


Forget, Mirror Mirror on the Wall, You Have Mirror Neurons in your Brain!

TO COMPLEMENT SANFORD HARMONY'S 4TH GRADE SEL LESSON,
LEARNING FROM EMPATHY

Did you know, we all have some special cells in our brains called “mirror neurons” which help us to imitate (mirror!) other people’s actions and emotions.

Mirror neurons help us to learn by being able to copy others. They also help us to see and understand other people’s actions and emotions. Just by looking at someone, we can feel what they feel!

Mirror neurons help us to empathize. By mirroring what someone else does, we can more easily imagine and feel what they might be feeling. Let’s try it out...



Part 1



You are going to practice observing other people's movements and see if you can copy them.

Sitting opposite your partner, take turns for each partner to make movements (with heads, arms, hands, body and legs) which the other partner copies back.

Partner A leads a few times (with B copying back each time), and then partner B leads (with A copying back).

Here's an example...




Click on the image below to view Amanda's example.



Talk with your partner about what you remember of this activity.

Were your movements similar or different? If different, in what way were they different?

How did it feel to copy your partner's movements? Did you feel that you could really become like them when doing the movement or did it feel alien to you?



Do this activity again and focus on being as much like the other person as you can when you mirror their movement back.

How can you become like them, not just how the movement looks like on the outside, but also how you imagine it feels on the inside.



Part 2



This time, the leading partner will do movements with their body and face that express emotions.

Partner A expresses three emotions with facial expression and body actions. Partner B copies back, attempting to capture what each emotion looked like and also imagining how that might feel on the inside. Try this a few times.

Switch roles with B leading and A mirroring back.



Click on the image below to view Amanda's example.



Talk with your partner. Ask each other questions like:

How did it feel to watch each other express emotions? How did it feel inside to become your partner's feelings?

Did it get easier as you went along, were you able to see, feel it and become it more?


Did you notice emotions that you both expressed and felt? Did they look the same or different? For example, did partner A's sadness look and feel the same as partner B's?



Part 3



Now you are going to have an emotion conversation, that goes like this:

- Partner A express a negative feeling emotion with your face and body
 - Partner B use your mirror neurons to express this emotion back to A
 - Partner B express a more positive feeling emotion that you think might help A feel better
 - Partner A mirror back the positive action and emotion and sense what that feels like
 - Take turns to be A and B!
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Click on the image below to view Amanda's example.



Talk with your partner about this experience.

What did it feel like to mirror your partner?

Did you find a way to move from a negative feeling to a positive one that felt helpful?

Did you like someone else mirroring you before they suggested a positive change?

