

Teachers Guide

Grades 6-8



Don't Laugh at Me

Teachers Guide: Grades 6–8 Creating a Ridicule-Free Classroom

A Project of Operation Respect Conceived and Produced by Peter Yarrow Productions and Educators for Social Responsibility

Project Directors: Peter Yarrow and Flora Lazar
Writer: Laura Parker Roerden
Senior Content Advisor: Linda Lantieri

Grateful thanks for their generous pro bono contributions of time, energy, and talent:

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Linda Lantieri | Project Conception/Design (Founding Director of the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP), a program of Educators for Social Responsibility) |
| Charlotte Frank | Project Executive Producer (Vice President of Research and Development, The McGraw-Hill Companies) |
| Vincent Lawrence | Project Executive Producer (National Marketing Manager, The McGraw-Hill Companies) |
| John Lee | Project Executive Producer (President and CEO, Learning Curve) |
| Tim Smith | Executive Producer, <i>Don't Laugh at Me</i> Website |
| Roger Zender | Producer, <i>Don't Laugh at Me</i> Website |
| Jan Bell | Designer, <i>Don't Laugh at Me</i> Website |
| Jim Carnes | Project Contributing Editor (Executive Director, Southern Poverty Law Center) |
| Milton Glaser | Graphic Design |
| Katja Mass | (Milton Glaser Studio) |
| George Leavitt | (Milton Glaser Studio) |
| Lillian Ng | (Milton Glaser Studio) |
| Matthew Klein | Photographer (Flatiron Color) |
| Scott Elam | Assistant Photographer |
| Doug Parker Roerden | Layout/Design, <i>Don't Laugh at Me</i> School Program Teachers Guide |
| Laura Parker Roerden | Art Direction, <i>Don't Laugh at Me</i> School Program Teachers Guide (inside page layout) |
| Joy Sumberg | Production, <i>Don't Laugh at Me</i> School Program Teachers Guide |
| Salome Brant | Production/Project Coordinator (Peter Yarrow Productions) |
| Gigi Causey | Production/Project Coordinator (Peter Yarrow Productions) |
| Tom Asher, Esq. | Project Attorney |
| Victor Kovner, Esq. | Project Attorney |
| Bertha Panda | Project Production Coordinator for CD and School Program Packaging (McGraw-Hill Companies) |
| Keri Guzzardo | Manufacturing Coordinator for CD and School Program Packaging (McGraw-Hill Companies) |
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| Nora Mavrelis | Teachers Guide Printing Coordinator (Learning Curve International) |
| Peter Friedlan | Producer/Director, School Program Video (McCann-Erickson) |
| Alex Marolachakis | Editor, School Program Video (McCann-Erickson) |
| Larry Kapit | Senior Video Supervisor, School Program Video (McCann-Erickson) |
| Brooks Sorice | Senior Video Supervisor, School Program Video (McCann-Erickson) |
| Charles (Charlie) Gelber | Post-Production Audio, School Program Video (Gelber Television) |
| Suzanne Adomo | Production Associate, School Program Video (McCann-Erickson) |
| Norman Cook | School Program Video Manufacturing Coordinator for School Program (Abbey Tape Duplicators, Chatsworth, CA) |
| Jim Feeney | School Program Video Manufacturing Supervisor (United AV Group, North Hollywood, CA) |
| Stan Reynolds | Executive Producer; Peter, Paul & Mary <i>Don't Laugh at Me</i> Music Video (Reynolds & Reynolds, Inc., Des Moines, IA) |
| Shelia Cospere | Director/Producer; Peter, Paul & Mary <i>Don't Laugh at Me</i> Music Video (Austin Music Network) |
| Tristan Rudat | Editor; Peter, Paul & Mary <i>Don't Laugh at Me</i> Music Video (Granite House, Inc., Austin, TX) |
| Tim Shriver | Advisor; Special Olympics archival footage for Peter, Paul & Mary <i>Don't Laugh at Me</i> Music Video (Special Olympics) |
| Michael Martin | Associate Editor; Peter, Paul & Mary <i>Don't Laugh at Me</i> Music Video (Granite House, Inc., Austin, TX) |
| Jennifer Presto | Associate Editor; Peter, Paul & Mary <i>Don't Laugh at Me</i> Music Video (Granite House, Inc., Austin, TX) |
| Austin Music Network | Additional Videography; Peter, Paul & Mary <i>Don't Laugh at Me</i> Music Video |
| Lee Greenhouse | Consultant, <i>Don't Laugh at Me</i> Website |
| Tina Sharkey | Consultant, <i>Don't Laugh at Me</i> Website |
| Deb Weiser | Consultant, <i>Don't Laugh at Me</i> Website |
| Forrest Wright | Consultant, <i>Don't Laugh at Me</i> Website |
| Jacquie Turner | Director and Co-Producer, <i>Don't Laugh at Me</i> Website "Greeting" |
| Peter Friedlan | Co-Producer, <i>Don't Laugh at Me</i> Website "Greeting" |

Special thanks for the generous contributions that helped make the *Don't Laugh at Me* School Program possible:

Applied Graphics Technologies Broadcast Services
The Honorable Elizabeth K. Bagley and Mr. Smith Bagley
Benton Foundation
Blue Star Camps
Children's Benefit Fund
Coleman Day Camps
Dairy Queen International
Gail and Alfred Engelberg
Fanny Landwirth Foundation
First Texas Council of Camp Fire
Gander & White Shipping, Long Island, NY
Morris Goodman
The Handleman Company
The Harris Foundation
Itsy Bitsy Entertainment
Lear Family Foundation
McCann-Erickson
The McGraw-Hill Companies
Metis Associates
The Nathan Cummings Foundation
One Source Digital Solutions
Carol Rosofsky and Robert Lifton
John Shea
Loren and Gloria Smith
Toys R Us Children's Fund
Tukaiz Communications
Variety Clubs International
Wicklander Printing Corporation
Peter Yarrow
Zany Brainy

