

***‘What’s the Buzz?’* for OLDER Students - Lesson 6 of 16**

Charity; acts of kindness

“More than meat pies”

Key social and emotional principles (*learning intention*)

This lesson brings some of the broad concepts around charity into focus. It explores the changeable appearances of charity. Whether it must be organised, or do small acts of kindness count? Should charity be conditional? Should one charity have a stronger value than another? And, how might one respond after receiving a kind or charitable gesture? The lesson also considers that a kinder world can only emerge when each of us becomes more charitable towards family, friends, acquaintances, and especially towards those we feel challenged by.

Materials required for this lesson

- Name tags
- Chairs arranged in a social circle for students to sit on
- Whiteboard/ butcher’s paper/ screen and markers
- Create a simple outline of the lesson on the whiteboard/ butcher’s paper/ screen for students to follow
- Display the ‘What’s the Buzz?’ GROUP VALUES (located in the introduction or <http://whatsthebuzz.net.au/main-menu/content-whats-the-buzz-for-older-students>)
- Print ‘thumbs up’ and reminder cards, or similar, to strengthen responsive behaviours (located in the introduction or <http://whatsthebuzz.net.au/main-menu/content-whats-the-buzz-for-older-students>)
- Have Archie’s story ready to read to students. This can be done directly from this lesson. Or, for a small registration fee, you can download the 16 Archie stories as you want them. Each story contains text, audio in the form of the authors reading to your students, and 2 large illustrations in full colour that will fill your screen. Access is available from; <http://whatsthebuzz.net.au/main-menu/content-whats-the-buzz-for-older-students>
- Pencils, pens and paper for students to do, PART ONE of ‘*Show me the Buzz*’
- Set students up with tablets, laptops or PC’s to research ‘Dig deeper to understand homelessness’ in PART ONE of ‘*Show me the Buzz*’
- Print - Kindness cards for ‘Kindness activity’ in PART ONE of ‘*Show me the Buzz*’ (located at the end of the lesson or <http://whatsthebuzz.net.au/main-menu/content-whats-the-buzz-for-older-students>)
- Provide each group with a piece of poster board, or similar, along with markers and other inspiring art supplies to design a kindness/charity themed poster for ‘Charitable designs’ in PART ONE of ‘*Show me the Buzz*’ Also display the Kindness cards.
- Print the Role-play cards for - ‘Charity; acts of kindness’ in PART TWO of ‘*Show me the Buzz*’ (located at the end of the lesson or <http://whatsthebuzz.net.au/main-menu/content-whats-the-buzz-for-older-students>) ready to print
- One cardboard square, or a carpet square or an A4 sheet of paper to play the game, ‘Save the day’ in ‘*The Buzz*’
- Each student will need; 15 small Lego pieces - same colour, size and shape - (Tip; let them sort these prior to the game), plus one sheet of large format graph paper and a barrier, to play the game, ‘A barrier game’ in ‘*The Buzz*’
- Prepare handouts for parents(s);
 - 1 copy of this lesson for each parent to read
 - 1 copy of ***After the Buzz, social thinking ideas for parents and caregivers*** to send home (located at the end of the lesson ready to photocopy or <http://whatsthebuzz.net.au/main-menu/content-whats-the-buzz-for-older-students>)

Explanation

Consider the last time someone was caring or compassionate towards you? How did it make you feel? For most, feelings of connectedness and happiness follow these warm gestures. A simple act of kindness and care can make all the difference to someone’s day, week or even year. When a person has been treated with kind-heartedness and

consideration, they're more likely to treat others in the same way. In this sense, a kind gesture is responsible for creating a ripple effect touching many more than we might anticipate.

It seems that some are born with charity already present in their DNA. Their concern and contribution to others appears to come effortlessly; as if it's wired naturally. However, most of us must learn it and to do so we are reliant on great role-models, a generous environment and the engagement of humane friends, family and teachers to show us the way.

Traditionally in schools, academic and sporting achievements have taken priority above social, emotional, civic and community contributions. With the benefit of hindsight these types of contributions were often presented as consolation prizes to students who did not excel academically or on the sports field, but tried hard. Here in Australia there's a refreshing wind of change. The Australian curriculum has recently added a new capability – "Personal and social - recognising others' emotions, supporting diversity and working together." This capability falls under a broad heading termed, 'soft skills' and is expected to be taught to all students at every age. This addition has caught some traditional educators off-guard. They are struggling to understand why the 'soft skills' have found parity with the 'hard skills'. They are asking, "Do these 'soft skills' really matter?" "If they do, then how do we teach them?" "Does teaching young people how to recognise their emotions, the emotions of others, and manage them aptly have a rightful place in schools?" "Can teaching self-awareness, self-regulatory skills, relationships, resolving conflict, community and being charitable to one another be justified in our curriculum?"

The truth is that the 'soft skills' are at the heart of being human.

While more difficult to define, observe and measure than the hard skills they centre about communication and community; courtesy, perseverance, charity, friendliness, optimism, integrity, humility, personal responsibility, flexibility, teamwork, creativity and much more. These human virtues help people to navigate their way successfully in families, in relationships, in classrooms, in the workplace and as citizens in the community. These are the skills to be successful throughout their lives.

