Art4Wellbeing

SESSION 3

Empathy: Seeing Through Another Lens

Project nr. 2025-2-NL02-KA210-YOU-000368916

ART FORM USED	Photography

TOTAL DURATION	MAIN OBJECTIVE	SESSION PURPOSE
90 minutes	To build empathy by helping participants see that the same moment looks different through different eyes, separate observation from assumption, and practise curiosity toward other perspectives through photography.	To move from playful perspective shifts to guided photo-making, shared viewing and supportive listening, without pressure to disclose personal experiences or to be photographed.

Materials

Smartphones (one per participant or pair); a selection of printed image cards; A4 paper and scissors for paper frames; handouts (Seen / Imagined / Can't Know; perspective cards); one everyday object per group; pens and coloured markers; post-it notes in three colours; tape; optional calm background music; the Group Agreement from Activity 1 visible on the wall.

Session at a Glance

NO.	ACTIVITY	TIME	FOCUS
3.1	Finger Frames	10 min	Warm-up: attention, framing and the idea that we all look from somewhere
3.2	Seen / Imagined / Can't Know	15 min	Visual bridge: separate observation from assumption
3.3	Same Frame, Different Eyes	35 min	Main photo activity: one object, many viewpoints; then a photo through someone else's eyes
3.4	Silent Gallery & Empathy Echo	20 min	Supportive sharing: curiosity-based feedback and listening
3.5	Session Evaluation & Closing	10 min	Integrate learning and close safely

Methodological Basis

This session follows the same experiential logic as the previous sessions: warm-up → visual bridge → main activity → sharing → reflection; voluntary participation; visual prompts; strength- and curiosity-based feedback. It draws inspiration from perspective-taking exercises, the See–Think–Wonder visual thinking routine, participatory (photovoice-style) photography and mirroring practices. The central idea: empathy begins when we replace certainty ("I know how you feel") with curiosity ("What might this look like from where you are?").

Before the Session: Preparation Checklist

Suggested group: 8–20 participants. Photography is done with smartphones; a no-phone alternative is given below.

- Print or prepare **30–40 image cards** with a mix of subjects and moods. Choose images that can be read in more than one way.
- Print one **"Seen / Imagined / Can't Know"** handout per participant (Handout 1).
- Print and cut the **perspective cards** (about 15, see Handout 2).
- Select **one everyday object** per group of 3–4 (cup, shoe, plant, chair, keys, scarf).
- Check that phones are charged and have storage. Ask in advance who has no phone or does not wish to use one, and prepare paper frames or a shared phone.
- Mark a **safe photography zone** (the room, corridor, courtyard) and agree on a return time.
- Prepare wall or table space for the Silent Gallery.
- Keep the Safe Harbor group agreement visible and briefly remind the group of it at the start.

Adaptations

- **No phones:** use paper frames and cut-out viewfinders to "take" photos by framing, then sketch or describe the frame; or use image cards and disposable or instant cameras if available.
- **Limited mobility or indoor-only:** do Part 2 of 3.3 inside the room or from a seat, using the window, a table of objects or the image cards.
- **Mixed languages:** write the sentence starters on a flipchart in all group languages; use gesture and drawing; allow captions in any language.
- **Shorter time (60 min):** keep 3.1, 3.3 Part 2 (shorten the walk to 7 min), 3.4 and 3.5; use 3.2 as optional homework.
- **Larger group (20+):** run the Empathy Echo in groups of three and hold the Silent Gallery in two rounds.

Handout 1: Seen / Imagined / Can't Know

I SEE	I IMAGINE	I CAN'T KNOW
Only what anyone can observe: colours, objects, positions, light.	My guesses about feelings, thoughts, stories or context.	What I would have to ask in order to know.

Handout 2: Perspective Cards

Print and cut. The cards describe situations and feelings, not identities, to avoid stereotyping. Keep one blank card for participants who prefer to invent their own perspective.

Someone who has just arrived in a place they do not know yet.	Someone who is very tired at the end of a long day.
Someone who is nervous before something important.	Someone who is in a hurry.
Someone who is happy and wants to celebrate.	Someone who feels a little lonely.
Someone who is seeing this place for the very first time.	Someone who is very small, close to the ground.
Someone who is very curious about everything.	Someone who is waiting for good news.
Someone who is trying to feel calm.	Someone who loves this place.
Someone who does not feel welcome yet.	Someone who is looking for a friendly face.
Blank card: invent your own perspective.	

