

Empathy Exercise: Hunger



The Empty Pantry: What If You Couldn't Afford Your Next Meal?

Imagine you're a single parent working full time at minimum wage. After paying rent, utilities, and transportation, you have \$30 left to feed yourself and two kids for the week. What do you do?

Choose Your Path: Make a choice at **each step** and reflect on the consequences.

Step 1: Grocery Budget- you go to the store with \$30. Which do you prioritize?

- A) Fresh fruits and vegetables (but not enough calories)
- B) Processed packaged meals (cheaper but low nutrition)
- C) Rice, beans, and canned goods (affordable but repetitive)

Step 2: Meals at Home- you run out of food two days early. What's your plan?

- A) Skip meals so your kids can eat.
- B) Borrow food or money (you've asked before).
- C) Visit a food pantry (but it's only open one day a week).

Step 3: Social Costs of Hunger - your child wants to go out with friends after school.

- A) Give them \$5 to grab a snack (but that means you won't have bus fare for work tomorrow).
- B) Tell them no - you can't spare the money (they feel left out and embarrassed).
- C) Encourage them to go anyway, knowing they can't buy anything (they may be teased or feel uncomfortable).

Step 4: Long-Term Options- this is becoming a monthly pattern. What's next?

- A) Apply for SNAP (takes 4 weeks to process).
- B) Work extra hours (but need childcare).
- C) Visit a soup kitchen (not always kid-friendly).

Reflection Prompts:

- What sacrifices would you have to make?
- How would this impact your mental and physical health?
- How does hunger affect dignity and decision-making?

Optional Challenge:

Try shopping for a week's groceries with just \$30.

- **Plan meals and make a list.**
 - **Reflect on what you had to give up or compromise.**
 - **If you're able, donate the difference between your usual grocery budget and \$30 to a local pantry (like CRC's Food and Nutrition Center!). Note "Empathy Exercise" on the donation.**
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Quick Facts:

- 1 in 4 San Diegans experience food insecurity.
- Hunger affects working families, seniors, and children.
- Food insecurity can lead to serious long-term health issues, including chronic diseases.