

Give to Someone You Care About: Give to a Friend



grades: 4-5



40 minutes

“Let us be grateful to the people who make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom.” – Marcel Proust

Lesson Summary

In this lesson, students deepen their understanding of relationships with those they care about. They reflect on their friendships, identify the key qualities of a good friend, and explore how empathy strengthens these bonds. To reinforce these concepts, students participate in a role-playing activity where they practice using empathy to lift a friend's spirits, especially when they're having a tough day.

Students will Examine

- The friendships they have developed.
- What are the qualities of good friends?
- How practicing empathy can strengthen their friendships.

Pre-Activity Prep

- Prepare markers and paper plates (or paper strips) (1/student) (THINK.GIVE section).
- Print and cut out Beaming Bonds Scenarios ([PDF](#)) (1 worksheet/group, or more depending on number of students) (THINK.GIVE section).
- (Optional) Print or digitally share an Exit Ticket ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)) (1/student) (CONNECT + CLOSE section).



MATERIALS

ThinkGive Journals
Student Journal Guide ([PDF](#))
ThinkGive Warm-up Activities ([PDF](#))
Quote Image ([PDF](#))
Paper plates
Markers
Beaming Bonds Scenarios ([PDF](#))
Exit Ticket ([PDF](#) | [Google](#))



MEDIA TO PREP

Slides: [Give to a Friend](#)
Video: [The Animal Odd Couple](#) (2:44)
(Digging Deeper) Video: [How Friendship Affects Your Brain](#) (4:07)

WARM-UP ACTIVITY

Extreme Rock, Paper, Scissors

Students form partners and play a round of Rock, Paper, Scissors. The player who loses becomes the winner's cheerleader. Winners from each pair then find another winner to compete against in the next round; their cheerleaders cheer them on. Continue this process, with each round's



TEACHER TIP

If time allows, start the lesson with a Warm-Up Activity to help your students connect, especially if new participants are joining during the program.

losers joining the cheerleading squads. In the final round, the last two remaining players face off, each backed by a large group of cheerleaders. The final winner receives a big cheer from everyone. Repeat the game as time allows.

Refer to the ThinkGive Warm-up Activities ([PDF](#)) for other ideas.

SHARE

Suggested time: 5 minutes

Students volunteer to share aloud.

Ask: What actions did you take to show appreciation for a member of your inner circle? Did you deliver your Appreciation Card? If so, how did that person react?

★ TEACHER TIP

If students feel dissatisfied with their actions or have yet to act, remind them that small, consistent actions help develop kindness muscles (ThinkGive Three), so keep trying!

OPEN

Suggested time: 5 minutes

Quote/Image

Display the Image ([PDF](#)) and/or read the quote or invite a student to read it (see slides): “Let us be grateful to the people who make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom.” – Marcel Proust

Ask: What does this image/quote mean to you?

THINK • GIVE

Suggested time: 20–25 minutes

Defining and Valuing Friends

Explain: Friends are people with whom we share a special bond, and because of that, we care about their feelings and well-being. Just as our friends can make us happy by showing they care, we must do the same for them. One way to strengthen our friendships is by practicing empathy—listening to and understanding how our friends feel. By showing that we value their friendship and being there for them, we can brighten their day and strengthen our connection.

★ TEACHER TIP

If needed, brainstorm before students choose words that describe a friend. Sample words include loyal, supportive, reliable, accepting, caring, trustworthy, kind, empathetic, encouraging, understanding, fun, honest, respectful, and generous.

Give each student a paper plate and a marker. Students think of all their friends—in class, at school, and in other communities (e.g., sports teams, clubs, religious community, etc.)—and write a word in large letters that they feel embodies the most important quality of a good friend (e.g., honest, funny, kind, empathetic, trustworthy).

NOTE: Instead of plates, you could use paper strips and build a friendship chain. You could also have students reflect in their ThinkGive Journals.

Students share their words with the class and explain their choices. Display the plates in the room where everyone can see them.

Discuss:

- What do you notice about the words we chose?
- Why are friends important?
- Why is empathy important in a friendship? How does empathy help prevent us from taking a friend for granted?
- How can you be a good friend? What are some things you can do to brighten a friend's day?

Activity: Beaming Bonds

Assign pairs or allow students to choose a partner. Hand out the Beaming Bonds Scenarios ([PDF](#)) (1/pair) (different pairs can receive the same scenario). Students take turns role-playing, with one person acting out the scenario and the other responding with empathy and kindness. After the first round, they switch roles and replay the scenario, this time choosing new words or actions to demonstrate empathy differently.

