We've All Been There

Language level: Intermediate (B1) – Upper Intermediate (B2)
Learner type: Teens and adults
Time: 60 minutes
Activity: watching a short film, speaking and writing
Topic: Empathy
Language: Present perfect, narrative tenses and language connected with empathy
Materials: Short film
Overview

This lesson plan is designed around a moving short film by Nicholas Clifford and the theme of empathy. Students write a story, watch a short film and speak about empathy.

Step 1

Tell students that you are going to explain a situation and that they should visualise the situation. Explain the following situation:

“You are an elderly woman driving a Mercedes through the Australian outback in the middle of nowhere. You realise that one of your tyres is flat. You stop the car and ring for assistance, but there is no cover so you wait inside your car. Suddenly, a Ford pick-up truck pulls up behind you; a large muscular man covered in tattoos gets out of the truck and walks towards you.”

Now put students into pairs and ask them to discuss the following questions:

How would you feel in this situation?

What would you do?

Next get feedback from the whole class.
Step 2

Now put students into pairs and ask them to discuss the following questions:

Tell students that you are going to explain another situation and that they should visualise the situation. Explain the following situation:

“You are a young 8-month pregnant woman who has just arrived at the restaurant where you work as a waitress. You have just received a letter from your landlord informing you that you owe $800 in rent; if you don’t pay this money you will be evicted from your house. You ask your boss for extra work so you can pay the rent, but your boss is really rude to you and refuses to give you any extra work.”

How would you feel in this situation?

What would you do?

Next get feedback from the whole class.

Step 3

Now tell students that the 2 woman appear in the same short film and that there is a connection between them. Put them into small groups and ask them to speculate about what the connection might be and what story the film tells. Ask each group to write a short story which connects the 2 women together.
Step 4

When students have finished their stories ask one student from each group to read out their story. Ask for comments on all the stories.

Step 5

Tell your students that you are now going to watch the short film. As they watch they should compare their stories with the story the film tells.

Link: https://vimeo.com/56464411

Step 6

Ask students the following questions:

How does the film make you feel?

What’s the film’s message?

Step 7

Pause the film at 05:49 where we see the napkin with the words “Keep it all. We’ve all been there.” Ask students what it means. If they don’t know explain that it means that the elderly lady can understand and empathise with the young woman being in a difficult situation and so she wants to help her.
Step 8

Write “What goes around comes around” on the board. Tell students that this is a common English proverb; ask them to explain what it means. If they can’t explain, give them a definition such as:

“The results of things that one has done will someday have an effect on the person who started the events.”

Tell them that What Goes Around Comes Around is the title of the story on which We’ve All Been There is based. Ask them why they think the story has this title.

Put them into pairs and ask them to discuss the following question:

Can you think of any examples of the proverb “What goes around comes around” in your own life, in the life of other people or life in general?

I hope you enjoy the lesson.