Don't Laugh at Me School Program "Angels":

Melanie Abbott
Suzanne Adomo (McCann-Erickson)
Mark Aiston (Director, Gander & White Shipping)
Tom Bellios (President, Zany Brainy)
Don Biederman (Warner/Chappell Music, Inc.)
Marna Biederman
Jill Biernat (Anchor Bay Entertainment)
Karen Bohlin (Director, Boston University's Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character)
Anne Brandt
Eve Brant
Michael Casserly (Executive Director, Council of Great City Schools)
First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton
Beverly Coney (National Association of Elementary School Principals)
Bob DeCormier
Dan Defino (Tukaiz Communications)
Larry Dieringer (Executive Director, Educators for Social Responsibility)
Rich Dutra St. John (Director, Challenge Day)
Roy Elvove (Senior Vice President, BBDO)
Chris Jennings
Eva-Tone, Inc., Clearwater, FL
Jo Ann Freiberg-Reagan
Margaret Gage (The Proteus Fund)
John Garamendi (Manager, Yucaipa Co.)
David Greenhouse
Don Gold (President of On-Screen Entertainment—Theatrical, Itsy Bitsy Entertainment)
Martha Hertzberg (Manager, Peter, Paul and Mary)
Ted Jensen (Sterling Sound)
Elizabeth Kolodny (NYU, Robert F. Wagner School of Public Service)
Dr. Tony Kovner (Professor of Public and Health Administration, NYU, Robert F. Wagner School of Public Service)
Flora Lazar (Greenhouse Associates)
Lynn Kalasky (The Handleman Company)
Cindy King (Allied Digital Technologies)
Kimberly Longey (The Proteus Fund)
Rob Mayer
Michael Paul Miller (Chairman, Toys R Us Children's Fund)
Harold McGraw, Jr. (The McGraw-Hill Companies)
Harold W. McGraw III (Chairman, President, and CEO, The McGraw-Hill Companies)
Linda Mckay (Character Education Partnership, St. Louis, MO)
Michael Miller
Carol Miller Lieber (Educators for Social Responsibility)
Steve Nadelberg (The Handleman Company)
Colleen O'Connor (Department Of Education)
Jeff Perkins (Educators for Social Responsibility)
Peter, Paul & Mary
Alfonso Pollard
Larry Richmond
Jeff Rosen
Mora Rothenberg (Educators for Social Responsibility)
Esther Schaeffer (Executive Director and CEO, Character Education Partnership)
Stan Schneider (Senior Vice President, Metis Associates)
School for Young Achievers, Boston, MA
Steve Seskin (Songwriter, "Don't Laugh at Me")
Shari Sexton (Walk Street Management)
Allen Shamblin (Songwriter, "Don't Laugh at Me")
Archie Smart (Allied Digital Technologies)
Jill Spitz (Learning Curve International)
Robin Stern (Board of Trustees, The Woodhull Institute for Ethical Leadership)
Yvonne St. John Dutra (Director, Challenge Day)
Fred Tarter (Stagebill)
Jacquie Turner
Mary Vasquez (Learning Curve International)
Ken Viselman (Chairman, Itsy Bitsy Entertainment)
Jim Wicklander (Wicklander Printing Corporation)
Mary Beth Yarrow
Judy Zdziera

A special thanks to all the children in the cover photograph:

Taqee Bond, Jane Chardiet, Margaret Chardiet, Sophia Henriquez, Kyia Jones, Ethan Klein, Eric Kreitzer, Gabriel Strauss.

Don't Laugh at Me Teachers Guide

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Don't Laugh at Me School Program Video

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Don't Laugh at Me School Songs CD

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Don't Laugh at Me

2 Penn Plaza

23rd Floor

New York, NY 10121

212-904-5243 (phone)

212-904-3618 (fax)

www.dontlaugh.org

Educators for Social Responsibility

23 Garden Street

Cambridge, MA 02138

800-370-2515 (phone)

617-864-5164 (fax)

www.esrnational.org

The activities in this guide were adapted primarily from materials by two programs of Educators for Social Responsibility: the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP) and Adventures in Peacemaking (AIP). Materials were drawn from *Resolving Conflict Creatively: A Teaching Guide for Grades Kindergarten Through Six* by Peggy Ray et al. (Board of Education of the City of New York and Educators for Social Responsibility, Metropolitan Area, 1993, 1996); *Early Childhood Adventures in Peacemaking* by William J. Kreidler and Sandy Tsubokawa Whitall et al. (Educators for Social Responsibility and Work/Family Directions, 1996, 1999); *School-Age Adventures in Peacemaking* by William J. Kreidler and Lisa Furlong (Educators for Social Responsibility and Work/Family Directions with Project Adventure, 1995); *Linking Up* by Sarah Pirtle (Educators for Social Responsibility, 1998); *Conflict Resolution in the High School* by Carol Miller Lieber (Educators for Social Responsibility, 1998); and *Conflict Resolution in the Middle School* by William J. Kreidler (Educators for Social Responsibility, 1994, 1997). Additional materials were drawn from the Southern Poverty Law Center's Teaching Tolerance Program and Challenge Day. Adapted and used with permission.

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PETER YARROW
NEW YORK, N.Y.

Dear Friends,

The whole *Don't Laugh at Me* project started with the song, discovered by my daughter, Bethany, and then played for Peter, Paul & Mary. It brought tears to our eyes when we first heard it, as it might to yours upon first listening.

Just as "We Shall Overcome," "Blowin' in the Wind," and "If I Had a Hammer" reached the hearts of millions of Americans, galvanizing them to action, so, I believe, might "Don't Laugh at Me" provide a similar kind of heart's connection that will help educators, social workers, and other children's caregivers create a more respectful, safe environment for our children and teenagers.

