



# In My Shoes

## Educators' Guide



# about

This document is intended to help teachers or other discussion facilitators host empathy workshops using the online games created by Soristic.

## **About Soristic Impact Collective**

Soristic Impact Collective is a social enterprise that seeks to support poverty alleviation and reduction of inequalities in communities in ASEAN. We strive to be enablers for social change through our work with businesses, non-profits, organisations and communities in four main areas: impact monitoring and evaluation; research and consulting; capacity building; and philanthropy and CSR advisory.

## **Contact us**

To find out more about this project or our other work, visit our website at [www.soristic.asia](http://www.soristic.asia) or reach out via [connect@soristic.asia](mailto:connect@soristic.asia).

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# introduction

Empathy refers to the ability to understand and share others' feelings without having experienced them firsthand.

It is a valuable skill for young people to develop, having been linked to both high academic performance (Lundy, 2007) and strong interpersonal relationships with a diverse range of peers (Lu, Dane, and Gellman, 2005). It is particularly relevant in Singapore's competitive and multicultural educational environment, and increasingly so given the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on exposing several underlying inequalities.

With this context in mind, Soristic has developed workshops to help young people develop their empathy skills. The workshops comprise two components:

- a. Online simulation exercise
- b. Semi-structured discussion

Due to this format, the workshops can be conducted either remotely or in person.

The remainder of this document is structured around these components in order to facilitate preparation for the workshop session.

# online game

There are two games to choose from:

- a. Youth
- b. Seniors

We recommend that you play through the games yourself before the workshop for familiarisation and to aid with troubleshooting if necessary.

Both exercises are similarly formatted. The instructions for gameplay are on the game websites and How-To-Play guide, but we have provided a general version below.

## *Instructions*

**Step 1.** Fill in the form with your age and gender details (this is completely anonymous).

**Step 2.** Read and understand the objective of the game.

**Step 3.** Choose a character to play as.

**Step 4.** Read the character information. You will be able to refer back to it in the bottom left-hand corner of your screen during gameplay.

**Step 5.** Choose your character's responses to the scenarios, keeping in mind the point types (e.g. health, social, money) and quantities that you need to meet the objective (if applicable).

# discussion

These games are designed as conversation starters and thus their content has been streamlined to maintain player engagement, hence they should not be treated as exhaustive representations of life for disadvantaged people. We highly recommend having an interactive discussion component after gameplay. A possible lesson plan may be:

## **I. Introducing the exercises (15 minutes)**

This stage will understandably be tailored to the age ranges and backgrounds of each class. Nonetheless, some important points to highlight might include:

- That the focus of the lesson is on empathy;
- Getting participants to share what they think empathy means/a situation in which they have used empathy/a situation in which empathy would be useful;
- An introduction to the specific game they are playing and relevant concepts e.g. the objective, choosing a character, having points, and facing various scenarios.

## **II. Gameplay (20 minutes for all characters in one game)**

We recommend focusing the workshop on one game only (i.e. either Youth or Seniors) in order to prompt richer discussion.

In order to facilitate a richer understanding of empathy, participants should play through all three characters in the chosen game, and record their thoughts on the relevant space in the How-To-Play guide. This process should take approximately half an hour.

# discussion

From our rounds of testing, we have identified some points that may need emphasising:

## ***Reading the character backgrounds***

Participants may be tempted to press 'Continue' and skip learning about their character, but active listening is an important part of building empathy. It may be useful to:

- actively encourage participants to read their character background
- invite one or two of them to share what they know about their character with the rest of the group
- remind them that they can always click the bottom-left icon to refer back to this information during the game.

## ***Being reflective***

Some of the scenarios contain a lot of information that may distract participants from the overall lesson. It may be helpful to remind participants that they have space for notes in the How-To-Play guide and to record anything that was particularly difficult, confusing, or interesting.

## ***"Winning" isn't everything***

Some participants may have an easier experience playing specific characters, either because of the character backgrounds or because they are familiar with the themes. If a student finishes playing a character relatively quickly, encourage them to play as another character and note down some thoughts about each experience.

# discussion

## ***Losing isn't everything, either***

Similarly, some characters may be more difficult for participants: this could be because they are unfamiliar, but also because they might be *too* familiar. However, the point of this exercise is to highlight such experiences. If participants become disheartened, encourage them to think about how feeling disheartened is evidence of their ability to be empathetic.

## **III. Discussion (30-45 minutes)**

The discussion component should comprise the majority of the session. Participants' (in-game and personal) experiences will vary from group to group, so this can be a loosely structured conversation.

We recommend that you start with more straightforward questions, such as:

- Did any of your points drop significantly? Did you trigger any wildcards?
- Which characters did you find the most interesting? Which characters did you find the most difficult?
- Another option for this section is to ask participants what made them Glad, Sad, Puzzled and/or Mad about the characters they played.

Then, you can move on to linking these questions to the wider discussion, with prompts such as:

- Do you think that each character had an equally easy or difficult time?
- How fair were the scenarios that the characters encountered?

# discussion

- Did you find yourself having to make any compromises/sacrifices (e.g. conserving health but having social points decrease)? How did that make you feel?
- Is there anything that frustrated you, and why?

Lastly (and most importantly), you can start a discussion about how the games/discussions may influence real life:

- Imagine that you know people that were like the characters in the game. Do you think that you would be aware of everything they are going through?
- **Only if participants are willing**, open up a discussion as to whether they felt the simulations were accurate or inaccurate, and whether they were similar or different to any of the characters.
- If applicable, it may be worth reminding participants that for them, this might just be a game/simulation - having the ability to 'switch off' is a privilege.
- It may also be worth reminding participants that these are only a small sample of the circumstances people find themselves in - no one situation is inherently bad, but everyone's life is complex.
- It is crucial to **end the session on a constructive note** - you could brainstorm ways to include and help the various characters in innovative ways, such as asking "How would you help Terry keep his ice-cream business afloat?"
- Do you think your mind and/or behaviour will change after having this conversation? If so, how? (Participants may respond that they will "be more empathetic"; ask for details where possible.)
- Any other takeaways.





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