After a few rounds of role-play, invite volunteers to re-enact their scenarios for the class. As a group, discuss and highlight the examples of empathy and kindness that stood out during the performances. Encourage students to reflect on how these actions made a difference in the scenario.

Discuss:

- How did it feel to play each role—both experiencing a cloudy day and offering support?
- What words or phrases stood out to you as helpful in brightening a friend's day?
- What challenges, if any, did you encounter when trying to show empathy?

DIGGING DEEPER

Watch: [How Friendship Affects Your Brain](#) (4:07). This video explains how adolescent friendships influence brain development and how your brain responds to time spent with friends.



VOCAB

Empathy: noun; the ability to understand and share the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of others.



TEACHER TIP

Model a scenario to show students what practicing empathy can look like.



TEACHER TIP

Remind students that while it's not their responsibility to fix a friend's day, a small act of kindness can sometimes have a significant impact. Even a simple gesture can help brighten a friend's mood and show them they're cared for.

Discuss:

- The “ventral striatum” part of your brain helps you feel happy when you're with friends. Can you think of a time when you felt excited to spend time with a friend? Do you often look forward to hanging out with friends?
- What is the “Theory of Mind”? (see minute 2:20)
- Have you ever felt completely in sync with a friend? What was the situation, and how did it make you feel?

Tech Option

Watch: [The Animal Odd Couple](#) (2:44). This video is about a unique friendship between two animals named Bella and Tara. As students watch, encourage them to think about what these animals can teach us about friendship.

Discuss:

- What gifts do Bella and Tara give each other?
- Do you think Bella and Tara exhibit empathy for each other? If so, how?
- What can we learn about friendship from Bella and Tara?
- How does this friendship impact the humans at the nature preserve?

CONNECT + CLOSE

Suggested time: 5 minutes

Take Action

Explain: Before our next ThinkGive session on [give date], notice opportunities to take a small (and authentic) action to impact a friend in class, at school, or in another community. Remember, small is all!

Things to Consider

- The ThinkGive Three's focus is on small. Small actions can go a long way in strengthening a friendship!
- Use empathy to consider what a friend wants, needs, or enjoys.
- What action can you take that might brighten a friend's sky?

Closing Quote

Use this quote and Image ([PDF](#)) to close out the lesson. The reflective questions could serve as an Exit Ticket ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)).

“Let us be grateful to the people who make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom.” – Marcel Proust

Discuss:

- What does this quote mean to you now?
- How does this quote connect to the lesson?

★ THINKGIVE THREE

1. True: be authentic
2. Small: small is all
3. Brave: step into your courage zone




★ CONNECTION

Marcel Proust (1871–1922) was a French novelist who wrote the longest novel, *In Search of Lost Time*. It's almost 4,000 pages and has 1.2 million words. It took him 13 years to write!

Sample Actions

- I sat beside a friend on the bus because they were alone.
- I noticed I've taken a friend for granted. I told him I'm thankful he's a friend.
- My best friend and I are different people. I told them what I like about how different we are.

Student Journal Questions

-  Write about a friendship you admire—and what you admire about it.
-  What have you learned from your friends? How did you learn those things?
-  What actions can you take to develop or strengthen friendships?

Extensions

DO

Friendship Spotlight Game

Use the Friendship Spotlight Game from "Changes In Me: A Puberty and Adolescent Development Resource for Educators" ([PDF](#)) to help students identify positive, warning, and negative signs in friendships. Review the activity description and decide which teaching strategy best suits students. Print the Activity Cards ([PDF](#)) and prepare your room according to your chosen approach.

WATCH

Song: "[You've Got a Friend](#)" (4:30) by James Taylor (see lyrics: [PDF](#)). This song, written by Carole King, is about how friends always help us during hard times.

Discuss:

- What qualities of a friend does James Taylor highlight?
- How does James Taylor care for his friend?

READ/LISTEN

Read-aloud book: [My Two Blankets](#) (4:55) by Irena Kobald and Freya Blackwood. Due to war, a girl nicknamed Cartwheel has moved to a place where she no longer feels like herself, and friendship inspires new ways of speaking, living, and being.

Discuss:

- What do you learn about the narrator? What is her experience?
- Why does she feel so alone?
- What kindness does the girl give the narrator?
- The narrator learns from the girl; what does the girl learn from the narrator?
- How do the girls' blankets connect with her identity?