3.1 WARM-UP: FINGER FRAMES 10 MIN

Purpose

To bring attention into the room, introduce the idea of a "frame" (what is included and what is left out), and show playfully that two people standing side by side can notice very different things.

Instructions

1. Invite everyone to stand in a circle and take a comfortable breath together.

2. Demonstrate the **finger frame**: form two L-shapes with the hands to make a rectangle and look through it. Everyone tries it.

3. Ask each person to silently choose **one small detail** in the room (a texture, a shadow, a colour, an object) and frame it for about 20 seconds. They do not say what it is.

4. In pairs, standing side by side and facing the same direction, each person frames what catches their eye and describes it in one sentence. Partners notice **how different the choices are**.

5. Quick round in the circle: each person completes *"Today I look at the world with … eyes"* using one word, a colour or a gesture. Passing is always possible.

Facilitator Prompt

"We are going to start with our eyes. A frame shows us something and leaves something out. Choose one detail that catches your eye, not the most impressive one, just the one that calls you. Then see whether your partner chose the same thing. There is no right answer."

Facilitator Note

Keep the tone light. The only aim is to feel that "where I look from changes what I see". Do not comment on why people chose their details.

3.2 VISUAL BRIDGE: SEEN / IMAGINED / CAN'T KNOW 15 MIN

Purpose

To practise the first step of empathy: separating what we can actually observe from what we imagine, and noticing what we cannot know without asking. The third column opens the door to curiosity.

Instructions

1. Spread the image cards face up on the floor or on tables. Give each participant Handout 1 (or ask them to fold a sheet of paper in three columns).

2. Invite participants to walk around quietly and choose **one image that makes them curious**. It does not have to be the easiest or most beautiful one.

3. Individually (about 5 minutes), they fill in the three columns shown below.

1. I SEE	Only facts that anyone could observe: colours, objects, positions, expressions, light.
2. I IMAGINE	Guesses about feelings, thoughts, stories or context.
3. I CAN'T KNOW	What is impossible to know from the image alone and could only be learned by asking.

4. In pairs, they share their three columns (about 5 minutes). Partners notice how the "I imagine" column differs and where each guess might come from.

5. In the circle, invite a few volunteers to share one item from their "I can't know" column (about 4 minutes). Name that this column is where **empathy begins**: staying curious instead of being certain.

Facilitator Prompt

"Look at your image like a detective who is not allowed to conclude anything. First write only what you can see. Then write what you imagine. Finally, write what you cannot know. That last column is the most important one for today."

Facilitator Note

Do not tell participants what an image "really" shows. If someone's imagination goes in a stereotyping direction, gently ask, "What in the image tells us that, and what could be another explanation?" Keep it a question, not a correction.

3.3 MAIN ACTIVITY: SAME FRAME, DIFFERENT EYES 35 MIN

Purpose

To let participants experience empathy through the camera: first by discovering that one object can tell many stories depending on the viewpoint, then by trying to photograph the world through the eyes of an imagined other person, without disclosing anything personal.

Photo Ground Rules (read aloud before starting)

- Photograph objects, spaces, details, shadows and surfaces. Faces are not needed.
- Never photograph a person without asking and receiving a clear yes.
- Photos stay in this group. Nothing is posted or shared outside the room without agreement.
- Stay inside the agreed photography zone and return on time.

Part 1 - Same Object, Different Eyes

Duration: 15 minutes

1. Form groups of 3–4. Place **one everyday object** in the middle of each group.

2. Give a 2-minute mini-brief on how a photo changes: **angle** (low, eye level, high), **distance** (far, close-up), **light** (shadow, backlight, soft light) and **framing** (what you leave out).

3. Each person secretly chooses **"whose eyes"** they will photograph the object through: a very small child, a tired person at the end of the day, someone who has never seen this object before, someone who loves it, an ant, someone in a hurry. Each takes up to three photos and picks one (about 5 minutes).

4. Each group lays its photos side by side. The others guess, *"Whose eyes might these be?"* Then the photographer reveals their choice (about 6 minutes).

5. Short group talk (about 2 minutes): *"What changed between the photographs? What did we assume?"*

Part 2 - Through Someone Else's Eyes

Duration: 20 minutes

1. Each participant picks **one perspective card** (or invents their own). The cards describe situations and feelings, not identities. The perspective stays private until the gallery.

2. Participants go out alone or in pairs for about 10 minutes and take **up to three photos** "through the eyes of" their card. What would this person notice? What would they overlook? What would feel big, small, far, close, warm or cold?