First, please play the video and you'll be halfway there to understanding our objective. You will probably "get it" (almost) as quickly as the wonderful young people in our focus groups who helped guide us with their comments, ideas, and suggestions.

In a nutshell, *Don't Laugh at Me* is intended to serve as an introduction to, and enrichment of, ongoing efforts that nurture young people's emotional, social, and ethical development, such as character education, conflict resolution, and teaching tolerance programs.

When students begin this project, they have an opportunity to share the feelings they experienced when they, or others, were targeted by disrespect. Then, using the tools and activities in the enclosed guide book, and guided by skillful, caring teachers, they become sensitized to the hurtful effects of ridicule, scorn, name-calling, bullying, intolerance, and other forms of disrespect that they encounter in the classroom and their lives beyond.

As you progress, the suggested activities, combined with the video and the CD, will lead you and your students on a path to successfully creating a "Ridicule-Free Zone." Together, you will have the opportunity to declare your classroom (or other environment in which you work) a space in which ridicule and other forms of disrespect are, by mutual agreement, not acceptable.

The expressed desire to evolve the culture of the classroom, so that it becomes more respectful, peaceful, and safe, is a necessary first step. Your classes' enthusiasm for nurturing and maintaining a Ridicule-Free Zone is a good beginning, but only a beginning. After that, new skills need to be learned, such as recognizing one's own and others' feelings, expressing oneself in a nonthreatening way, identifying prejudice, and learning to think beyond intolerant messages from one's past.

Concurrently, students will need to learn how to resolve controversy and disagreements respectfully, creatively, and nonviolently. As they acquire new, advanced socializing skills, heartfelt pledges to change can begin to become a reality.

Additionally, to make this project part of your daily classroom activities, extension efforts need to be integrated with the regular academic curriculum.

Your "classroom in transformation" can also begin to reach beyond the school's walls. Doctors, lawyers, law enforcement workers, business leaders, psychologists, athletes, governmental officials, artists, and musicians can all be invited to the classroom to see what the class has achieved and discuss ways of extending the Ridicule-Free Zone to the larger community.

Most importantly, of course, parents need to be brought into the circle; by teachers, school staff, and advisors, but primarily by the young people themselves. Their homes can also become Ridicule-Free Zones as old habits of angry confrontation are replaced by new, more respectful ways of resolving conflict with compassionate exchange.

With the proposed “Conscious Acts of Caring” being shared, dramatized, or posted on the *Don’t Laugh at Me* website (www.dontlaugh.org), the spirit of your *Don’t Laugh at Me* project can intersect with the energies of other classrooms and schools committed to the same philosophy and goals.

Let *Don’t Laugh at Me* provide a point of inspiration, but do not fail to follow through on the exciting possibilities that will reveal themselves when you and your students first watch the video. The beginning activities in the enclosed teacher’s guide should serve as a powerful introduction to many other excellent character education and conflict resolution programs that have proved to be highly effective in the classroom and other settings, particularly when embraced on a year-round basis.

In order to continue to move forward in your efforts to nourish your students’ emotional, social, and ethical development, you may want to consider further training, which is available now, but in most cases still needs to be financed by groups of teachers or individual schools that allocate special funds for this purpose. However, considering the recent national prioritization of character education and safe schools initiatives, we suspect that teacher training of this sort will soon be widely mandated and financed by state and local governments.

Finally, for those of you who have already embarked on a path to creating a peaceful environment for your students, this guide, CD, and video can add extra passion and new dimension, giving “song” and extra “heart” to your efforts.

Having shared all this with you, I must introduce a cautionary note before advising you to launch *Don’t Laugh at Me* in your classroom. A certain amount of background in social and emotional learning, particularly in the area of conflict resolution, is crucial to the successful implementation of the *Don’t Laugh at Me* curriculum. Since preparation for teaching does not always require experience in these areas, some of you may feel unprepared to begin using *Don’t Laugh at Me*. If you are enthusiastic about introducing the project into your classroom, but feel you need a stronger educational foundation in this area, we urge you to wait a semester or two before starting, while you pursue such further professional development. Educators for Social Responsibility (800-370-2515) and other excellent providers of professional development are listed in Appendix C of the guide, and happily, we believe that distance learning courses may soon be available. Check the *Don’t Laugh at Me* website at www.dontlaugh.org for updates.

In any event, know that you are far from alone in your enthusiasm to pursue this work. A virtual movement is gathering strength as more and more educators agree that students must not only acquire academic skills to become successful, thoughtful participants in a democracy, they must also acquire the tools to help them grow up to be ethical, compassionate citizens of strong character, healthy self-esteem, and humane sensibilities.

With my warmest wishes for your success in the *Don’t Laugh at Me* project,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Yarrow". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and a long, sweeping underline.

Peter Yarrow

INTRODUCTION

Don't Laugh at Me

The goal of *Don't Laugh at Me* is to support you in creating a caring, compassionate, and cooperative classroom and school environment. Since young people learn by doing, this guide focuses on giving them the experience of learning in a caring community—a classroom characterized by:

- a healthy expression of feelings
- caring, compassion, and cooperation
- the creative resolution of conflicts
- an appreciation of differences

Don't Laugh at Me addresses issues of the heart—as well as the mind. Through the song, CD, and video, the project harnesses the power of music and art to transform, inspire, and build skills in students. The activities in this guide are designed to raise awareness, explore feelings, connect young people to their inner selves and one another, provide important tools for you as a teacher, fulfill curriculum standards, and build essential skills. Additionally, these activities will help you to empower your students to become important catalysts for change in your school and community—so that the circle of caring widens and an increasing number of young people can share in the experience of a caring community.

