



Contributing positively to
the social fabric of your
community!



Student Workbook

Module 1

THE **BetterMe**
PROJECT

Learn how to contribute positively to a better and safer world!



UNDERSTAND

DISCOVER

REFLECT

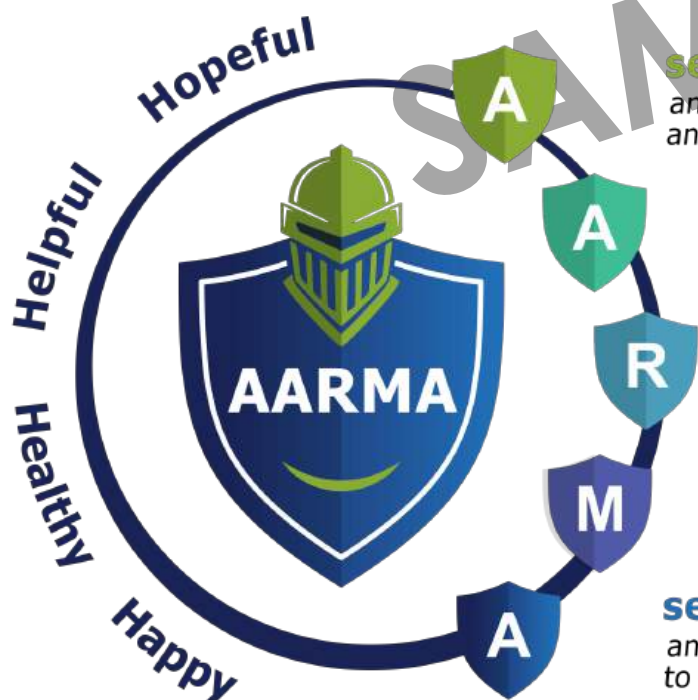
... understand the role of empathy, respect and dignity in fostering respectful relationships and how your actions impact you and others in a digital and social context.

... strategies for building and maintaining respectful relationships by exploring the science of social connections, understanding your digital rights and responsibilities, and evaluating the influence of social media on your behaviour and self-esteem.

... on your personal and digital interactions, assessing how your behaviours align with promoting a supportive, respectful, and dignified community, both in-person and in the digital space.

Remember your Human AARMA!

The Human AARMA protecting me and others from the challenges of being human!



self-AWARE

and AWARE of your impact on other humans and how other humans are impacting you

self-ACCEPTING

and ACCEPTING of other humans and of circumstances beyond your control

self-REGULATED

and able to support other humans to self-REGULATE

self-MOTIVATED

and MOTIVATED to work and collaborate with other humans

self-ACCOUNTABLE

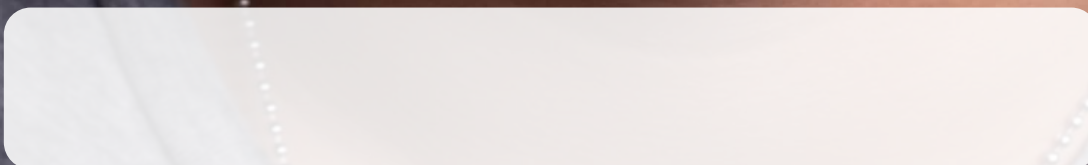
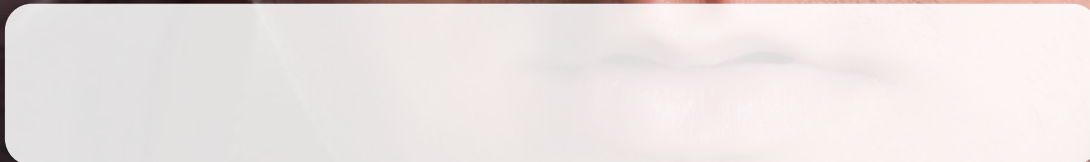
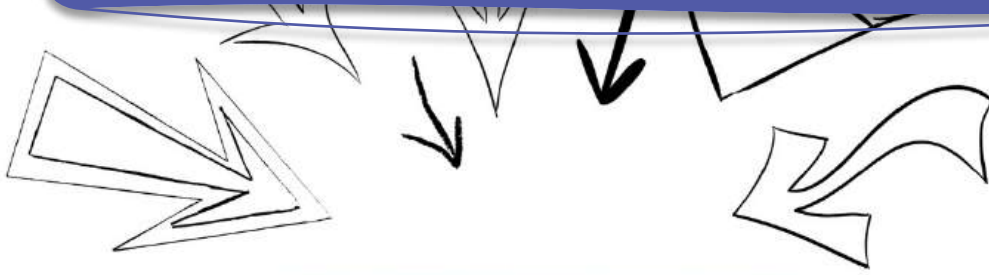
and able to hold other humans ACCOUNTABLE to being kind, respectful and reliable



