

Ability to show students the monthly video ([www.everymondaymatters.org](http://www.everymondaymatters.org)), if appropriate.

Prep time: 5 mins.



As this is the first Monday of the month, we recommend presenting this Monthly Kick-Off activity and if appropriate, the monthly video. Or, at a minimum, offer highlights from this activity plan.

## MONTHLY KICK-OFF

**1) SHARE THIS MONTH'S THEME WITH STUDENTS: "MONDAY GETS UNDERSTANDING"**

**2) SHOW STUDENTS THE "MONDAY GETS GRATEFUL" VIDEO.**

- The "MONDAY GETS UNDERSTANDING" video can be found at [www.everymondaymatters.org](http://www.everymondaymatters.org). Click on "MONTHLY VIDEOS" on the homepage.

**3) ASK A FEW OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TO WARM STUDENTS UP ON THIS MONTH'S FOCUS:**

**\*NOTE:** *Choose questions appropriate to your students' ages, grades, ability levels, and classroom goals. Students may share their answers in pairs, small groups, or as a large group.*

- **What does the word "UNDERSTANDING" mean?**
  - Answer: Being aware of other people's feelings, or being tolerant and forgiving
- **What are some ways that you can be "UNDERSTANDING" to the people around you?**
- **How does it feel when someone is "UNDERSTANDING" to you?**
- **Is it always easy to be "UNDERSTANDING" to others?**
  - Why or why not?
- **How can doing your best to be "UNDERSTANDING" to others be helpful to them?**
- **How can being "UNDERSTANDING" help your relationships?**
- **How can "UNDERSTANDING" help you make connections in your community and in the world?**
- **How is curiosity related to being "UNDERSTANDING"?**
- **Do you think being empathetic, or trying to walk in someone else's shoes, can help you "GET UNDERSTANDING"?**
  - How so?
- **How might righting a wrong, or repairing a relationship, help you lead an "UNDERSTANDING" life?**

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- Do you think committing to being “UNDERSTANDING” can help you build bridges and strong relationships with other people?
    - How so?
  - What are some reasons to “GET UNDERSTANDING”?
  - Why is it important to be “UNDERSTANDING” in all different circumstances?
  - How can “GETTING UNDERSTANDING” show you that YOU MATTER and can make a difference in the world?
  - How can committing to being “UNDERSTANDING” help show others that they MATTER?
  - How will being “UNDERSTANDING” with others in your community and in the world show us all that WE MATTER?
  - What might the world be like if we all “GOT UNDERSTANDING” and empathetic more often?
    - How might we all grow and change for the better, and make a world that’s better for all of us in it?

**4) SHARE THE MONTHLY SITUATION AND CHALLENGE (PAGE 3) WITH STUDENTS BY READING IT OUT LOUD OR ASKING A STUDENT TO DO SO:**

- Consider having students use this information as the foundation for a writing prompt. Let them form their own questions or provide them one or two to answer, using the challenge that lies ahead of them for the month

**5) CONSIDER SHARING THE MONTHLY FACTS (PAGES 4-6) WITH STUDENTS.**

- This can be done now or throughout the month
- The MONTHLY FACTS are an integrated learning tool for you to use, as desired and appropriate

**6) SHARE THE UPCOMING WEEKLY THEMES WITH STUDENTS.**

- Monday, March 4 - “BE CURIOUS”
- Monday, March 11 - “WALK IN THEIR SHOES”
- Monday, March 18 - “RIGHT A WRONG”
- Monday, March 25 - “BUILD BRIDGES”

**7) GET STUDENTS EXCITED ABOUT MAKING MARCH ALL ABOUT “MONDAY GETS UNDERSTANDING” AND SEEING HOW A LITTLE OPENNESS, COMPASSION, AND EMPATHY CAN MAKE A HUGE DIFFERENCE IN THEIR LIVES AND THE LIVES OF OTHERS, BOTH NOW AND IN THE FUTURE.**