This letter, written by a Holocaust survivor, is a great reminder of why teaching the 'soft skills' in schools - kindness, compassion, community and charity – should be prominently positioned in the curriculum. It read;

"I am a survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what no person should witness: gas chambers built by learned engineers. Children poisoned by educated physicians. Infants killed by trained nurses. Women and babies shot by high school and college graduates. So, I am suspicious of education. My request is; help your children become human. Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths or educated Eichmanns. Reading, writing, and arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more human."

(Ginott, 1972)

1. What's the Buzz?

Actively greet students as they enter. Provide chairs in a social circle for them to sit on and have a brief lesson plan on the whiteboard/ butcher's paper/ screen for students to see. As students are settling, hand each of them a 'thumbs up' feedback card to highlight their thoughtful behaviour and using the GROUP VALUES.

Let's begin

As usual frame the lesson by introducing the key social principles. The learning intention of this lesson concerns the facets of charity, so let's start by placing the following statement on a screen for students to see;

"Giving to the poor, the sick or to homeless people, is useless because these problems are so big that no real difference can be made."

Ask, 'who agrees?' Select a student to present a viewpoint that persuasively supports this statement. Once this student has finished, thank them. Explain to everyone that you secretly coached them to prepare this persuasive argument because the points raised are often used by people when arguing against being charitable. Now they're feelings have

been stirred, invite responses from the group. Next, display the piece of writing below, and read it to the group (it's easy to find on Google) or use Starfish Story (aka The Star Thrower) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-aVMdJ3Aok>

The Starfish Story: one step towards changing the world

Once upon a time, there was an old man who used to go to the ocean to do his writing. He had a habit of walking on the beach every morning before he began his work. Early one morning, he was walking along the shore after a big storm had passed and found the vast beach littered with starfish as far as the eye could see, stretching in both directions.

Off in the distance, the old man noticed a small boy approaching. As the boy walked, he paused every so often and as he grew closer, the man could see that he was occasionally bending down to pick up an object and throw it into the sea. The boy came closer still and the man called out, "Good morning! May I ask what it is that you are doing?"

The young boy paused, looked up, and replied "Throwing starfish into the ocean. The tide has washed them up onto the beach and they can't return to the sea by themselves," the youth replied. "When the sun gets high, they will die, unless I throw them back into the water."

The old man replied, "But there must be tens of thousands of starfish on this beach. I'm afraid you won't really be able to make much of a difference." The boy bent down, picked up yet another starfish and threw it as far as he could into the ocean. Then he turned, smiled and said, "It made a difference to that one!"

adapted from The Star Thrower, by Loren Eiseley (1907 – 1977)

Do not invite discussion. Finish with this statement, or similar;

Being charitable can be as small as giving a genuine smile to someone and making a positive difference to how they feel in that moment. That's where charity begins and grows from. After all, the boy in the story made a world of difference to the starfish he came across.

Begin reading Archie's story.

Archie's story; "More than meat pies"

It was Sunday. Archie and his sister were still in their pyjamas and starving as they waited for their parents to return home and have lunch with them. To pass the time they floated between their phones, television and homework. Suddenly, the front door burst open and the three whippets launched themselves onto Archie as he lay on the couch.

"How did it go?" he called as Maxi, Luca and Kelvin stood on him licking his face.

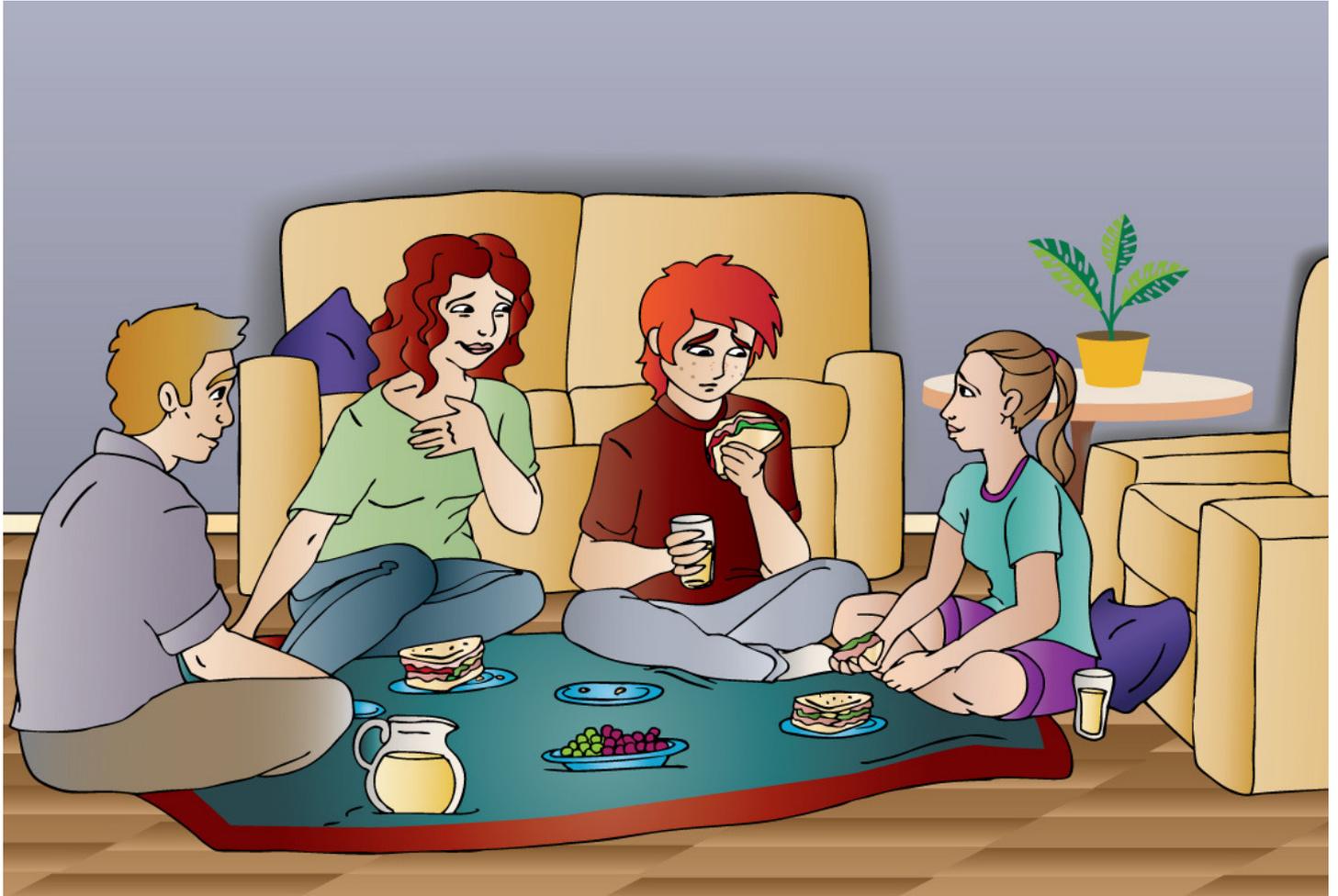
"It was okay. There were a lots for breakfast because it's so cold," called mum.