Module 1

Wired to Connect The science of 'us'!

My adolescent brain!



In the video I saw ...



In the absence
of information,
my brain will ...



Wired to Connect: The Science Of Us



Welcome to the BETTER ME PROJECT, and to this unit about becoming a SOCIAL ME!

Now, this isn't about how to be the most fun at parties! It's a bit bigger than that. It's about the idea that you live and exist in a social world—a society—where the way you interact with others really does matter.

Imagine this: you're standing in front of your friends, about to make a decision that could either impress them or make you look foolish or weak. Your heart's racing, your mind's buzzing, and all you can think about is, 'What will they think of me?'

Sound familiar? That's your social brain at work. It's the part of you that's wired to connect, to belong, to be part of the group. Believe it or not, this need to belong is one of the strongest forces driving the choices you make and the way you behave in certain situations.

Let's take a step back in time—way back to when our ancestors roamed the Earth. Survival wasn't just about finding food or avoiding predators. It was about survival by sticking together.

Alone, a person was vulnerable. But in a group? They were safer, stronger, more likely to survive. Being part of a group meant protection. That's why, over thousands of years, our brains evolved to make us crave that connection and sense of belonging.

WHAT PART OF THE BRAIN IS SOCIAL?

There are three parts of the brain heavily involved in what we call your social brain—it's more of a network than a specific part of your brain.

Put your hand on the front of your head. This is where your **pre-frontal cortex** is—just under your forehead—we'll call it the PFC. Your helps to navigate complex social situations—it's where you make decisions and choices.

Now put your other hand on the back of your head. This is sort of where your **limbic system** is. Your limbic system kicks in when you feel emotion.

And somewhere in the middle of all that are your **mirror neurons**.

They light up when you see someone else's pain or joy—you can 'mirror' that experience in your own brain.

For example, if someone you like or admire or feel close to is in pain, you feel that pain too. That feeling is designed to move you to action to help them. It's called 'Empathy'.

The PFC, limbic system, and mirror neurons all work together to form your social brain—it's the machinery in your brain that helps you to understand others and build the relationships and social connections that make your life meaningful.

BUT THERE'S A CATCH!!!

But here's the thing: what helped our ancestors survive can sometimes trip us up in our modern society.

Think about it. That same powerful drive to **belong**, to be **accepted** by your friends, can lead you into some tricky situations.

Ever done something you knew was wrong just to fit in?

Maybe you said something mean because everyone else was doing it, or you took a risk that didn't feel right just to impress your friends. Maybe you joined in when someone was being bullied, or maybe you did something dumb, something that you knew was wrong, but you didn't want to feel left out or look weak.

That's your social brain in overdrive. It's screaming, **'Fit in at all costs'** even if that means doing something that goes **against** your better judgement.

But why is this drive so strong?

Because back in the day, being rejected by the group could mean life or death. And even though we're not fighting off predators anymore, your brain still reacts as if social rejection is a serious threat to your survival.

It's normal human behaviour. It's just not always that useful!

You see, your brain sees things like failure, embarrassment, or rejection in the same way it sees a physical threat like someone attacking you with a knife or pointing a gun at you. That's pretty big if you think about it!

And that's why it can feel so intense and hurtful when you feel excluded, and why the urge to fit in can sometimes push you to make decisions that aren't in your best interest or even in the best interests of others—which isn't really fair—but we'll explore that later.

Basically, when you let your social brain **run the show** without controlling it you can end up hurting others, and hurting yourself.