**8) ENJOY THE FIRST WEEK’S THEME AND ACTIVITIES: “BE CURIOUS”**

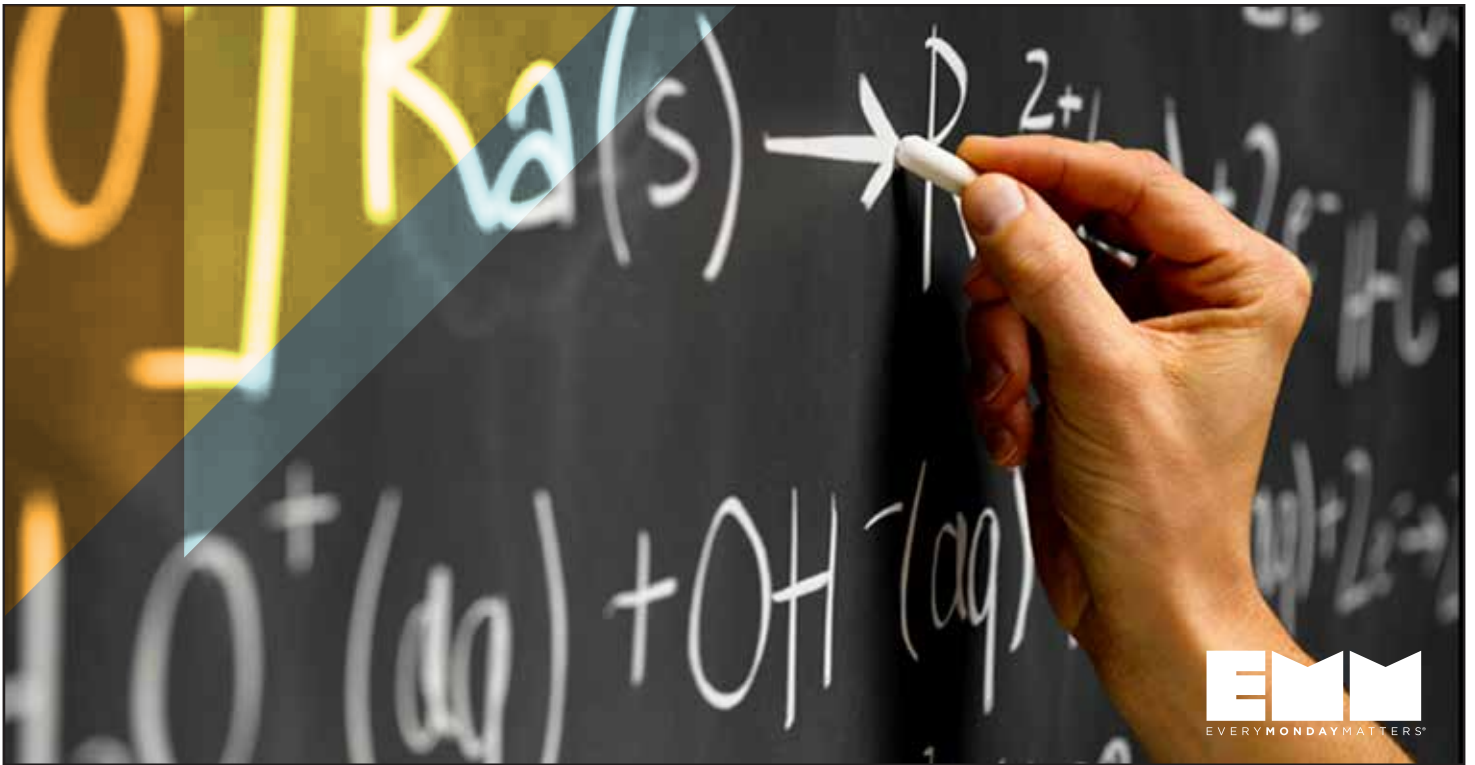


## THE SITUATION

Each of us has a story, and every one of us wants to be understood, seen, and known. But understanding goes both ways. When someone is different from us, we can do one of two things—approach them with the intention of understanding them, or go on believing what we’ve always believed. This month, we’re challenging everyone to GET UNDERSTANDING. March is all about approaching others with empathy, curiosity, and an open mind. It’s about recognizing that we don’t know everything, and that understanding takes time and different perspectives. This month, we want you to make understanding a priority and ask a whole lot of questions—and get ready to learn a whole heck of a lot. It’s going to be fun. Getting understanding matters.

## THE CHALLENGE

It’s easy to say we value understanding other people, but do we actually put in the work? This month, we’re going to prioritize learning as we approach others and situations with open minds. We’ll practice hearing others out and asking questions to understand their thoughts and beliefs. We’ll remember that no one knows absolutely everything, and that’s okay. We’ll practice not needing to be right all the time and stop trying to prove our worth in that way. So this month, take the opportunity to be part of a movement that’s headed toward more understanding. Be the change you want to see in the world, and remember that you, your words, and your actions have an impact. This month, start approaching others and situations with more understanding so others will, too.



