

# Feeling Shoes:

## A Drama Exercise in Empathy

by Tori Rice

The following exercise was designed to complement Sanford University's Unit 2, Empathy and Critical Thinking, Section 2.2 Walking in Someone Else's Shoes <https://online.sanfordharmony.org/lessons/sfwd-grades-5-and-6-Unit-2-Empathy-and-Critical-Thinking-22-Walking-in-Someone-Else's-Shoes-WISES/>

- Description** Students identify other people's feelings and perspectives through imagined play.
- Materials** paper/cardboard/construction paper (could be scrap paper, paper bag, cereal box, etc.), marker, crayons, pen or pencil, scissors, optional: costume pieces (shirts, pants, sheets, towels, glasses, hats, scarves), optional: Refer to Appendix 2.2: Feelings Chart Reference Guide
- Step 1** Create your characters and their shoes!  
On a piece of paper, write down different feelings and think of a color to go with the feeling. (Optional: Refer to Appendix 2.2: Feelings Chart Reference Guide.) A few examples:  
Irritated = Red  
Happy = Yellow  
Embarrassed = Blue
- Step 2** Outline your feet on a piece of paper. Cut out the pieces and color them to match a feeling or write the color inside of the "shoe." Optional: Add costume pieces to complete your character.
- Step 3** Choose one of the "shoes" and think of a scenario that might fit the feeling. Example: Embarrassed (blue shoes). This person was carrying their lunch tray to a table and tripped, spilling the lunch. They are wishing that they weren't so clumsy. They are embarrassed.
- Step 4** Now, "step into" that feeling and change your body and facial expression to match the feeling. How does your expression and body posture change?
- Step 5** Ask someone in your household to be your partner. Tell them the scenario, that the person was carrying a lunch tray to a table and tripped, spilling the lunch. Then act it out. Do not reveal the feeling or the person's inner thoughts! Based on your body posture and facial expression, your partner will try to understand how you feel in the situation and respond to you. For example, if you are playing the person who trips carrying their lunch, you might feel embarrassed. You would show this in your body posture and facial expressions. Your partner might say, "It's okay. Let me help you. I totally understand what it feels like to be embarrassed. Do you want to share my lunch?"

You can try this exercise to demonstrate all sorts of emotions. Someone in your household may even wish to give it a try!