On the positive side, when you **DO** feel accepted and like you belong, your brain releases dopamine and oxytocin which are feel-good brain chemicals. But craving that dopamine can drive you to make unwise choices and those choices can affect you not just now, but in your future as well.

So here's the big question: how do you control this powerful force? How do you harness the strength of your social brain without letting it lead you into trouble?

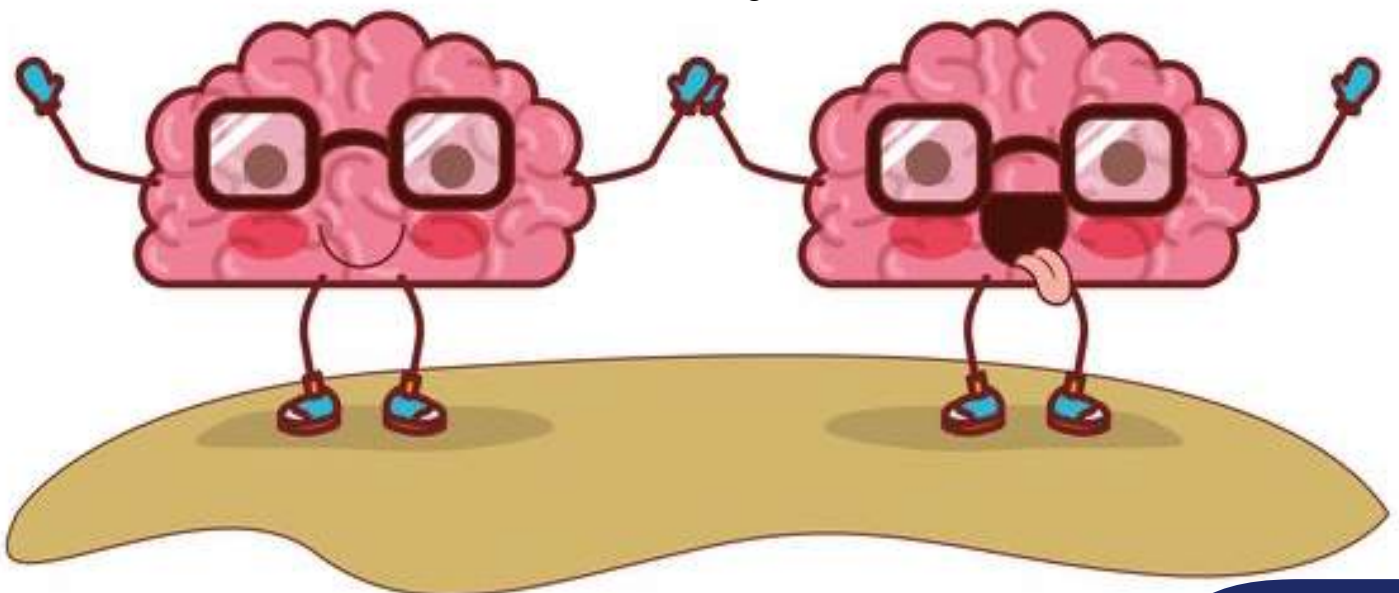
Well, it starts with understanding that you have the power to choose. Your social brain might nudge you towards certain behaviours, but you're in the driver's seat. By being aware of these influences, you can decide when to follow the crowd and when to stand your ground. You will need to be brave sometimes, but it will always be worth it if you do the right thing.

And trust me, learning to control your social brain is key to living a safe, successful life. It's what helps you build **respectful relationships**, make **smart choices**, and stay **true to yourself even when the pressure is on**. When you understand how your brain works, you can use its power for good—building connections and friendships that lift you up, instead of dragging you down.

So, as we dive deeper into the social brain, keep this in mind: your brain is wired for connection, but it's up to you to make sure those connections are positive, respectful, and aligned with who you really want to be.

Ready to take control?

Let's get started!