3. Back in the room (about 5 minutes), each person chooses one photo and gives it a **short title**. They also write one sentence on a post-it: *"From this perspective I notice …"*

4. Place the photos (or the open phone screens, with auto-lock off) in the gallery space. Put each perspective card face down beside its photo, with the post-it sentence next to it.

Facilitator Prompt

"You are not trying to become someone else, and you cannot know what another person truly feels. You are trying to look in their direction with curiosity. Ask yourself: if this person walked through this space, what would draw their attention? Take your photo from there."

Safety Choice

Participants may photograph only objects or textures, use a paper frame instead of a camera, work with an image card instead of taking their own photo, choose a fictional or playful perspective, or pass on the second part and join as a gallery viewer. Do not ask whether a perspective 'really' is about them. Perspective cards are about situations ('someone who feels nervous'), not groups of people, to avoid stereotyping.

3.4 SUPPORTIVE SHARING: SILENT GALLERY & EMPATHY ECHO 20 MIN

Purpose

To let participants experience being seen with curiosity rather than judgement, and to practise listening and reflecting without interpreting or advising.

Part 1 - Silent Gallery

Duration: 8 minutes

1. Everyone walks silently through the gallery. Calm background music is optional.

2. At three or more photos, visitors leave a post-it using only these sentence starters: **“I see …”**, **“I wonder …”** or **“Thank you for showing …”**

3. Visitors may read the photographer’s title and sentence, but the perspective card stays face down for now.

Part 2 - Empathy Echo

Duration: 10 minutes + 2 minutes back in the circle

1. Form groups of three. Each person has about 3 minutes as the photographer.

2. The photographer turns the card over, tells which perspective they chose, and shares what they tried to notice, and what was easy or hard.

3. The two listeners reflect back using observation language: *“I heard …”, “I noticed …”, “When I saw your photo I wondered …”* They may check their understanding: *“Is this close to what you meant?”*

4. The photographer may answer “close”, “not quite” or nothing at all. Listeners do not interpret, advise or evaluate.

5. The photographer collects the post-its left on their photo and keeps **one word or sentence** they would like to carry with them.

6. Return to the full circle and invite volunteers to share one post-it they received or one thing they noticed about another person’s way of seeing.

Facilitator Prompt

“We are not deciding what a photo means or what anyone feels. We are showing the photographer that we looked and listened. Start with ‘I see’, ‘I wonder’ or ‘Thank you for showing’. If your guess is wrong, that is not a failure. It is exactly how empathy works: we guess, we check, we learn.”

Facilitator Note

If a photo prompts strong emotion in the photographer or a visitor, slow down, offer a choice (pause, step aside, pass) and follow the safeguarding steps agreed in Activity 1.

3.5	SESSION EVALUATION & CLOSING	10 MIN

Purpose

To check the group's sense of safety and connection, to integrate what participants noticed about perspective and empathy, and to close in a contained way.

Instructions

1. Invite participants back into a circle.

2. Ask for a quick **1–10 rating**: "How safe did it feel to share your photo and perspective today?" Participants show a number with their fingers or say it aloud.

3. Invite brief responses to the reflection questions below. Passing is allowed.

4. Finish with the **finger-frame gesture** from the beginning: each person frames the empty space in the middle of the circle and says one word for what they take away. The group may echo the gesture.

5. Thank the group and remind them that the Group Agreement stays visible and that the next session continues with listening.

Reflection Questions

1. What did you notice when you photographed the same object from a different point of view?

2. What is the difference between what you saw and what you imagined?

3. What was it like to look through someone else's eyes, even for a few minutes?

4. What did your "I can't know" column teach you?

5. Complete the sentence: *"Today I looked differently at …"* or *"For me, empathy is like …"*

Facilitator Closing Prompt

"Empathy does not mean knowing exactly how someone else feels. It means being curious, looking from another side, and asking. Thank you for sharing how you see. Take one word, one photo or one sentence from today with you."

Facilitator Principles

Voluntary participation	Sharing is invited, never required. Passing remains possible at every stage.
Non-interpretation	Do not interpret photos or perspectives; meaning belongs to the photographer.
Observation before assumption	Keep returning to "What do we see?" before "What do we imagine?"
Consent & privacy	No photos of people without a clear yes. Photos stay in the group.
Avoiding stereotypes	Use situation-based perspectives, not identity-based ones.
Inclusion	Offer paper frames, image cards, seated options and visual sentence starters.
Emotional boundaries	If strong emotion emerges, slow down, offer choice and grounding, and follow safeguarding procedures where necessary.
Pacing	Start light, move gradually toward reflection, keep 10 minutes for closing.

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