The Project's Scope and Pedagogy

The *Don't Laugh at Me* project is the result of a rich collaboration among leading organizations working in the fields of character education, conflict resolution, and diversity education, including Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR) and its Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP), the Southern Poverty Law Center and Teaching Tolerance, the McGraw-Hill Companies, the Character Education Partnership, CharacterPlus, the Center for Advancement of Ethics and Character at Boston University, and Challenge Day. The activities in this guide are drawn primarily from Educators for Social Responsibility's programs, including the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program and Adventures in Peacemaking (AIP), with important contributions from all of the project's partners.

ESR works to make teaching social responsibility a core practice in education so that young people develop the convictions and skills to shape a safe, sustainable, democratic, and just world. AIP is a widely recognized after-school and early childhood program. RCCP is one of the nation's leading school-based conflict resolution programs. Results of a recently completed evaluation of RCCP, released by the National Center for Children in Poverty, at the Joseph L. Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University, provide concrete evidence of the program's effectiveness in teaching students competent strategies for resolving conflict and reducing violence. Furthermore, the study shows that taking time for the development of social and emotional competencies through direct skill instruction not only benefits students socially, but also improves academic performance as measured on standardized reading and math tests.

The results of this study confirm what many educators know from their experience working with young people. It is possible to create a more just, caring, and safe way of being in the world for young people. But changing the culture of your classroom and school takes time, patience, support, and sustained effort. Hopefully, the activities offered here will provide a bridge to integrating social, emotional, and ethical development instruction on an ongoing basis in your classroom practice and across your curriculum. Toward this end, throughout this guide we offer you suggestions on extending the *Don't Laugh at Me* project through the best curricula, programs, and training available.

Getting Started

Begin by watching the “Don’t Laugh at Me” video to familiarize yourself with the project. Included on the video are: 1) Peter, Paul & Mary’s version of the song with moving visuals, 2) a message from Peter Yarrow to explain the project, 3) Peter Yarrow’s performance of the song (that will be helpful in teaching the song to your students), and 4) a personal message from Peter Yarrow to your students. When you are finished viewing the video, listen to the CD, which includes classic folk songs sung by Peter Yarrow, like “Blowin’ in the Wind,” “If I Had a Hammer,” “Day Is Done,” “Puff the Magic Dragon,” “Light One Candle,” and “Weave Me the Sunshine.”

Now review “Lessons from Research on Ridicule” (Appendix A) as well as “How to Use This Guide” (below) before starting the lessons.

How to Use This Guide

Think about the best way to implement this project in *your* classroom. Ideally, you can facilitate one or two activities a week. Minimally, we recommend you do at least two activities per month over five months. Suggestions for curriculum infusion provide additional opportunities to reinforce the lesson and extend the program. Activities have been carefully sequenced to build trust and community over time. It’s therefore important not to skip ahead to new activities without completing the preceding ones.

This guide is organized into four thematic units:

- Being You, Being Me, Being Us (Theme: Expressing Feelings)
- I Care, You Care, We Care (Theme: Caring, Compassion, and Cooperation)
- Words That Hurt, Words That Heal (Theme: Resolving Conflict Creatively)
- Together We Can (Theme: Celebrating Diversity)

Each unit shares the following features:

Important Facilitation Guidelines. Take the time to think through how every part of your classroom’s structure, including rituals, routines, classroom management strategies, etc., can support the goals of a caring classroom. Each unit begins with a general overview of the skills you will be nurturing in your students. Important facilitation guidelines are included in Appendix B.

Take It to the Community. Because bullying and other uncaring behaviors often occur outside of the classroom—in the halls and the cafeteria, and on the bus and the playground—it’s important that your students explore ways to apply what they have learned in your classroom to your school and, ultimately, to your community. Additionally, research shows that young people benefit from a sense of empowerment when they successfully address societal issues that might otherwise seem overwhelming. This sense of social efficacy is also correlated to academic efficacy.* Work with your students to design the “Taking It to the Community” component and help them build the confidence to successfully execute their project. (See “Creating a Community Action Project,” page 44, for a process for doing this.) The ideas presented in each unit for this component are suggestions only. Other ideas, more specifically suited to the culture of your classroom, school, or community, might be even better.

Children’s Conscious Acts of Caring. To reinforce the importance of modeling, we have included some inspirational stories of middle school-aged students making a difference in their schools and communities. We hope the next printing of this guide can include stories from *your* classroom! Please share your students’ “Conscious Acts of Caring” through the *Don’t Laugh at Me* website at www.dontlaugh.org.

* Berman, Sheldon (1997). *Children’s Social Consciousness and the Development of Social Responsibility*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Next Steps. Each unit ends with an overview of additional skills that are important to nurture in your students and specific suggestions as to where you will find activities that address those skills. This is where you'll learn how to extend your program beyond the *Don't Laugh at Me* project.

Anatomy of a Lesson

To help you quickly get the information you need for your planning, all of the core lesson plans in this guide share certain features:

Activity Title: This includes a short description of the lesson.

Objectives: This section lists the desired student outcomes for the lesson.

Materials: This section describes any materials you'll need for the lesson, as well as outlining any preparation you'll need to do in advance.

Gather Together: This section begins with an activity that is a “gathering”—a way to bring students together for the work at hand. The gathering helps you introduce the lesson. Feel free to paraphrase or make up your own introduction to place the lesson in the context of your classroom's work. You may also sing any of the songs provided on the CD to help you celebrate your classroom's growing sense of community. Singing these songs together at the beginning or end of any activity in this guide will help you establish a sense of shared community.

Close Together: Each lesson is followed by a period of reflection that asks students to think about what they have just learned and how they might apply what they have learned in some way. This section is where you'll find concrete suggestions for this reflection. Also included is a closing activity, a way to bring closure to your time together.

Curriculum Connections (Optional): This section includes optional extensions that link the topic or skill to your core curriculum. Look for additional opportunities to infuse this topic into your curriculum. The possibilities are endless!