"I'm annoyed," replied his father walking towards Archie peeling off his coat, "Everyone was miserable because the shelter might close."

"Why?" questioned Archie.

"The local business owners and residents are complaining. They don't want a shelter for 'homeless people' near them, even though the Shelter has been there for thirty years," replied dad shrugging his shoulders.

Archie's mum and dad spent every Sunday morning, with the whippets, at 'Crossroads Shelter for the Homeless'. They loved going and so did the whippets. They were much loved at the shelter because the dogs had a happy knack of bringing out conversation, laughs and lightness. Archie had visited the shelter many times too. Slowly, he'd learnt what being homeless meant. He'd learnt that anyone can become lost in life, at anytime. He knew that being poor or indigenous, having a disability or tricky mental health, domestic violence, losing someone you loved or a job, as well as drug and alcohol problems meant the chances of becoming homeless got so much bigger. He'd learnt to try to value everything in his life - his friends, family, teachers, whippets, getting an education and working towards a good future. He knew he was lucky.



Large coloured images, drawn by Lauren Eldridge-Murray can be downloaded from <http://whatsthebuzz.net.au/main-menu/content-whats-the-buzz-for-older-students> to fill your screen. As you can see, 2 illustrations accompany each story. There is also the option to have the authors read the story to students.

Archie's family had a weird but wonderful Sunday tradition. It was to eat brunch, always a generous toasted sandwich, on a picnic rug on the living room floor together. As Archie sat chomping into his thick, lightly toasted rye bread with two pieces of bacon, two slices of melted cheese, extra ham, avocado and a fried egg, his father asked a question. "You know it's your birthday in a week? Would you like money or a present from us?"

Archie was looking forward to going to the movies with Joanna, Tobias, Ayman, Prisha, Daisy and her brother, Raif, followed by dad's famous blueberry black forest cake at home. It was his only recipe, but he'd perfected it into a taste sensation!

"Hey dad? How much are you thinking of spending?" asked Archie.

"We can manage a \$100," responded dad.

Suddenly an unexpected thought hit Archie. He didn't really need more stuff. His life wasn't perfect, but was pretty good. A wave of just how lucky he was, washed over him. He looked at his parents, and even though they drove him mad sometimes, he knew they were bursting with love for him and his sister.

"So," said Archie, "here's what I'm thinking. I've got a heap of stuff. This year I'd like to donate my birthday money to the friends we've made at the Shelter. Archie's parents knew he had plenty of compassion for others, but this was unexpected. They felt Archie's heart had just doubled, so they doubled the amount. Archie was keen for mum to buy as many meat pies as she could because the weather had been so cold which made it tough for those sleeping rough.

Later in the week mum bought fifty mega meat pies. Then, late on Sunday afternoon, once the pies had been warmed, Archie, the whippets and his parents made their way to the Shelter. As always there were a few familiar faces sitting under the veranda to escape the drizzle and keep one another company. Each of them gratefully accepted one or two of the hot gooey pies - a rare treat! Archie's parents shared that he'd bought the pies with his birthday money rather than receiving a gift. Craig teared up as he heard about Archie's kindness. Craig was thirty five and was once happily married with a son. His wife and two year old boy passed away in a car accident. Craig couldn't cope with the loss. He began drinking for comfort and never stopped. He lost everything. Next, Leonie took a pie, smiled at Archie and gave him a gentle hi-5. She was much younger than she looked, but a lifetime wandering and sleeping rough had made her sick. Leonie had an intellectual disability and had never been able to hold down a job or make a friend. Recently, she'd moved into a small community housing apartment nearby, but hung around the Shelter because of the new friendship she'd found there. Archie continued to hand out pies until everyone was satisfied.