QUIZ

1. What is the main purpose of the SOCIAL ME unit?

- A. To learn how to be the most fun at parties
- B. To understand the importance of social interactions and relationships
- C. To learn survival skills
- D. To avoid making mistakes in social situations

2. What is the social brain primarily concerned with?

- A. Avoiding physical threats
- B. Making people laugh
- C. Connecting and belonging to a group
- D. Finding food

3. Why did our ancestors' brains evolve to crave social connections?

- A. To avoid loneliness
- B. To ensure everyone had friends
- C. To develop empathy
- D. Because it made survival easier in groups

4. Which part of the brain is responsible for making decisions in social situations?

- A. Prefrontal cortex (PFC)
- B. Limbic system
- C. Mirror neurons
- D. All of the above

5. What role do mirror neurons play in social interactions?

- A. They enable you to feel others' emotions and empathise with them
- B. They enable you to remember people's names
- C. They help you speak fluently in groups
- D. They prevent you from feeling pain

6. What is the potential downside of the strong 'drive to belong' in modern society?

- A. It leads to physical fitness
- B. It enhances decision-making skills
- C. It guarantees social acceptance
- D. It can make you do things against your better judgement

7. How does the brain react to social rejection?

- A. It sees it as a physical threat similar to an attack
- B. It considers it a minor inconvenience
- C. It ignores it completely
- D. It reacts by laughing it off

8. What can happen if you let your social brain run the show without control?

- A. You always make the best choices
- B. You end up hurting others and yourself
- C. You become a leader
- D. You gain more friends

9. What chemicals are released when you feel accepted and like you belong?

- A. Adrenaline and serotonin
- B. Dopamine and oxytocin
- C. Cortisol and endorphins
- D. Melatonin and acetylcholine

10. What is a key message about controlling your social brain?

- A. It's impossible to control your social brain
- B. Always follow your social brain's instincts
- C. You can choose how to act and not always follow the crowd
- D. Ignore the need to belong



SAMPLE



Your social brain system

Why is it important that we have a SOCIAL BRAIN?
What would happen if we did not have
a *social brain*? How can the social brain get in the way
of *wise decisions*?

Find out more about the role of the Pre-
frontal Cortex (PFC) in making 'choices and
decisions'.

List 10 things that are USEFUL to know
and *understand* about the **adolescent brain**
and **social media**.

SAMPLE



Your social brain gets 'hacked'

Curated lifestyles

Creating trends

Influencers often start trends by being the first to wear or use something new – and remember, they get paid to do that. Your social brain, which wants you to be part of the "in" crowd, might make you feel like you need to jump on the trend to avoid feeling left out. For example, if an Influencer starts wearing a specific type of cap, their followers might all start wearing it too, even if they didn't particularly want or need a new cap before.

Influencers often share a polished and perfect version of their lives. Your social brain, might compare your everyday reality with these seemingly 'perfect' images, leading you to want the products they promote as a way to feel better about yourself. For example, if an Influencer posts a picture of their perfect vacation, you might feel the need to buy the same clothes or gadgets they use to feel like you can have a similar experience.

INFLUENCERS

Personal recommendations

Influencers often talk directly to their audience (you) as if they are your friend, giving personal recommendations. The social brain is more likely to trust these recommendations because they feel like they're coming from someone you know and admire. For instance, if an Influencer says, "I love this brand of shoes; they're so comfortable and stylish," followers might be more inclined to buy them because they feel like it's a friendly tip rather than just a sales pitch.

THINK ABOUT ...

When have you seen or fallen 'prey' to influencers hacking your social brain?



Your social brain gets 'hacked'

Social proof

FOMO – Fear of Missing Out

Advertisers create a sense of urgency by making you feel like you might miss out on something important or trendy if you don't buy a product.

For example, a commercial might say, "Limited time only!" or "Get yours before it's gone!" This taps into your social brain's fear of being left out of something that everyone else seems to be part of.

Advertisers show that other people, especially those you admire or see as popular, are using their product. This might look like a commercial where a celebrity or popular Influencer is seen wearing a certain brand of clothes or using a specific gadget. Your social brain sees this and thinks, "If they have it, I should too, to fit in or be cool."

ADVERTISERS

THINK ABOUT ...

