

LESSON 9

Personal Responsibility



Goal

To examine individual responsibility in helping to stop the escalation of hate.

Materials

"Self-Reflection" handout and stamped post cards, one of each for each student

Key Words and Phrases

Self-reflection, assumptions, consequences, media messages

Process

1. Have the statement "You're either part of the solution or you're part of the problem" written on the board. Ask students if they have ever heard this expression and elicit from students what they think the statement means. Ask them to think specifically about what this statement means in terms of name-calling, prejudice and exclusion.
2. Review the "Pyramid of Hate" from Lesson 8. Ask students to think about where their own actions and beliefs fall on the pyramid (e.g., do they sometimes believe stereotypes about groups of people?)
3. Explain that this lesson provides students with an opportunity to think about their own attitudes and behaviors and to consider how they may be "part of the problem," but also how they are, or can be, "part of the solution."
4. Distribute the "Self-Reflection" handout and give students time to answer the questions. Explain that because this is a personal self-reflection, no one will be asked to share individual responses; encourage students to be as honest as possible. Tell students that when everyone has completed the handout, you will lead a general discussion about it, but no one will be asked to reveal specific answers, and the "Self-Reflection" handout will not be turned in to the teacher.
5. After all students have completed the handout, conduct a discussion using the following questions:
 - a. How did you feel completing this handout?
 - b. Were you surprised by any of your answers? If so, why do you think you were surprised?
 - c. Do you think it was a good exercise for thinking about these topics? Why or why not?

NOTE: Assure students that most people are not prejudice-free and everyone must work hard to keep from moving up the "pyramid."

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- d. Do you think that you will try to change any of your attitudes or behaviors based on your self-reflection? Explain your thinking.
 - e. If you were satisfied with some (or all) of your answers, what kinds of things will you do to continue being “part of the solution?”
 - f. Do you think each person has a responsibility to stop the escalation of hate? Explain your thinking.
6. Continue this lesson by having students review their lists. Encourage them to identify one item that they will try to work on in the coming weeks. Have them refer to the handout at different times and determine whether they feel they are making specific improvements. After a period of time has passed, consider having students write an essay on which behavior they tried to change/improve, how successful they felt they were, what strategies they used to stay focused on their goal, obstacles they encountered, and so forth.
 7. Close the lesson by distributing a stamped postcard to each student and instruct students to write their name and full mailing address on the stamped side of the card. On the other side of the card, ask the students to write one or two actions that they hope to accomplish in the next month. Tell the students that you will collect the cards and will mail them to the students in one month. Explain that the cards will serve as a reminder of what the students hoped to accomplish.

Connection to Standards

Language Arts: Listening and Speaking

- Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes

Language Arts: Writing

- Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process
- Uses the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing
- Uses grammatical and mechanical conventions in written compositions

Life Skills: Thinking and Reasoning

- Understands and applies basic principles of logic and reasoning
- Applies basic trouble-shooting and problem-solving techniques
- Applies decision-making techniques

Civics

- Understands the importance of Americans sharing and supporting certain values, beliefs, and principles of American constitutional democracy
- Understands the role of diversity in American life and the importance of shared values, political beliefs, and civic beliefs in an increasingly diverse American society

Self-Reflection Handout

Directions: Think about your own thoughts and actions with respect to prejudice and unfairness. Rate yourself using the scale below and then answer the questions that follow each item.

1 = I almost never do this 2 = I sometimes do this 3 = I often do this 4 = I always do this

_____ **I try to learn about my own cultural group(s).**

Why do I think I do (or don't so) this? _____

What else could I do to learn about my own background and heritage? _____

_____ **I try to learn about other cultural groups.**

Why do I think I do (or don't do) this? _____

What else could I do to learn about other cultural groups? _____

_____ **I listen to other people's opinions and points of view on various topics, even when they differ from my own.**

Why do I think I do (or don't do) this? _____

What are some ways that I could do this better? _____

_____ **I engage in name-calling.**

What are some reasons why I do (or don't do) this? _____

What would be the value of my not engaging in name-calling at all? _____



_____ **I make assumptions about people based on the groups to which they belong.**

Why do I think I do (or don't do) this? _____

What are some ways I can practice not making assumptions and not believing stereotypes?

_____ **I tell jokes that make fun of people because of things like their gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, clothes, body size or shape, physical or mental ability.**

Why do I think I do (or don't do) this? _____

What is the value of not telling jokes about people? _____

_____ **I spread rumors.**

Why do I think I do (or don't do) this? _____

What are the possible consequences when/if I do spread rumors? _____

_____ **I am prejudiced against certain groups of people.**

Why do I think I do (or don't I) hold prejudices? _____

Which prejudices that I hold do I personally think I need to rid myself of and why?



_____ **I think about the negative messages that I am getting about people from things like advertising, television, movies, music, and video games.**

Why do I think I do (or don't do) this? _____

What would be the value of paying closer attention to hidden messages in the media?

_____ **I speak up for others when I see them being treated unfairly.**

Why do I think I do (or don't) speak up? _____

What can I do to become more outspoken on issues of unfairness and inequity?

How would I benefit from speaking out for others? _____

How would others benefit if I spoke out? _____