Finally, they headed off across the road to the parklands. It was rainy and looked deserted, but the whippets knew better. They strained on their leads towards a grove of bushes. Their friends had tucked themselves under the bushes wrapped in blankets, cardboard and plastic to stay dry. One by one, they found them. And, those who couldn't be found, found Archie and his family anyway.



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Lucky last was Jerry. He was so intelligent, so kind, played a guitar and sang like a rock star. He was part of the stolen generation which meant he was taken from his parents by the government in Australia when he was a boy. His heart had ached ever since, and the ache had got in the way of a life that Jerry could only dream about. Before Jerry received the

last two pies he gently hugged Archie and said, “You’ve given more than meat pies today, Archie. You know that don’t you?”

The answers to the statements and questions below will be covered later in ***Do you know the Buzz?*** For now, simply read them to get students thinking. Encourage them to listen and respond to each question by putting their thumb up if they ‘agree’ or think ‘yes’, thumb down if they think ‘no’ and thumb to the side if they think ‘maybe’. Move very quickly through them. No verbal responses are required.

Your thoughts on these statements and questions?

- Does your family have special traditions that helps you all appreciate what you have together?
- Would you tell your parents to gift your birthday money to a charity?
- Would you think about doing this in the future?
- Do you agree; the real meaning of charity is treating each other kindly every day.
- Have you given or received charity?
- Do you feel like you live a lucky, or a privileged, life?
- Should people leading luckier lives provide charity to those who are struggling?
- In the story, Jerry said, “You’ve given more than meat pies today, Archie.” Do you know what this means?
- Is there a difference between donating \$200 to the shelter and doing what Archie’s family did?
- Do you agree or disagree; ‘Anyone can become homeless if too many bad things happen that you can’t cope with?’
- Do you agree or disagree; ‘I’d never become homeless because it’s a choice I won’t choose.’
- If a person who appears to be homeless asks politely for money, would you give them some?
- Many will not give money to someone living rough because they worry they’ll spend it on alcohol or drugs. Is it our right to insist that the person we gift money to must spend it on food, or spend it sensibly?

2. Show me the Buzz

Show me the Buzz provides students with the opportunity to discuss a variety of social and emotional ideas, absorb the thoughts of others, debate them, create role-plays and receive feedback from the group. We have learned that this approach heightens understandings and the transference of skills. There is always a PART ONE and PART TWO. Choose one activity from either PART ONE or do the role-plays within PART TWO, depending on what appeals to you, the time you have and your group’s likely preferences. There’s plenty of content in ***Show me the Buzz***, so the lesson can be revisited time and time again while continuing with this same topic.

PART ONE

1. Group Discussion

Together, brainstorm 10 ways to show charity. Let your students lead the way, but here are a few ideas as well;

1. Smile, wave to someone, hold a door open or gesture that they go first. Small acts warm people’s hearts.
2. Donate unwanted belongings to help local charities.
3. Find a way to help neighbours; mowing lawns, raking leaves or weeding their garden. How refreshing to turn up with a large bowl of fruit or flowers to someone you know who is elderly or lives alone.
3. Give your time to talk with people, even though you may not know them!
4. Sometimes, turn your birthday into an event where gifts are deliberately brought along to be passed on to a charity you’ve nominated.

5. Have a 'for a good cause party' mixed with the fun of getting together with friends. There are endless good causes. Ask each person coming along to bring something that can be donated.
6. Charity for pets. From time to time buy dog or cat food and take it along to a cat or dog shelter. Enlist the help of family and friends. Spend some time with the animals at the shelter. Volunteer to work there.
7. Collect cans, jars and packets of food (even fresh food if you can) from friends, extended family, neighbours, classmates and the school community and deliver to a local food charity
8. Sign up as an official charity collector for an organisation you respect. You will need your parent's permission and it's safest to have them with you when you do the door knock.
9. Reach out to older people. The number of people in aged care centres is fast growing. Most welcome a brief visit, just once a fortnight. Turn up with a friend, a brother or sister or a parent ready to chat, to share a game, to play something nifty on your iPad or share some biscuits or sweets you've made. Many schools are now driving this sort of relationship because of the wellbeing component it offers for students as well.
10. Pitch in and be charitable towards the environment. There are now so many groups making countless contributions.

2. Dig deeper to understand homelessness

Visit Hutt Street Centre website - https://www.huttstcentre.org.au/who-we-help/life_stories/norm

St Mungo's - <https://www.mungos.org/homelessness/real-life-stories/>

Catherine House - <https://catherinehouse.org.au/about/our-stories/our-clients/>

Five homeless youth share their stories - <https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2015/10/19/five-homeless-youth-share-their-stories.html>

Success Stories | Pacific House - <https://pacifichouse.org/about-us/success-stories>

Look at one of these websites and read the life-stories of people who have been helped by these centres. Assign pairs of students to research a life-story, and report back to the group about that person's life, and share the possible factors that have contributed to their difficulties and situation.

3. Group discussion

Discuss the phrase; 'Charity begins at home' Ask, what do you think this means? Apparently, Sir Thomas Browne first to put the expression, "Charity begins at home, is the voice of the world: yet is every man his greatest enemy" into print in 1642. His point was that our virtues grow through the everyday way we show care and generosity to; our mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters, and at school to our teachers, acquaintances and friends. Yet, these can be places where people do not show charity to each other. Why not? Does charity begin at home?