Create insecurity

Some advertisements try to make you feel insecure about your appearance or lifestyle and then present their product as the solution. For example, a skincare ad might highlight "flaws" like acne or wrinkles, then show how their product can "fix" them, making you feel like you need their product to be socially accepted or attractive.

When have you seen or fallen 'prey' to advertisers hacking your social brain?

Imagine a popular YouTuber you follow suddenly starts wearing a new style of sneakers and posts about how they are the “coolest shoes right now.”

Even if you didn’t need new shoes, you might feel an urge to get those sneakers because you don’t want to be the only one in your group not wearing the latest trend.

Your social brain is pushing you to fit in and be accepted, and advertisers and influencers know exactly how to trigger that feeling.

How does your understanding of the social brain help you interpret your reaction to the YouTuber's promotion of the new sneakers?

In what ways can being aware of how influencers and advertisers target your social brain change how you respond to such promotions in the future?

Can you think of a time when your social brain led you to make a decision that you later regretted? How might you handle a similar situation differently now?



Empathy: The key to connection

Let's talk about something that's at the heart of every great friendship and relationship, every strong community, and every act of kindness—empathy.

You've probably heard the word before, but what does it really mean? And why is it so important?

Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person. It's like stepping into someone else's shoes and seeing the world from their perspective. But here's the thing—empathy isn't just about feeling sorry for someone; that's sympathy. Empathy goes deeper. It's about truly connecting with someone else's emotions, feeling what they feel, and responding in a way that shows you care.

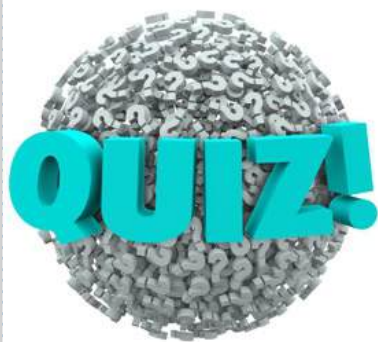
Now, our brains are strongly wired for empathy. There are the mirror neurons that were mentioned before. These neurons fire up when you see someone else experiencing an emotion—whether it's happiness, sadness, or even pain.

These neurons help you 'mirror' what the other person is feeling, making it possible for you to understand their experience on a deeper level.

But empathy isn't just something that happens automatically. It's a skill you can develop, and it's one of the most important tools you'll ever have in your social toolkit. When you're empathetic, you build stronger, more respectful relationships. You create a community where people feel seen, heard, and valued. And let's face it, in a world that can sometimes feel divided, empathy is what brings us together.

So, how do we practice empathy? One way is by putting ourselves in someone else's shoes and imagining what they're going through. We're going to walk through some scenarios that will help you do just that. As you hear each one, take a moment to think about how you would feel in that situation, and how you would respond if it were happening to someone else.





1. What is the main focus of the video?

- A. Friendship
- B. Empathy
- C. Kindness
- D. Sympathy

2. What is the definition of empathy?

- A. Feeling sorry for someone.
- B. Being polite and respectful.
- C. Offering help to those in need.
- D. The ability to understand and share the feelings of another person.

3. What is the difference between empathy and sympathy according to the video?

- A. Sympathy is deeper than empathy.
- B. Empathy is about feeling sorry for someone while sympathy is about understanding their feelings.
- C. Empathy is about truly connecting with someone's emotions, while sympathy is feeling sorry for them.
- D. There is no difference between empathy and sympathy.

4. What role do mirror neurons play in empathy?

- A. They help you remember people's names.
- B. They enable you to 'mirror' the emotions of others, helping you understand their feelings.
- C. They help you learn new skills quickly.
- D. They are unrelated to empathy.

5. Why is empathy considered an important skill?

- A. It helps you get ahead in life.
- B. It allows you to manipulate others' emotions.
- C. It builds stronger, more respectful relationships.
- D. It makes you more popular.

6. What effect does empathy have on a community?

- A. It divides people.
- B. It creates a community where people feel seen, heard, and valued.
- C. It leads to misunderstandings.
- D. It makes the community more competitive.

7. How can you practice empathy?

- A. By putting yourself in someone else's shoes and imagining their experience.
- B. By ignoring others' feelings.
- C. By focusing only on your own feelings.
- D. By avoiding emotional situations.