## MONTHLY FACTS

**UNDERSTANDING (ADJECTIVE):** CHARACTERIZED BY UNDERSTANDING; PROMPTED BY, BASED ON, OR DEMONSTRATING COMPREHENSION, INTELLIGENCE, DISCERNMENT, EMPATHY, OR THE LIKE.

-[www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com)

**IMAGINE A WORLD IN WHICH PEOPLE INTERACTED WITH EACH OTHER LIKE ANTS OR FISH. IMAGINE A DAY AT WORK LIKE THIS, OR IN YOUR FAMILY, AWARE OF THE SURFACE BEHAVIOR OF THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU BUT OBLIVIOUS TO THEIR INNER LIFE WHILE THEY REMAIN UNMOVED BY YOUR OWN. THAT'S A WORLD WITHOUT EMPATHY. EMPATHIC BREAKDOWNS SHAKE THE FOUNDATION OF A RELATIONSHIP; JUST RECALL A TIME YOU FELT MISUNDERSTOOD - OR EVEN WORSE, A TIME WHEN THE OTHER PERSON COULDN'T CARE LESS ABOUT UNDERSTANDING YOU... POOR EMPATHY IS THE CORE PROBLEM IN MOST TROUBLED COUPLES OR FAMILIES; WITHOUT IT, NOTHING GOOD IS LIKELY TO HAPPEN. WITH IT, EVEN THE TOUGHEST ISSUES CAN BE RESOLVED.**

-Hanson, Rick; *Try to Understand Others*; *Psychology Today*; September 2018

**FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS ALIKE, CURIOSITY HAS BEEN LINKED WITH PSYCHOLOGICAL, EMOTIONAL, SOCIAL, AND EVEN HEALTH BENEFITS. HERE ARE SIX OF THEM!**

- 1) CURIOSITY HELPS US SURVIVE**
- 2) CURIOUS PEOPLE ARE HAPPIER**
- 3) CURIOSITY BOOSTS ACHIEVEMENT**
- 4) CURIOSITY CAN EXPAND OUR EMPATHY**
- 5) CURIOSITY HELPS STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS**
- 6) CURIOSITY IMPROVES HEALTHCARE**

-Campbell, Emily; *Six Surprising Benefits of Curiosity*; *Greater Good Magazine*; September 2015

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**NOW, KNOWING THE IMPORTANCE OF CURIOSITY, HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO DEVELOP IT:**

- 1) KEEP AN OPEN MIND: BE OPEN TO LEARN, UNLEARN, AND RELEARN. SOME THINGS YOU KNOW AND BELIEVE MIGHT BE WRONG, AND YOU SHOULD BE PREPARED TO ACCEPT THIS POSSIBILITY AND CHANGE YOUR MIND.**
- 2) DON'T TAKE THINGS AS GRANTED: TRY TO DIG DEEPER BENEATH THE SURFACE OF WHAT IS AROUND YOU.**
- 3) ASK QUESTIONS RELENTLESSLY: WHAT, WHY, WHEN, WHO, WHERE, AND HOW ARE THE BEST FRIENDS OF CURIOUS PEOPLE.**
- 4) DON'T LABEL SOMETHING AS BORING: WHENEVER YOU LABEL SOMETHING AS BORING, YOU CLOSE ONE MORE DOOR OF POSSIBILITIES.**
- 5) SEE LEARNING AS SOMETHING FUN: IF YOU THINK OF LEARNING AS SOMETHING FUN, YOU WILL NATURALLY WANT TO DIG DEEPER.**
- 6) READ DIVERSE KINDS OF READING: DON'T SPEND TOO MUCH TIME ON JUST ONE WORLD; TAKE A LOOK AT ANOTHER WORLD. IT WILL INTRODUCE YOU TO THE POSSIBILITIES AND EXCITEMENT OF OTHER WORLDS WHICH MAY SPARK YOUR INTEREST TO EXPLORE SOMETHING FURTHER.**

*-Latumahina, Donald; 4 Reasons Why Curiosity is Important and How to Develop It; Lifehack*

**BEING ABLE TO EMPATHIZE MEANS TO BE CAPABLE OF IDENTIFYING AND UNDERSTANDING ANOTHER PERSON'S FEELINGS, WITHOUT EXPERIENCING THEM FOR YOURSELF AT THAT PARTICULAR MOMENT. IT IS THE ABILITY TO LITERALLY EXPERIENCE THE WORLD FROM ANOTHER PERSON'S PERSPECTIVE; TO WALK IN THEIR SHOES, TO VIEW LIFE FROM THEIR LIVING CONDITIONS AND TO FEEL WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO BE THAT PERSON.**