4. Kindness Activity

Have students sit with a partner on chairs in a social circle. Then, break the circle slightly so two semi-circles are created. Team one now faces team two. Move to the centre of the group, shuffle the 'Kindness cards' and place the deck on the floor. Invite one student from each pair to pick up a 'Kindness card' and take it back to their partner. The task for each pair, when called, is to eloquently explain what the saying means. After they present the entire group will indicate whether they deserve a 1, 2 or 3 by holding up their fingers;

1 = okay

2 = well done

3 = well done, and was improved by giving a real-life example

Student votes will help you decide, but you get a vote as well. Add each team's points together and the team with the most points wins! Give all the pairs 3 or 4 minutes to chat and prepare.

5. Charitable designs

Divide students into pairs or groups of three. Provide each group with a piece of poster board, or similar, along with markers and other inspiring art supplies to design a kindness/charity themed poster. To begin, spread the 'Kindness cards' from the previous activity out so groups can choose a quote to base their poster on. Give them freedom to be creative, but there are two necessities. Firstly, the quote must appear on the poster. Secondly, the design or image must carry the message. Display the posters in prominent places.

6. Shout-outs!

A 'Shout-out' is a generous statement given to another recognizing their kindness, friendship, a contribution they've made, or a kind behaviour. Students will need you to model this first. So, begin by modeling a few 'shout-outs' to individuals sitting in the social circle before inviting others to do it. There are many ways to start a 'Shout-out'. Here are a few positive starters (Alber, et al., 2017).

Begin by stating the person's name, look at them and say;

I really like how...

I noticed that...

I'd like to give a shout-out to...

I love how...

I saw you...

You often...

We're not close friends, but I like...

Hey, thanks for always being...

Thank you for...

Students will quickly pick up on what you're doing and how to do it. At first established friends will send 'shout-outs' to each other. Be sure to encourage students to show some courage and send them to others who they do not spend a lot of time with. This activity is a wonderful way to end the day and consolidate positive connections. In just a few minutes 'Shout-outs' have the capacity to boost everyone's mood, help people feel appreciated and send everyone away feeling a little lighter.

7. 'Random acts of kindness' challenge

Invite students to perform one random act of kindness towards someone in the coming week. Firstly, discuss what a 'random act of kindness' might look like. Brainstorm them and leave them up for all to see. The challenge will be to show a single kindness towards someone who is not in their immediate friendship group. As well, alert students, to prepare themselves to receive a 'random act of kindness' with thankfulness.

Invite students to come to you, one at a time, and show them the name of the person they are to show a kindness to. They are not to disclose this name to anyone. Ensure each student has someone. Throughout the week as students offer their 'random act of kindness' to their designated person they are to quietly check in with you and confidentially tell you what they did and when. Be sure to tell students you're seeing a positive change in their participation with each other during this challenge. This is likely to happen anyway!

At the end of the week bring the group back together into a social circle. Nominate a student to begin. Encourage them to explain who they received a kindness from, what it was and how it felt. Continue until all students have received an opportunity to share.

8. What did Jerry mean?

At the end of Archie's story, Jerry received the last two pies. As he took them he said, "You've given more than meat pies today, Archie. You know that don't you?" You may wish to display Jerry's comment on a screen for everyone to see. Break your class into groups of three or four and ask them to work together and decide on what Jerry meant by this statement. Afterwards bring the class back together for a larger discussion. The theme here is that charitable acts give connection and hope to others. Receiving is essential to wellbeing and helps to counteract feelings of isolation and despair.

"Hope is being able to see that there is light, despite all the darkness." – Desmond Tutu

Indeed, hope is a word that brings light to a dark place and joy, even if it's fleeting. And never forget - when we leave people smiling following our kind act, we feel we have contributed to the value of being part of this world.

PART TWO; role-plays - 'Charity; acts of kindness'

The role-plays are in the photocopiable section at the end of this lesson. They are also available online - <http://whatsthebuzz.net.au/main-menu/content-whats-the-buzz-for-older-students> - you may either read them to students, or print them and hand each group a role-play. Help students to form small groups. Each role-play card states the number of students required. It does not matter if the same role-play is given to several groups. Give students a few minutes to rehearse and move between groups to provide plenty of coaching and enthusiasm.

Next, ask each group to perform their role-play. If a student does not wish to perform allow them to pass. So much can be learned through observing. Always perform role-plays in the middle of the social circle. Considering capturing the action on film or photos by using your iPad, camera or smartphone. Encourage others to give constructive feedback after each role-play.

3. Do you know the Buzz?

Do you know the Buzz? is a lively group 'discussion time' where students briefly respond to a series of questions and statements highlighted by Archie's story. The goal is for them to exchange ideas, and in the process, 'mind map' their way, more empathically, through the complexities of social and emotional situations. This should also provide facilitators with an insight into the depth of student understandings. To do this, have students sitting on chairs in a social circle.

Your thoughts on these statements and questions?