8. Why is empathy considered more than just a feeling?

- A. Because it involves actively responding in a caring and respectful and 'fair' way.
- B. Because it's only for people in leadership roles.
- C. Because it's a requirement in every job.
- D. Because it's difficult to achieve.

9. What does the video suggest empathy can do in a divided world?

- A. It can lead to more arguments.
- B. It can create more divisions.
- C. It can help bring people together.
- D. It can make people more selfish.

MIRROR NEURONS IN ACTION

Record the story from the cartoons and list the different emotions you see on the characters.

SAMPLE

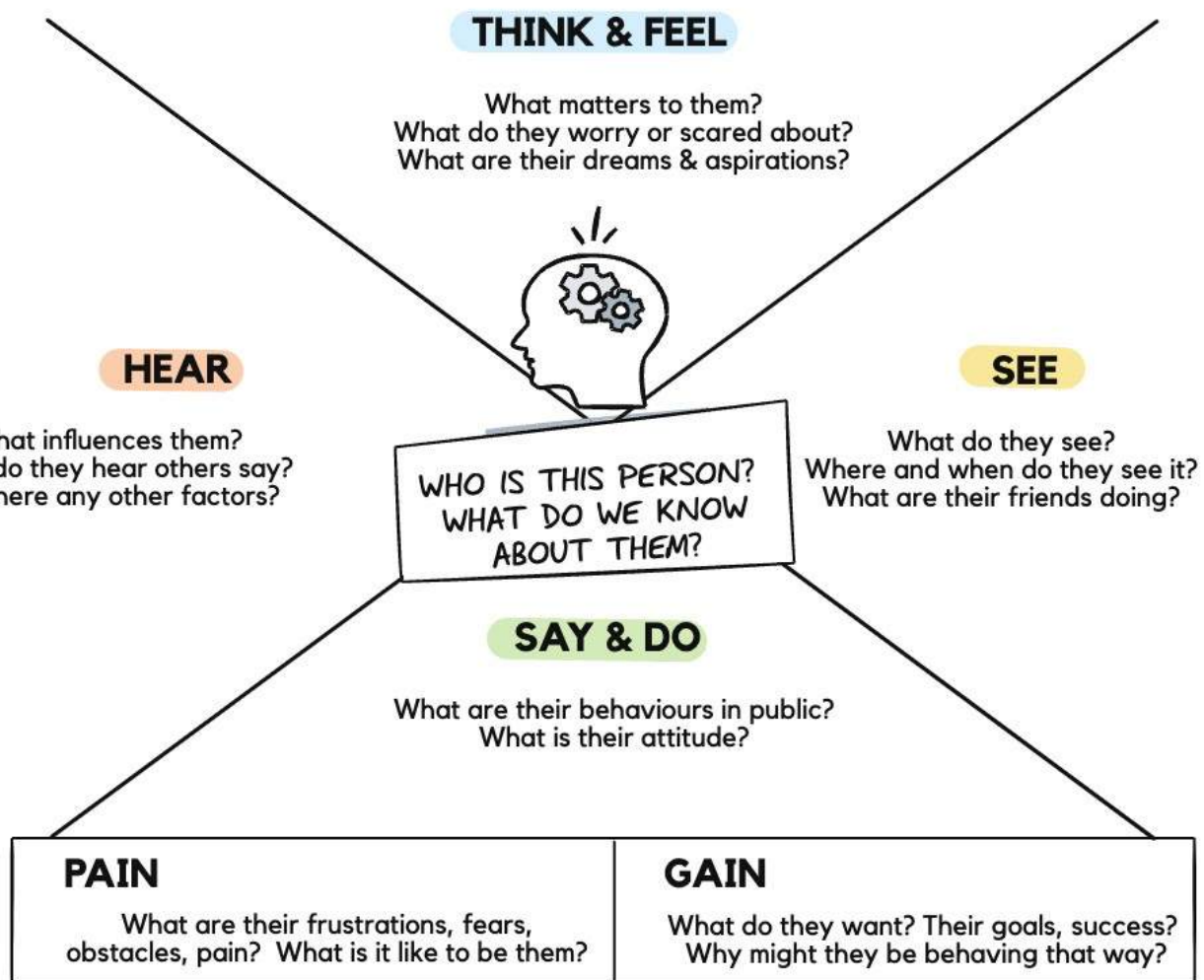
SAMPLE



Empathy Mapping

Time to put your mirror neurons to use! Let's practice putting yourself in someone else's shoes.

