encourage practice outside class (e.g., in family discussions) and reflections in journals.