- Does your family have special traditions that helps you all appreciate what you have together? What are they?
- Would you tell your parents to gift your birthday money to a charity?
- Would you think about doing this in the future? Why? Why not?
- 'The real meaning of charity is treating each other kindly every day'. Is this the real meaning of charity? Is this where it really starts?
- Have you given or received charity? What happened? How did it feel?
- Do you feel like you live a lucky, or a privileged life?
- Should people leading luckier lives provide charity to those who are struggling? Why? Why not?
- In the story, Jerry said, "You've given more than meat pies today, Archie." Do you know what this means? What had Archie given as well as meat pies?
- What's the difference between donating \$200 to the shelter and doing what Archie's family did? Which is better? Is there a better way or should it be a choice?
- Do you agree or disagree; 'Anyone can become homeless if too many bad things happen that they can't cope with?'
- Comment on this statement; 'I'd never become homeless because it's a choice I won't choose.'
- If a person who appears to be homeless asks politely for money, and you have some, would you give them a little?
- Many will not give money to someone living rough because they worry they'll spend it on alcohol or drugs. Is it our right to insist that the person we gift money to must spend it on food, or spend it sensibly?

4. The Buzz

The Buzz is an opportunity for the group to play games that strengthen their friendship and the skills central to this lesson.

Game; pass on a talent or trick (fun and interactive)

Most of us have a little talent or trick; wiggling our ears, speaking in a teeny, tiny voice, going cross eyed, tongue rolling, singing, juggling, a magic trick, saying a rhyme or poem, finger tricks, a weird walk, doing a frog balance and so on. To

begin, let the group see your talent or trick! Next, ask each person to take a moment to think about a talent or trick they might show the group. Once they're ready, let the show begin!

After each person has had the chance to show their talent or trick, encourage them to break off into small groups and teach each other how to do it. Share with the group that one of the great keys to a happy life is to be open to learn new things, especially simple, novel things.

Game; save the day! (exciting)

Divide your group into two teams (equal if possible, but not necessary). Teams face each other standing at opposite ends of the room. Each player needs to carry one cardboard square, or a carpet square or an A4 sheet of paper - something big enough to place two feet on.

The idea is for each team to get all their players across the room to the other side without touching the 'lava' (the floor). To avoid this certain 'death', players must ALWAYS step on the cardboard, paper or carpet squares – their own or those of players in their team. Players who step on the 'lava' are disqualified and sit out on the sideline. This means that players must always be stepping on their square or the square of a teammate. The cardboard, paper or carpet squares cannot be slid along the floor. They must be picked up and put down.

The team that makes it to the other side of the room with the most players, wins! Before you begin, allow a few minutes for each team to talk about their strategy for getting everyone across safely and swiftly. Then let the fun begin!

Game; "One of the nicest things I remember someone doing for me was..." (passive)

Settle your group in a social circle. Ask them to think of something someone has done for them that made them feel good. You start, so you're able to model the idea, "One of the nicest things I remember someone doing for me was..."

This gratitude exercise is an effective way to reflect on how simple kindnesses make a difference. It's often the small warm gestures that make the most lasting impressions.

Game; a barrier game (moderately exciting)

Barrier games are based on teamwork, listening, language, attentiveness and helpfulness. The goal is to work together and achieve mutual success. To play this version of a barrier game, set students up in groups of 2 or 3. One takes the role of 'organiser', and the others are the 'go-getters'. Each player will need an identical set of materials and a barrier. The barrier is set up, so players cannot see what each other are doing. To begin, supply 10 Lego pieces (identical colours and shapes) and one sheet of large format graph paper to each student. As players become better at the game you can increase the number of Lego pieces significantly. Allow players to sort through the Lego pieces to prepare their own materials ready to play.

The aim is for the 'organiser' to gradually, just one piece at a time, arrange their Lego pieces behind their barrier on their large format graph paper. While they do this, they explain to the 'go-getters' exactly which piece of Lego they are picking up and exactly which square they are placing it in and its orientation. 'Organisers' may choose to stack some pieces too! Once everyone has placed their last piece of Lego onto the graph paper the barriers are taken down for all to see and compare. The group wins if each player has arranged their Lego pieces in the same way, in the same graph squares, with the same orientation as the 'organiser'.

There are loads of variations to this game. For more, google barrier games, or look on Pinterest.

After the Buzz, social thinking ideas for parents and caregivers

Lesson 6 of 16: Charity; acts of kindness

Key social and emotional principles (*learning intention*)

This lesson brings some of the broad concepts around charity into focus. It explores the changeable appearances of charity. Whether it must be organised, or do small acts of kindness count? Should charity be conditional? Should one charity have a stronger value than another? And, how might one respond after receiving a kind or charitable gesture? The lesson also considers that a kinder world can only emerge when each of us becomes more charitable towards family, friends, acquaintances, and especially towards those we feel challenged by.

After the Buzz presents further ideas for parents, guardians and educators to encourage the social and emotional thinking students have touched on during the lesson. Our children rely on us to consolidate these skills by positively modelling them, and emphasising the language and ideas contained within the lesson. As always, here are a few practical ideas to help children build the notion of charity.