EMPATHY MAP

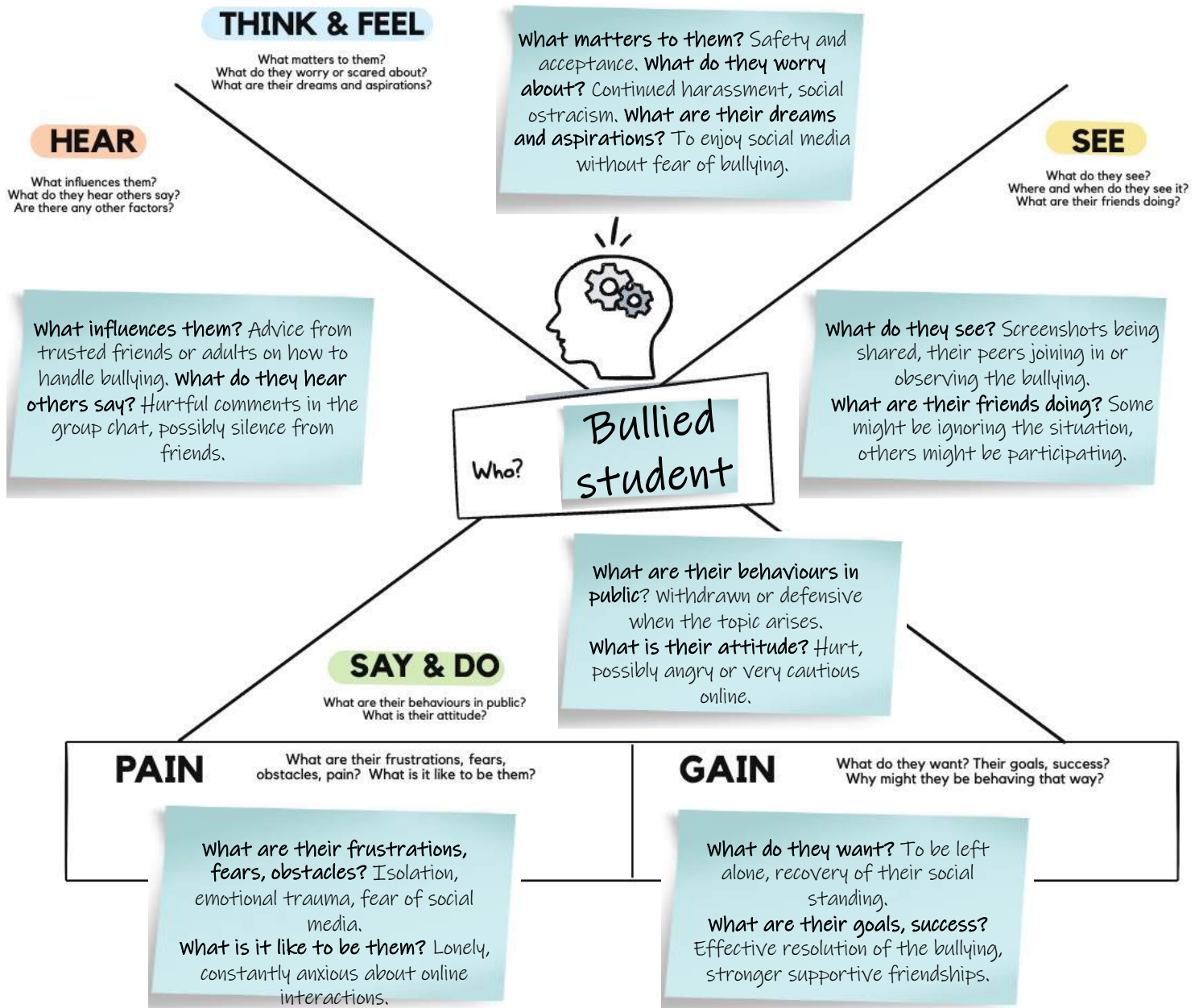


Empathy Mapping

Scenario

A student is being mocked and ridiculed in a group chat on a popular social media platform. The situation escalates as more students join in on the bullying.