*-Mueller, Steve; Developing Empathy: Walk a Mile in Someone's Shoes; Planet of Success; March 2017*

**MORE AND MORE, WE LIVE IN BUBBLES. MOST OF US ARE SURROUNDED BY PEOPLE WHO LOOK LIKE US, VOTE LIKE US, EARN LIKE US, SPEND MONEY LIKE US, HAVE EDUCATIONS LIKE US AND WORSHIP LIKE US. THE RESULT IS AN EMPATHY DEFICIT, AND IT'S AT THE ROOT OF MANY OF OUR BIGGEST PROBLEMS. IT'S BECAUSE OF HOW HOMOGENEOUS PEOPLE'S SOCIAL CIRCLES HAVE BECOME, AND ALSO BECAUSE HUMANS NATURALLY HOLD BIASES. BUT RESEARCHERS HAVE DISCOVERED THAT FAR FROM BEING AN IMMUTABLE TRAIT, EMPATHY CAN BE DEVELOPED. THERE ARE STEPS PEOPLE CAN TAKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR BIASES AND TO MOVE BEYOND THEIR OWN WORLDVIEWS TO TRY TO UNDERSTAND THOSE HELD BY OTHER PEOPLE. BONUS: YOU'LL MAKE NEW FRIENDS ALONG THE WAY... WHILE SOME PEOPLE ARE NATURALLY MORE EMPATHETIC, THERE ARE EXERCISES THAT ANYONE CAN DO TO IMPROVE:**

- TALK TO NEW PEOPLE**
- TRY OUT SOMEONE ELSE'S LIFE**
- JOIN FORCES FOR A SHARED CAUSE**
- ADMIT YOU'RE BIASED**
- BE HONEST WITH YOURSELF**
- CHECK YOUR PRIVILEGE**
- STAND UP FOR OTHERS**
- TAKE ACTION**
- AMPLIFY OTHER VOICES**
- READ BOOKS**
- BE OPEN TO CHANGING YOUR MIND**

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- **LEARN TO LISTEN**

- **REMEMBER: IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE HARD**

*-Miller, Clair; How to Be More Empathetic; The New York Times*

**FORGIVE ME FOR STATING THE OBVIOUS, BUT FORGIVENESS IS IN THE AIR THESE DAYS. EVERY WEEK, OUR NEWS FEEDS FILL WITH SOMEONE OR OTHER ASKING FOR FORGIVENESS... THE REAL WORK, [RABBI JOSEPH TELUSHKIN] EXPLAINED, IS WHEN YOU'VE BEEN HARMED BY SOMEONE YOU'RE CLOSE TO AND YOU WORK THROUGH ALL THE CONFLICTING FEELINGS TO GET TO A PLACE OF DIGNITY AND PEACE. SO HOW DO YOU DO THAT, ESPECIALLY THOSE OF US WHO HAVE RUPTURES WITHIN OUR OWN FAMILIES?**

- **ADMIT VULNERABILITY**

- **APOLOGIZE. NO, REALLY APOLOGIZE**

- **IF YOU WANT TO BE FORGIVEN, ASK**

- **HOW DO YOU GET TO FORGIVENESS? PRACTICE**

*-Feiler, Bruce; How to Ask for Forgiveness, in Four Steps; The New York Times; September 2015*

**NO MATTER WHO IS LEADING THE MOST POWERFUL COUNTRY IN THE WORLD, WE EACH HAVE A CHOICE TO BE KIND. WE CAN ALL TREAT THOSE AROUND US WITH ACCEPTANCE, LOVE AND RESPECT. THAT WILL NEVER CHANGE. WE MUST LEAD WITH HOPE AND NOT FEAR. BECAUSE WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER. AS JENS STOLTENBERG ONCE SAID, "WHEN AUTUMN DARKNESS FALLS, WHAT WE WILL REMEMBER ARE THE SMALL ACTS OF KINDNESS: A CAKE, A HUG, AN INVITATION TO TALK, AND EVERY SINGLE ROSE. THESE ARE ALL EXPRESSIONS OF A NATION COMING TOGETHER AND CARING ABOUT ITS PEOPLE." LET'S BUILD A BRIDGE TO A NEW DAY PAVED IN KINDNESS AND RESPECT FOR OTHERS. AND THEN CROSS IT TOGETHER.**

*-Kukolic, Siobhan; Build Bridges Not Walls; Huffington Post; November 2017*