Start small

It is normal for pre-teens and teens to be overly self-focussed. They are juggling a lot as they process this complex stage of life and the egocentricity you witnessed in toddlerhood often returns around this time. They are on a search to deepen their identity and values, and it is wise to hit a charitable note that really resonates with them. Small, well-placed acts of kindness will give them a meaningful taste of how it feels to live compassionately. As you send a thank-you card, a warm email or text, an emoji, a friendly note, a hand-made card or make a phone call to someone who has been helpful or needs their spirits raised, encourage them to contribute with you. Another idea is for them to support you by taking out and bringing in an elderly neighbours' rubbish bin each week. Over time, aim towards bigger things like volunteering or supporting special charities. Tread judiciously because taking on too much, too fast always leads to 'compassion burnout' and charity loses both its appeal and authenticity.

Have them prepare a meal

One way to encourage your child's contribution towards others is to support them at a grass roots level by having them prepare a meal for the family every so often. How often and how much support? This does, of course, depend on their maturity and general abilities. Once a fortnight is a reasonable frequency. Younger and less experienced adolescents will need greater support in choosing recipes and in the preparation. However, the underlying importance of this act cannot be overstated. As your child carries the food they've prepared to each family member they are immersed into the world of giving! And, while on this note, progressively teach your kids how to prepare each of these every day recipes, to a point, where they can prepare them without help or a recipe;

Boiled eggs, fried eggs as well as an interesting frittata
Spaghetti bolognese
A hamburger packed with healthy options
Homemade chicken Noodle Soup
Roast chicken (whole or pieces), gravy and baked vegies

Lead by example

Our children observe our every move. Most of us are busy with our own lives and going that extra mile to help others, volunteer, cook for someone who is unwell is always a stretch on our time and energy, but it will never go unnoticed by your child. When we commit time to care for others our children are more likely to engage in these acts themselves. When an opportunity arises, involve the whole family in volunteering.

On a more personal level, be sure to show kindness and compassion to those in your family. Over time, your children will absorb how you do this and will use these qualities themselves. For example, there will be times when you say “no” or it may be time to ask them to finish something they’re enjoying. By saying, “I know you’re right into this, but I need your help to come grocery shopping with me in fifteen minutes” shows them you respect what they’re doing and acknowledge that making this transition is tricky. When you show this sort of charity they’ll feel more connected to you and more inclined to cooperate.

When someone or something bothers you, try to be respectful and insightful about it. Stay calm and briefly talk through the situation in an understanding manner. By doing so you’re helping your child to mature within a compassionate perspective. For instance, if someone has behaved poorly towards you, instead of complaining, “How rude were they? She’s just ignorant!” you might say, “Wow! They could well be going through a tough time to behave like that. What do you think is going on for them?” This discerning perspective shows that behaviour is communication and behind most poor behaviour is an explanation.

Model gratitude, use “thank you” and often

Be sure your children see and hear some of your kind acts to others. Simple things, such as a ‘thumbs up’ and mouthing a thank you, to someone who’s let you squeeze your car into a lane at a busy time. Or, when you buy a coffee, let your kids witness that sometimes you pay for two, so someone not so well-off can be given a coffee at the café later. What about when a person who appears homeless asks for money? Let your kids see you take them on face value, freely give them a little money, with a smile, kind words and no conditions on how they spend it.

Identify compassionate role-models with your children

Here’s a simple fact. The people we gather around us and socialise with, as well as those we do not socialize with but admire, set the standard for the quality of our thinking and behaviour. The more people we bring into our lives who are kind, respectful and generous, the more ‘normal’ this behaviour becomes to our children.

Opt for diversity in your life

Just as we should, gently encourage your children to mix with a variety of people from various backgrounds, cultures and spiritual beliefs. As this occurs, they’ll naturally build a healthy and empathic perspective about others who live life differently to the way they do. What a loss it is to only ever mix with a homogenised, or standardised, group of others. Compassion grows stronger when children are exposed, softly and naturally, to diversity.

Sit and watch a movie together

Choose movies that explore compassion and embrace the value of perspective taking. Imparting these themes is so much easier when you have a movie to base your conversations around. The list below is a great start;

E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial (1982) G
Free Willy: Escape from Pirate’s Cove (2010) G
Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory (1971) G

The Blind Side (2009) PG
The Goonies (1985) PG
The Karate Kid (1984) PG
The Pursuit of Happyness (2006) PG
The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants (2005) PG

Amelie (2001) M
Lady Bird (2017) M
Little Miss Sunshine (2006) M
Pay it forward (2000) M
The Good Lie (2014) M

References

Alber, R., 2017, Kindness: A lesson plan. Classroom activities and resources for developing a vital character trait. <<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/kindness-lesson-plan-rebecca-alber>, July 2018>

Ginott, H., 1972, Teacher and Child. New York: Macmillan

Photocopiable resources now follow. They are also available online at <http://whatsthebuzz.net.au/main-menu/content-whats-the-buzz-for-older-students>

Photocopiable and Online Resources

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Lesson 6 of 16: Charity; acts of kindness

31; Archie's story; "More than meat pies" - first image in lesson

32; Archie's story; "More than meat pies"- second image in lesson

33; Kindness cards (currently under construction)

"Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world. For, indeed, that's all who ever have." Margaret Mead

"No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted. Aesop

"Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world." Desmond Tutu

"Three things in human life are important: the first is to be kind; the second is to be kind; and the third is to be kind." Henry James

"When you are kind to others, it not only changes you, it changes the world." Harold Kushner
"Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible." Dalai Lama

"If you want to lift yourself up, lift someone else up." Booker T. Washington

"Be a little kinder than you have to." E. Lockhart

"Always stop to think whether your fun may be the cause of another's unhappiness." Aesop