EMPATHY MAP



Empathy Mapping

Using the same scenario as on the previous page, produce an Empathy Map for the person or people who are the bullies!

EMPATHY MAP

THINK & FEEL

What matters to them?
What do they worry or scared about?
What are their dreams and aspirations?

HEAR

What influences them?
What do they hear others say?
Are there any other factors?

SEE

What do they see?
Where and when do they see it?
What are their friends doing?



Who?

SAY & DO

What are their behaviours in public?
What is their attitude?

PAIN

What are their frustrations, fears, obstacles, pain? What is it like to be them?

GAIN

What do they want? Their goals, success? Why might they be behaving that way?

Empathy Map Scenarios



CONFLICT OVER EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Scenario:

A student wants to join the school's drama club, but their parents want them to focus solely on academics.

People to Empathise With: Student, Parents, Drama Teacher, Sibling

RESPONSE TO A CLASSROOM INCIDENT

Scenario:

A teacher wrongly accuses a student of cheating, leading to a confrontation in class. The student feels humiliated and misunderstood.

People to Empathise With: Accused Student, Teacher, Parent, Witnessing Student

DIFFICULTY WITH A NEW SUBJECT

Scenario:

A student is struggling with a new subject, like algebra or a foreign language. The student is becoming increasingly frustrated and starts acting out in class.

People to Empathise With: Struggling Student, Supportive Teacher, Parent, Excelling Classmate

RUMOURS AND GOSSIP

Scenario:

A rumour about a student spreads rapidly through the school, affecting the student's reputation and social life.

People to Empathise With: Targeted Student, Gossiping Students, Informed Student, School Counsellor

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS



Individual or group reflection ...

How has creating an empathy map changed your understanding of the situations we explored?

Can you identify a time when you experienced feelings similar to those you described in any of the empathy maps? How might understanding those feelings in others influence your actions in the future?

In what ways do you think empathy contributes to resolving conflicts or misunderstandings in a social setting? Provide an example from the scenarios or your own life.

How might increasing your empathy influence your relationships and interactions on social media and other digital platforms?

What strategies can you develop to become more empathetic in situations where you initially feel judgmental or indifferent?

Personal reflection



SAMPLE

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
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SAMPLE

FINAL SCORE

THE ULTIMATUM GAME

Discussion Questions

PROPOSER: Describe your strategy for deciding how much to offer in each round?

What factors influenced your decisions?

RESPONDER: What was going through your mind as you decided whether to accept or reject each offer?

What criteria did you use to make your decisions?

BANKER: What did you notice throughout the game?

What different choices would you have made and why?

Why do you think those choices weren't made in the game?

THE ULTIMATUM GAME

Discussion Questions

EVERYONE

Did any of the choices elicit a strong emotional response, and how did it drive your behaviour and choices?

Did your perception of 'fair' evolve throughout the game? How did that impact your choices?

What part was your social brain playing in this game?

Where have you experienced something similar in real life?

What are you thinking you will be more aware of in the future?

Human Hack



**Press
Pause**

Self-awareness is the key to any Human Hack. Start noticing when your SOCIAL BRAIN is trying to influence your choices and behaviour and press the pause button knowing that any decision you make or any response you give might not be well thought out and may come back to bite you!

Remember that clever people are expert at tapping into your social brain. Choose to make your own choices.

It's ok to say – 'I just need a moment to think about this.' This is taking ACCOUNTABILITY for yourself and your reactions and actions. Humans can't help how they react (even adults) but they can REGULATE their responses to make wiser social choices.

*When are you good at 'pressing pause' and making wise choices when your social brain is involved?
When are you not so good?*

Where is one place or situation that arises often where 'pressing pause' on your social brain will be helpful?



SAMPLE

SAMPLE

THE **BetterMe**
PROJECT

SAMPLE