Professional Development

To support you in this important work, you might find it helpful to attend an institute or hold a professional development workshop at your school that addresses the themes of *Don't Laugh at Me*. Educators for Social Responsibility (800-370-2515), as well as the other organizations listed in the back of this guide, provide excellent professional development opportunities and resources. ESR provides professional development tailored to prepare teachers, staff, and other providers to teach *Don't Laugh at Me*. Additionally, programs are available through ESR to extend the themes of the program or to meet your site's unique needs and challenges.

A Word Before You Begin

Basic to this guide is the assumption that young people learn best through active involvement in their learning. The success of this approach lies in developing a foundation to support the attributes of any adventure—risk taking, fun, group work, and communication. Young people will be looking to you for their cues. So don't be afraid to say you're sorry, or that you made a mistake, or to suggest another option when things aren't going well. “Walk the talk” in terms of modeling the skills of a caring classroom. Take the time to listen. Show your feelings. Celebrate the diversity of your students. Take risks. But most of all, don't forget to have fun and have a wonderful *Don't Laugh at Me* adventure!

Don't Laugh at Me Registration

Please take a moment to register your copy of the *Don't Laugh at Me* teachers guide (even if someone has duplicated your copy for you or if you have downloaded it from our website). Registration is simple.

- Go to our website www.dontlaugh.org and use our secure server
or
- Clip the form below and return it to us by standard mail.

If you provide us with your email address, we can send you curriculum updates and ideas for integrating *Don't Laugh at Me* into your existing programs. We'll also notify you about upcoming professional development opportunities. Please urge any colleague for whom you duplicate a copy of the CD, video, or teachers guide, to register with us also. That way, they will also receive ongoing updates from us. Please help them do so by duplicating the registration form below for them or by sharing our web address so that they can register online.

We assure you that your privacy is important to us and that we will not make information about you available to any outside organizations.

Share *Don't Laugh at Me* with a colleague. Go to our website at www.dontlaugh.org to download the teachers guide and music.



Don't Laugh at Me Registration Form

Name: _____

Email Address: _____

Position: _____

School Name: _____

School Address: _____

School District: _____

Grade Level(s) Taught: _____

Subjects Taught:

General

Other (please specify) _____



Have you implemented programs or curricula in social and emotional learning or character education before (including conflict resolution, cooperative learning, diversity education, intergroup relations, etc.)?

Yes (please specify program type and number of years)

No

Have you received professional development in the implementation of social and emotional learning or character education before?

Yes

No

If you answered "No" to the prior question, do you feel that in spite of the fact that you do not have formal professional development education in these areas that other experience has prepared you to teach *Don't Laugh at Me*?

Yes (please specify related education or experience)

 No

Please mail your completed registration form to:

Don't Laugh at Me
2 Penn Plaza
23rd Floor
New York, NY 10121

All information provided will be kept confidential and private and used solely for program purposes by the offices of Operation Respect/Don't Laugh At Me.



EXPRESSING FEELINGS

Being You, Being Me, Being Us

Many young people need help recognizing and naming their feelings and finding ways to express them appropriately. As they become fluent in the language of emotions—able to interpret their own and others' behavior—they will also learn to empathize with others. Given ample opportunity to practice responding to one another's feelings in a caring way, they will eventually require little prompting from you. Slowly, the shift to a more caring culture in your classroom will become apparent.

Objectives of This Unit

In this unit, you'll help students to begin to:

- Learn feelings-related vocabulary
- Identify feelings (in self and others)
- Acknowledge and respect others' feelings
- Appreciate the range of human emotions
- Empathize with others

Important Facilitation Guidelines: Setting Up for Success

See Appendix B, page 96, for guidelines on supporting the healthy expression of feelings in young people, including how to build a feelings vocabulary, encourage discussion about feelings, reflect back young people's moods, support young people's empathy, infuse feelings reflection across the curriculum, and much more.

Don't Laugh at Me

Students are introduced to the *Don't Laugh at Me* project and develop group agreements.

Objectives

- To develop empathy
- To build awareness of actions that constitute put-downs
- To create group agreements
- To introduce the *Don't Laugh at Me* project

Materials

- “Don't Laugh at Me” song CD, cued to the track where Peter Yarrow performs the song
- Chart paper and marker
- One index card per student

Gather Together: Introduce *Don't Laugh at Me* (10 minutes)

- Introduce the idea that you will be exploring issues of how to treat one another with caring and compassion through the *Don't Laugh at Me* project. Explain that throughout the project you'll be examining ways we hurt one another's feelings, and discovering how we can make sure everyone in your classroom feels safe and cared for and is not ridiculed or treated disrespectfully. You'll also be looking at ways to bring a commitment of caring to the larger community of your school and even to your town or city.
- Have the students close their eyes and listen as the CD plays of Peter Yarrow from Peter, Paul & Mary singing “Don't Laugh at Me.” Give only the following introduction: “I'm going to play a very special song for you now. It is entitled ‘Don't Laugh at Me.’ Get comfortable, close your eyes, and be aware of the feelings, thoughts, and images you have as you hear the words.”

Explore Put-Downs (15 minutes)

- After the song has finished, ask for a few volunteers to share: What is this song about? What thoughts or feelings did you have listening to it? Summarize students' comments.
- Distribute one index card to each student. Ask students to think about a time when they heard someone being ridiculed or put down. On the top of the index card, they should write the put-down. On the bottom of the card, they should write the emotion they believe the target of the put-down felt.
- When students have finished writing, gather all of the index cards, shuffle them, and then randomly redistribute them to students.
- Go around the room and have all students share both the put-downs and emotions from their cards. On the board, record the emotions named, keeping track of the number of times a particular emotion is shared with check marks. Do not write down the put-downs, as that might reinforce them.
- Ask: Is there anything about this list that anyone wants to comment on? Acknowledge how harmful put-downs can be.

