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EC09: Expressing Sympathy

Student Name: _____ Student ID Number: _____

Instructor: _____ Level: _____ Date: _____

For media links in this activity, visit [the LLC ESL Tutoring website for Upper Level SDLAs](#). Find your SDLA number to see all the resources to finish your SDLA.

All listening and activities in this SDLA have been adapted from "Step Up 1: Listening, Speaking, and Critical Thinking" with permissions of the authors, Margaret Teske and Peggy Marcy.

Section 1: Introduction

What can you say when someone gives you bad news? Bad news may make us feel uncomfortable. It is important to respond with support. Sometimes the news is not very serious, but at other times the news is sad and very serious. Expressing sympathy is even difficult for native English speakers. Below are some common replies when we hear bad news.

Part 1: Organize the comments of sympathy in the list as being used for Very Serious News or Less Serious News.

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1) That's awful! | 8) What a shame! |
| 2) I'm sorry for your loss. | 9) I'm really sorry to hear that. |
| 3) What a hassle! | 10) Oh no! Are you feeling okay? |
| 4) That must be difficult. | 11) I hope you'll feel better soon. |
| 5) I can't tell you how sorry I am. | 12) You've been through a lot. |
| 6) That's not so bad. You should recover soon. | 13) That's terrible. |
| 7) That's so unfair. | 14) That's too bad. |

Sympathetic Responses/Replies

Very Serious/Sad News

Less Serious News

Part 2: Answer the questions.

1. What do you usually say to show sympathy? _____
2. How does it make you feel when you hear words of sympathy? _____





Section 2: Respond with Sympathy



Listen to the situations in "Respond with Sympathy" for Section 2. Listen to the recording for statements of bad news. For each, write a response and mark the situation as either "Very Serious" or "Less Serious."



Your Words of Sympathy	Very Serious	Less Serious
1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____
6. _____	_____	_____
7. _____	_____	_____

Section 3: Good and Bad Sympathy

It is possible to say the wrong thing. We have looked at some common statements of sympathy. Now, let's look at some bad statements in response to pain.

Part 1: Watch part of the video starting at 1:44. Answer the questions about the video.





English Self-Directed Learning Activities

Language Learning Center 77-1005, *Passport Rewards*

EC09: Expressing Sympathy

1. "Silver lining" is an idiom that means _____ ?
2. Why is it **not** sympathetic to start a reply with "at least"?

3. Complete this sentence from the video. "One of the things we do sometimes in the face of very difficult conversations is _____."
4. Complete these sentences from the video. "I don't even know _____ .
I'm just so _____ ."
5. What can make someone feel better? _____

Part 2: Mark the following comments as "Good Sympathy," "Bad Sympathy," or "Both." Be prepared to explain your answers to the tutor.

Good Sympathy | Both | Bad Sympathy

- | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| _____ | _____ | _____ | 6. I'm sure that if you try harder, you will do better next time. |
| _____ | _____ | _____ | 7. I know you worked really hard. I'm sorry it didn't turn out better. |
| _____ | _____ | _____ | 8. If you really want to lose weight, you should join my yoga class. |
| _____ | _____ | _____ | 9. If you pray hard enough, your problems will go away. |
| _____ | _____ | _____ | 10. I wish I knew what to say. I'm so sorry. |
| _____ | _____ | _____ | 11. I hope your sister feels better soon. |
| _____ | _____ | _____ | 12. I know just how you feel. Last year the same thing happened to me. |

13. What do the "Bad Sympathy" comments have in common? Why are they bad?

14. Would the same statements be considered "bad" in your mother tongue?





15. What do the "Good Sympathy" comments have in common? Why are they good?





Section 4: What Did I Learn?

Complete this table BEFORE meeting with a tutor.

Communication Skill	I can't do this YET. 	I can do this WITH help. 	I can do this WITHOUT help. 	I can TEACH this to a classmate. 
I can use sympathetic words for less serious situations.				
I can use sympathetic words for very serious situations.				
I can avoid saying the wrong thing when I hear bad news.				

Here are some words/phrases I need to practice.

Good Job!

Now make an appointment

with a tutor on the LLC ESL Tutoring Website

www.mtsac.edu/llc/passportrewards/llctutoring








Section 5: Practice with a Tutor!

Meet with a tutor. Give this paper to the tutor. The tutor will review your work and talk with you.

Grading Rubric

Possible Points	Need Practice  (0-1 Point)	Good Job  (2-3 Points)	Excellent Work  (4-5 Points)
Content	Not enough information provided in responses and often does not use correct vocabulary.	Provides most important information in responses and some of the time uses correct vocabulary.	Provides all necessary information in responses and most of the time uses correct vocabulary.
Skill: Speaking	More than 6 mistakes saying words; needs guessing more than 3 times.	Not more than 5 mistakes saying words; needs guessing on 1-2 words or sentences.	Not more than 2 mistakes saying words; needs no guess about meaning.
Oral Fluency	Speaks mostly in phrases, individual words; many pauses.	Sometimes speaks in complete sentences; several pauses.	Speaks in complete sentences; a couple pauses okay.

*Students must receive at least 10 points to move on

Possible Points: _____ / 15

Tutor Comments:

Congratulations! Keep going.

You have successfully completed this SDLA and are ready to continue to the next.

Work on this more.

You have not yet mastered this SDLA. It is recommended that you complete it again.

Tutor Signature: _____

Date: _____

