

Lesson Plan: Kindness, Inclusion, Empathy, and Self-Acceptance

Duration: 1-1½ hours

Age Group: 5–7 years (KS1)

Learning Objectives:

- Understand kindness, inclusion, empathy, and self-acceptance.
 - Recognise and respect differences in others.
 - Develop empathy through storytelling and discussion.
 - Participate in activities that promote kindness and inclusion.
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Ideal for use During Themed Weeks and Awareness Days, such as:

World Kindness Day, Empathy Week, Disability Pride Month, Disability History Month, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, Anti-Bullying Week, and Children's Mental Health Week.

Materials:

- *Damson's Friendship Wish* by Deborah Lawson
- Whiteboard and markers
- Coloured pencils/crayons
- Printable Resources from [Damson's Friendship Wish](https://deborah-lawson.co.uk/damsons-friendship-wish/): 'Draw Yourself in Damson's Forest' scene (for self-portraits)

Optional:

- Cut out forest scene (visual reference for the story and circle time)
 - Colouring pages and worksheets (for extension or take-home)
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Lesson Outline:

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

- **Warm-up Question:** "What is kindness?" Write responses on the whiteboard.
 - Briefly explain that kindness is about doing something to help others feel respected, cared for, or included.

- Ask: "How can we include others?"
 - Introduce the main themes: kindness, inclusion, empathy, and self-acceptance.
 - **Optional:** Have the cut-out forest scene set up and explain how the story is about a deer who wants to make friends.
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2. Storytime: Damson's Friendship Wish (15 minutes)

- Read the book to the class. Engage the children by asking:
 - "Why does Damson feel different from the other animals?"
 - "What do you think the animals felt when they ran away? Were they scared, busy, or surprised?"
 - "How do the other animals show kindness?"
 - "How does Damson feel at the end with his new friends?"
 - "What does Damson learn?"
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3. Group Discussion (10 minutes)

Key Themes:

- **Empathy:** Damson felt different, but his friends showed understanding and kindness.
- **Inclusion:** Everyone is different in their own way, and understanding that helps us become good friends.
- **Self-Acceptance:** Damson learned it's okay to be different and to embrace who he is.

Discussion Questions:

- "How can we be kind to someone who feels different?"
 - "Can you share a time when you helped someone, or someone helped you?"
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4. Practical Activity: "What Makes Me Special?" (15 minutes)

- **Objective:** Celebrate unique qualities and promote self-acceptance.
- Hand out the 'Draw yourself in Damson's Forest' scene. Ask children to draw a self-portrait in the forest, colour it in, and write something special about themselves (e.g., "I'm a good friend," "I help others").
- **Extension:** If time permits, consider having children share their portraits and something special about themselves with a peer.

5. Activity: "The Friendship Circle" (10 minutes)

- **Objective:** Promote inclusion and empathy.
 - Form a circle and pass around a 'friendship token' (or pass around Damson from the cut-out forest scene if used).
 - Each child shares one way they can show kindness, e.g.:
 - "I'll include everyone in games."
 - "I'll help when someone is sad."
 - "I will sit with someone who is alone at lunch."
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6. Reflection and Closing (5 minutes)

- **Group Affirmation:** Invite the children to create a group affirmation. For example:
 - "We are all kind, we are all friends, and it's okay to be different."
 - **Wrap-up:** Encourage each child to think of one act of kindness they can do today.
 - To extend learning at home, share the resource link with families in an email or newsletter: <https://deborah-lawson.co.uk/damsons-friendship-wish/>.
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Optional Extension Activities for Future Lessons:

These activities can be used in follow-up lessons or as optional activities to reinforce the themes of kindness, inclusion, empathy, and self-acceptance.

1. Kindness Challenge:

- Over the next few days, encourage children to:
 - Include someone new in a game.
 - Compliment someone for being kind.

2. Kindness Tree:

- Create a classroom display and add a "leaf" for each act of kindness the children share over the coming weeks.
- Label leaves with themes like "teamwork," "kindness," or "friendship."

3. Worksheets (Downloadable from the Author's Website):

- Use the word search, missing letters, and counting worksheets to reinforce vocabulary during wet playtime or as take-home tasks.

4. Colouring in (Downloadable from the Author's Website):

- Children can colour in the pictures of Damson during wet playtime, as a wind-down at the end of a lesson, or as take-home tasks.

5. Cut-out Forest Scene (Downloadable from the Author's Website):

- Ideal for creative days (e.g. end-of-term).
 - Tie into art or science lessons about habitats or ecosystems.
 - Use as part of a kindness-themed display for special events.

6. Role-Playing Scenarios (Future Lesson Activity):

- Use role-playing to illustrate scenarios about kindness, inclusion, and empathy. For example, act out a situation where someone feels left out or different and then invite students to suggest ways to make that person feel better.

7. Feelings Cards (For Future Lessons):

- Introduce cards with different emotions (e.g. happy, sad, surprised, nervous) and ask children to choose the card that best reflects how Damson might have felt in different parts of the story. This can support children who need help identifying emotions.

8. Visual Prompts (Future Lessons):

- Show images of different people, animals, or situations where kindness is needed and ask the children how they would respond. This could help trigger more ideas, particularly for visual learners.

9. Kindness Wall (Future Lesson Activity):

- After the "What Makes Me Special?" activity, you could create a Kindness Wall in the classroom where the children's self-portraits are displayed.
- Pair up the children so they can write a compliment or a positive attribute about each other to post next to the portraits. This ensures everyone receives a kind word and helps to promote a continued sense of kindness, inclusion, and self-acceptance.