

DIGITAL SOCIAL IMPACT



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Encouraging Prosocial Actions in Students

Description

Encouraging Prosocial Actions in Students

Students watch videos on prosocial (kind, helpful) action, complete self-reflection activities, and plan and record their prosocial acts over ten consecutive days. They finish with a reflection on the impact of their actions. This lesson comes from Greater Good in Education which offers free research-based and informed strategies and practices for the social, emotional, and ethical development of students.

[Course Configurator](#) > [Step 1: Design](#)

Best used for

Helping students see the value and benefits of kindness, it could be a warm-up or taster lesson to a larger scale Digital Social Impact project

In the context of Digital Social Impact courses and learning activities

It directly introduces students to the concept of social impact

Main Target Group

Lectures, Students and Local Communities

Potential tools for digitising this activity

Videos are involved in suggestive delivery, it could also be turned into a fully online lesson with a focus on pro-social online activities

Additional Resources

[See full lesson guidelines on Greater Good in Education](#)

Step by Step

1

Introduction

Ask students:

Do you think it's possible to make a difference in other people's lives? Why or why not?

How do you think an act of kindness might affect the person receiving the kindness?

Is it hard to be kind or to do kind acts for others? Why or why not?

Next, ask students what they think “prosocial behavior” means.

After taking several responses, tell them that it's the term that scientists use for “voluntary actions aimed at advancing the welfare of other people.” In other words, it's when a person offers some form of help or kindness to someone else because they care about their well-being.

Ask students:

What are some examples of prosocial behavior that you've seen or done yourself?

What does it feel like to be on the receiving end of kindness?

What does it feel like to be the one offering kindness?

Is it possible to increase the kindness we offer to others? In other words, is the amount of kindness a person shows fixed, or can it change? Why or why not?

Explain to students that over the next ten days, they will test whether it's possible to increase our kind behavior using a method from an actual research study.

2

Show students Video #1: [Prosocial Project Introduction](#)

After watching the video, ask them if anything surprised them about the benefits of prosocial behavior for the person who acts prosocially. Why or why not?

Before showing students Video #2: [NCAA Softball Player Carried by Opponents After Injury](#), ask

them to notice if they have any kind of physical or emotional reaction to what they see. Then show the video.

After watching the video, ask students to share any physical or emotional reaction they felt. If anyone felt warm and uplifted watching the video, you might mention that this is what scientists call “elevation.” The experience of elevation can often increase our desire to act prosocially.

3

Reflection Activities

Note: These can be done in class or as homework to allow students ample time for reflection.

Explain to students that they are going to be completing three reflections on what’s important to them, their values, and the kind of person they want to be.

Assure them that there are no right or wrong answers, and that they should answer the questions as honestly as possible.

Let them know that they won’t be sharing their responses with other students or with you. If assigning these handouts as homework, you might tell students that you just need to check that they completed them.

Give students the three handouts:

Identity Warm-up Handout

Value Identification Handout

Best Possible Self Handout

If completing these handouts in class, you might ask students to discuss afterwards as a class:

How did it feel to complete these exercises

Did anything surprise you?

Was anything clarified about who you are or want to be?

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Prosocial Planning

*Note: The Part 2 activities are designed to inspire students to want to behave prosocially and to be thinking about meaningful content, e.g., their core values, their most important relationships, which would then direct their plans for helping others. Therefore, **it would be ideal to complete Part 3 as soon as possible after Part 2.***

Give each student a **Prosocial Planning Handout** and a **Prosocial Behavior Log Handout**. Review the items on the Prosocial Planning Handout. Ask students if they can think of things to add.

Explain to students that for the next ten days, they are going to make a plan each day for how they can be helpful to others. Then, at the end of each day, they are to use the Prosocial Behavior Log to record what they actually did, their reaction to their actions, and the impact of their actions on others.

Let students know that to get the most out of this exercise, it’s very important that they do this each day rather than try to remember what they did if they forget to fill in the log—our memories

aren't always accurate.

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Part 4: Final Reflection

Note: This can be done as homework.

After students track their behaviors for ten days, give each of them a **Final Reflection Handout**. Ask them to complete it in class or as homework. They will need to refer to their answers on the Identity Warm-up Handout, Value Identification Handout, and Best Possible Self Handout in order to complete this reflection.