Create Group Agreements (15 minutes)

- Explain that the goal of the next part of the activity is to develop a list of agreements for working and learning together as a community that will help us do the “Don’t Laugh at Me” Program. Introduce brainstorming as a process that fosters creative thinking. It is used in problem solving to generate the maximum number of ideas for consideration. Share these guidelines for brainstorming:
 - All ideas are accepted; every idea will be written down.
 - There should be no comments made, either positive or negative, about any of the ideas presented.
 - Say anything that comes to mind, even if it sounds silly.
 - Think about what others have suggested and use those thoughts to get your ideas moving along new, creative lines.
- With students, brainstorm a list of ideas for making your class a positive learning experience. Ask: What guidelines will help the group to work together productively, communicate effectively, and treat each other respectfully? To help students get started, write down two or three agreements from the following sample list:
 - Talk one at a time. (Don’t interrupt another student while he or she is speaking.)
 - Avoid being judgmental.
 - Give everyone a chance to speak.
 - Keep what is said in class confidential.
 - Be open and honest.
 - Look at people when you speak to them.
 - Listen and discover, rather than giving advice.
 - Don’t make fun of what other people say or do.
 - Help each other out.

Be sure to include nonnegotiable rights for creating a sense of safety in your classroom: 1) everyone has the right to privacy (so students may pass if they do not want to share something too personal); 2) everyone has the right to confidentiality (i.e., anything shared in the room will not go out of it or be talked about elsewhere); and 3) everyone has the right to be respected.

List the students’ suggestions on chart paper.

- After everyone has shared their ideas, discuss each suggestion. Clarify the meaning and ask, “Have you ever been in a situation where this suggestion for a class agreement was not observed? How would observing the suggestion make a difference in our class?”
- Explain that these suggestions are the basis for agreements we will keep while in your classroom. Ask for any revisions or objections to items on the list. When there are no more objections, have students initial the agreement and post it.

Tip

When setting group agreements, acknowledge that during the *Don’t Laugh at Me* project students will be sharing some personal thoughts and feelings. Help students explore the risk involved in doing this and the importance of creating agreements that guarantee safety. Also stress the importance of “the right to pass,” i.e., the right not to share something if someone feels it is too personal or does not yet feel that sufficient group trust has developed. Finally, check in frequently with students, asking them to self-evaluate how the group is adhering to their agreements.

Close Together: Sing "Don't Laugh at Me" (10 minutes)

- Cue the video to Peter Yarrow's performance and sing "Don't Laugh at Me" along with him. Follow the song by playing Peter's video message to the students.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS (OPTIONAL)

Language Arts. Have students write a letter to a person whom they witnessed using put-downs (they should use a fictitious name).

Literature. Facilitate a discussion (or a journal writing) about this anonymously attributed poem, "To Laugh Is to Risk." After the poem has been read aloud, ask: Can you think of a time you took one of these risks? How did it feel? What made it safe to take that risk? When might it not feel safe to take such a risk? What is it like when people don't feel it's safe to take risks? When might taking a risk be healthy? When might it be unhealthy?

Explore how the group agreements students made might help make it safer to take certain healthy risks. Are there any new agreements students would like to add related to this discussion? (Perhaps they want to make an agreement that it's okay to cry or show strong emotions, for example.)

To laugh is to risk appearing the fool.

To weep is to risk appearing sentimental.

To reach out to another is to risk involvement.

To expose our feelings is to risk exposing our true self.

To place your ideas and dreams before the crowd is to risk loss,

To love is to risk not being loved in return,

To live is to risk dying,

To hope is to risk despair,

To try at all is to risk failure,

But risk we must, because the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing.

The man, the woman who risks nothing, does nothing, has nothing,
is nothing.

The Torn Heart

Students are introduced to the "Don't Laugh at Me" video and more deeply explore the effects of "put-downs" and "put-ups."

Objectives

- To develop empathy
- To build awareness of actions that constitute put-downs and put-ups
- To develop commitment to positive interactions
- To create a common language around put-downs, put-ups, and thumbs-down/thumbs-up behavior

Materials

- A large paper heart with the words "I Am Important" written on it
- Tape (masking or clear)
- A story about a middle school-aged student who is put down by her parents, siblings, teachers, and/or peers. Copy the model provided here or create one of your own.
- A VCR and the "Don't Laugh at Me" video

Gather Together: Tell a Story, "The Torn Heart" (15 minutes)

- Begin by holding up the heart and explaining that every person starts out in life thinking she is someone who is important—someone who thinks important thoughts, who has important feelings; someone who matters. This is our "self-esteem."
- Ask: What do we mean by self-esteem? How might our self-esteem be affected by our experiences or by how people treat us? Facilitate a short discussion about this.
- Now tape the large paper heart to your chest and tell students that you are going to tell them a story about a day in the life of a young person who is about their age. Each time they hear a put-down in the story they are to give a "thumbs-down." For each "thumbs-down" you will dramatically rip a piece off the heart on your chest and drop it to the ground.



Tip

In advance of this activity, introduce students to the rich tradition of folk music and Peter, Paul & Mary's place in this history. See the History/Music extension on page 22 for more guidance and information.

The Torn Heart

One Tuesday morning, when the alarm clock rang, Pedro did not get out of bed. Twenty minutes later, his older brother Carlos pounded loudly on his door. “You’re such a lazy lump,” (RIP) he said. “Get up. You’ll be late for school again.”

“But I’m sick,” Pedro said.

“Why do you always act like a baby?” (RIP) Carlos said. “Get out of bed! The bus will be here any moment.”

Pedro quickly put on his clothes—reaching for the first thing he could find—and went to the kitchen to grab something to eat. “Grab an apple and go,” his mother said. “If you weren’t so lazy (RIP) you could have had a decent breakfast. Sometimes I think your father is right; you’re never going to amount to anything.” (RIP)

Carlos stormed out the door, leaving it to slam in Pedro’s face. (RIP)

“You wait for Pedro,” their mother said.