"Goodness is the only investment that never fails." Henry David Thoreau

"Never be so busy as not to think of others." Mother Teresa

"The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little." Franklin D. Roosevelt

"There is no exercise better for the heart than reaching down and lifting people up." John Holmes

"Kindness is a language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see." Mark Twain

"A great man shows his greatness by the way he treats little men." Thomas Carlyle

"Be kind to unkind people – they need it the most." Unknown

"The first thing a kindness deserves is acceptance, the second, transmission." George MacDonald

"Today I bent the truth to be kind, and I have no regret, for I am far surer of what is kind than I am of what is true."
Robert Brault

"Beauty is not in the face; beauty is a light in the heart." Kahlil Gibran

"Kindness gives birth to kindness." Sophocles

"The value of a man resides in what he gives and not in what he is capable receiving." Albert Einstein

34; Role-play cards - 'Charity; acts of kindness' (currently under construction)

Role-play 1

Elijah/Ella is sitting alone in the library. He/she's known for being dark and pessimistic. He/she seems somewhat lost and lonely. Show a compassionate way to approach Elijah/Ella, even though being open-hearted may be risky. (Pairs – you and Ella)

Role-play 2

You and three friends are involved in a most unusual, but serious challenge. You've been given \$100 to spend. It must be spent on someone, or a group, you think would get great benefit from this kind act. In this role-play show the conversation that would take place between you and your friends about how to best spend this money. Who would you choose? Why choose them? How would you do it? How would you make sure they were not offended? (A group of 4. You and 3 friends)

Role-play 3

Show a conversation between you and two close friends. The three of you are huge animal fans. You're trying to work out whether your charity donation should go towards curing children's cancer or improving a local animal shelter that does wonderful work. In this role-play we want to hear you discussing the pros and cons for donating for one or the other. We also want to hear why you make your final decision about who to donate to. (A group of 3. You and your two good friends)

Role-play 4

You find your best friend's 'new friend' difficult to be around. Most people avoid this person. The 'new friend' is okay but are always making statements about achieving higher grades or doing better than others. It gets to you. You speak to your friend about it, honestly and caringly. It's just as well you do, because your friend has some information that explains why this person presents themselves in the awkward way they do. You never realised they had such a tricky backstory. It makes sense and gives you the resolve to be more charitable towards them. (Pairs – you and your close friend)

Role-play 5

You are a kind-hearted person but donating money to random charities is not your thing. In this role-play you are sitting with two friends when another friend approaches you because they are collecting donations for a charity. You say that what they're doing is great, but you don't want to donate. This friend is not pleased, rolls their eyes and says, "Really? That's mean spirited! You're the first to say no." You are not mean spirited and feel annoyed they have judged you badly in front of others. Show how to handle this gracefully. Also show how the other friends who were listening could ease the awkward situation. (A group of 4. You, the collector and 2 friends)

Role-play 6

You're struggling to write a birthday invitation for an old friend. Lately they haven't been treating you like a friend should. Naturally, you'd prefer to teach them a lesson and not invite them. Your parents disagree. They're asking you to be charitable and give them a chance. They think their behaviour has changed because something is not right in their life. They say this friend needs your steadiness and connection. In this role-play, show the discussion between yourself and your parents. Arrive at a compromise be sure to discuss what you'd do if the relationship with this friend worsened. (A group of 3. You and your parents)

Role-play 7

Your teacher has been moody, miserable and short-tempered all week. This is completely out of character. Today she started the day shouting at the class for no good reason. You know something is not right for her but feel confused by the change in her mood. In this role-play you show a courageous and sympathetic approach. You hang back after class, ask if you can help with anything, and respectfully ask if she's okay. (A pair. You and the teacher)

Role-play 8

You've lost the pleasure you once felt when you spent time with your little sister. There's a 6-year gap between you both so there's not a lot you have in common now. She admires you, wants to be just like you and be with you. But, she's annoying to be with for too long. Your parents want you to make a guaranteed thirty-minute shared time with her three times a week. This role-play catches you discussing these plans with your parents. You are happy to commit to some regular time with your sister, but they want more than you're prepared to spend with her. Maintain a conversation that is respectful. Show us how you achieve a reasonable compromise that is win/win for all. (A group of 3. You and your parents)

Role-play 9

There's a boy in your home group who's coming to school over the past few weeks with shoes that are progressively falling apart. You've known him for a long time and while you're not close, you are friends. You also know that he's got a tough home life and often doesn't get what he needs. So, you bring along a pair of shoes that your brother has used a little and would be perfect for him. When the time is right, you approach him, tell him what you've noticed, and offer the shoes you have in your bag to him. He is touched by your kindness but feels too embarrassed to take them. Use your best skills to be an understanding and compassionate friend. (A pair – you and the boy)

Role-play 10

You have been given the task of teaching your class about gratitude. You hate the stuff about gratitude; gratitude for the flowers, for the insects, gratitude journals, faking being thankful and the cute little sayings like, "gratitude as an attitude". You sit with three of your friends and discuss the pros and cons of the gratitude mindset. Then, one suggests forgetting about the gratitude stuff on social media, instead, be able to name the three things that are special to you and how you intend to keep them alive. Role-play this very conversation. (A group of 4. You and 3 friends)