“That loser,” (RIP) Carlos said. “I don’t want to even be seen with him. Do you see what he’s wearing?” (RIP)

The boys made it to the bus just in time, with Pedro following behind his older brother. But as the doors of the bus closed and it started rolling, Pedro remembered he had left his homework in his bedroom.

Pedro asked the bus driver if he would wait while he went back to get his homework. “What are you, kid, crazy? (RIP) This isn’t a taxi. Anyway, that’s what you get for being late.” (RIP)

When Pedro got to school, he told his English teacher that he had left his homework at home. She said, “That’s the fourth time this month, Pedro. Have you really been doing your work? I’m beginning to think you’re lying. (RIP) You know, I had your sister and she was such a better kid than you are.” (RIP)

Pedro liked to play sports but he hated gym class, where he was the smallest of all the boys. And to make it worse, in his rush in the morning he had forgotten his gym clothes and had to wear something from the lost and found box. That day, they were supposed to play basketball, which was Pedro’s very worst sport of all. The teacher asked the kids to divide themselves into two teams, the Lions and the Tigers. Within a few minutes, there were ten boys on each team, with only Pedro left. (RIP)

The captain of the Lions team said: “We don’t want him—he’s no good.” (RIP)

“He’s no Tiger. He’s more like a scaredy cat,” (RIP) said the captain of the Tigers. And the other boys laughed and meowed. (RIP) “Look, he doesn’t even have real gym clothes,” another boy said. (RIP) “Yeah (sarcastically), you’re looking mighty fine, Pedro. NOT.” And everyone laughed again. (RIP)

Finally, the teacher assigned Pedro to a team, the Lions. But he sat on the bench for the whole time because the captain never put him in the game. (RIP)

- Ask: How do you think Pedro is feeling right now? Why is he feeling that way? What might be the effect on him of being treated this way day after day?
- Reread the story and ask students to volunteer some “put-ups” for Pedro in place of the put-downs. Ask: How do you think Pedro would feel *now*, after hearing all of these put-ups? Can you think of other ways the people in Pedro’s life might have treated him differently?
- What are some reasons people might use such put-downs? What do they gain from it? Are there other ways they might gain that very same thing without hurting someone else?



Watch a Video: "Don't Laugh at Me" (20 minutes)

- Gather the students' desks or seats close together near the video player, or they may sit in a half circle on the floor near the video player. (Your goal is to create a sense of intimacy in the group.)
- Tell students that this version of the song "Don't Laugh at Me" is sung by Peter, Paul & Mary. If you have not already done so, tell them a little bit about the group. Mention that Peter, Paul & Mary recorded the classic children's song "Puff the Magic Dragon." But more importantly, Peter, Paul & Mary have used their music to create a fairer, more just society. They worked with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in the civil rights movement of the 1960s; they have worked for peace, equality for women, a safe environment, and many other important goals. After forty years they are still working toward, and singing for, these things. In the early 1960s, Peter, Paul & Mary were the #1 recording group in the country. And today they are considered an important part of America's legacy of folk music, a music that continues to inspire people of every generation.

Watch the video.

- Remind students about the group agreements they made in the previous lesson. Stress the importance of confidentiality—that if we think we can keep this agreement everyone in the group will be able to speak frankly and openly, but if we can't, no one will feel safe sharing. Stress that it will be a very serious problem for everyone in the class if someone does not keep this agreement. Ask: What might happen if someone breaks confidentiality? Ask students to raise their hands or say "YES" if they think they can keep the class agreements.

Have students pair with a neighbor to discuss the video. Give each student one minute to answer the question: 1) What was the strongest feeling you felt watching the video? 2) What images stood out for you? 3) Can you think of a time you wanted to say "don't laugh at me" or "don't laugh at him/her"? What happened?

- Facilitate a group discussion, allowing as many students to share what they discussed in their pairs as want to. Summarize students' comments.

Close Together: Sing "Don't Laugh at Me" (10 minutes)

- Go around the group having each student say one kind thing he can commit to doing that day for someone he or she cares about. Stress that it must be something that they know they can do that very day. Model the activity by beginning with a commitment to something you will do.
- Together with the students sing "Don't Laugh at Me" with the CD or Video.



CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS (OPTIONAL)

Social Studies. Connect this lesson on put-downs to issues of prejudice and discrimination by showing the video, "Names Can Really Hurt Us," which is about a group of middle school students in a New York school exploring these important issues. Available through the Anti-Defamation League, 212-490-2525. Discuss ways that prejudice and discrimination are visible in your school and what you could do about it.

History/Music.

A Song in Mind for a Place in Time

Introduce the *Don't Laugh at Me* project to students by exploring the rich tradition of folk music and its important place in history. By definition, folk music is music by and for the common people. African people who were brought to America and enslaved, dreamed of freedom and sang folk songs as they labored on plantations under the hot sun. American pioneers crafted their own folk songs as they travelled westward on wagons to an unknown region. During the Civil War many folk songs were written. As immigrants entered the United States, they brought

their homelands' folk music. And in the 1960s, folk music entered into a renaissance and became a galvanizing voice for peace and civil rights. As the civil rights movement gained momentum, folk singers like Peter, Paul & Mary, Bob Dylan, Pete Seeger, and Joan Baez eloquently expressed the dreams of peace and racial harmony that lived in the hearts of so many Americans. Bob Dylan's folk song, "Blowin' in the Wind," was recorded by Peter, Paul & Mary in 1963 and became one of the legendary songs of the era. Likewise, Peter, Paul & Mary sang "If I Had a Hammer" alongside Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to inspire tens of thousands of people during the Civil Rights March in Washington, D.C. Share these songs with students through the CD. Forty years later, Peter, Paul & Mary continue to share their music and work for a peaceful and more just nation.

Explore a few additional examples of folk songs that reflected the anxiety and yearning for a better way in the times they were written. For example, in the 1870s, as physical labor was replaced by machines in the Industrial Revolution, the song "John Henry" was written. (For more information, visit WV Traditional Music & Literature at access.k12.wv.us/wschool/CAW/btm/henry.btm. This site provides illustrations and a guide to learning to sing "John Henry.")

And finally, connect this inquiry to students' own lives by exploring the music that moves and inspires them. How has contemporary music been used to move people to address a social cause? Compared to the 1960s, is contemporary music being used more or less for supporting social causes? Why? What music moves *you* to act on the behalf of justice?

As folk songs are passed down from generation to generation, they inevitably change and evolve. However, folk music always expresses the spirit of the people at a certain point in history. It captures their dreams, expresses their pain, and memorializes their longing for a better world. For more information about folk music and folklore see *Folklore and Folklife: A Teacher's Manual*. Available from the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Smithsonian Institution, 955 L'Enfant Plaza, SW, Suite 2600, Washington, DC, 20560, 202-287-3424.

Facilitation Note: Take a Stand Against Bias

When students talk about put-downs and other issues presented in this guide, it's likely that derogatory labels and stereotypes about race, religion, sexual orientation, abilities, and gender will be shared. It's important when responding to these comments to be gentle, nonjudgmental, and instructive. Some students will be simply passing along comments they have heard, but which they may not completely understand. Others might be reflecting the bias deeply embedded in our society. Regardless of the roots of the comment, remember that no young person is born prejudiced—these attitudes are learned. It's therefore important to respond thoughtfully and instructionally when the comment or label is shared. Here are some general guidelines:

- Use young people's beliefs and questions as a springboard for challenging bias.
- Provide additional information that challenges the bias.
- Pose questions to students that ask them to reexamine their beliefs.
- Encourage empathy by asking students to imagine how they would feel if that particular comment were said about them.
- Encourage young people to express their anger or upset feelings in healthy ways rather than using a hurtful, derogatory label. See "The Ridicule-Free Zone *Constitution of Caring*" activity on page 38 for a process that helps to accomplish this.
- Together with the students, develop policies that seek to eliminate the use of offending labels and words.

For more information on how to talk with middle school students about sexual orientation, see the video *It's Elementary: Talking about Gay Issues in School*, available for purchase or rental from: New Day Films, Department FL, 22-D, Hollywood Avenue, Hoboken, NJ 07423, 201-652-5690, 201-652-1973 or see *Shared Heart*, a curriculum and video about sexual orientation available through www.sharedheart.com, P.O. Box 562, Brookline, MA 02146. For more help with dealing effectively with issues of bias in general, contact the Southern Poverty Law Center and their Teaching Tolerance Program, 400 Washington Avenue, Montgomery, AL 36104, www.teachingtolerance.org, or Educators for Social Responsibility, 23 Garden Street, Cambridge, MA 02138, 800-370-2515, www.esrnational.org.

How Would You Feel If...

Students empathize with young people in the "Don't Laugh at Me" song and video and name associated feelings.

Objectives

- To develop empathy in young people
- To sensitize students to the effects of ridicule, exclusion, and other unkind behaviors
- To identify and get in touch with feelings in self and others
- To build a feelings vocabulary

Materials

- Index cards (13 per student)
- Markers
- The "Don't Laugh at Me" video cued to the Peter, Paul & Mary version of the song
- Timer

Gather Together (10 minutes)



- Introduce the lesson: "Today we are continuing to explore feelings and learn more about how what we say or do might influence the way another person feels."
- Arrange your and the students' desks in a semicircle around the VCR. Watch the "Don't Laugh at Me" video. As students watch, ask them to raise their right hand when they feel something they see is a happy image; their left hand when they feel something they see is a sad image; and both hands if they feel the image is both happy and sad at the same time. Encourage them not to be influenced by what others are doing.
- After the video is finished, point out the broad array of emotional responses among the students to different video images. Ask: Does anyone have any thoughts or feelings from watching the video this time that you would like to share? Any new thoughts about how this video relates to your school or life?

Play a Game: "How Would You Feel If . . ." (10 minutes)

- Still with desks in a semicircle, hand out twelve index cards and one marker to everyone. For the first half of this activity, students will write down a word on an index card for how they would feel if . . . for each scenario here. Challenge the students to come up with a *different* feelings word for each scenario. After each scenario: 1) Collect all the cards, shuffle them, and then redistribute them to students. Have everyone hold up the card they received and look around the circle at the other cards. Point out that different students have very different feelings for the same scenario and that all feelings are valid since we all experience situations differently. 2) Ask if there are any feelings listed on the cards that someone in the room finds more difficult or easier to express. Again, note the diversity in the responses.

"How would you feel if . . ."

- someone made fun of you because of the clothes you were wearing?
- you won a prize or a competition?
- you were picked last when choosing sides for a game?
- you were told you were good at doing something?

- someone you admire called you a “geek”?
- someone helped you solve a problem?
- no one wanted to sit with you at lunch?
- someone you like invited you to a party?
- you had no food and had to beg on the street?
- someone asked your opinion about something important?
- there was a bad rumor circulating about something you did?
- someone forgave you for a mistake you made?

Play Emotion Motions (15 minutes)

- Ask: Why might it be important to be able to read someone else’s feelings?
- Collect the feelings word index cards. Delete any words that are not feelings or are repeated and then shuffle the cards. These are now your “Emotion Motions” feelings cards. Divide the large group into two teams to play a game of “feelings words” charades.
- Each member of Team 1 will have 20 seconds to silently act out at the front of the room a feelings word that she or he has chosen from the feelings cards for Team 2, who will be sitting in their seats. The rules of charades apply—no talking and no spelling out words with your hands. Once the group has guessed the feeling correctly, the next person in the group picks out a card, then begins to act out that feeling. Once Team 1 is finished, reverse roles and have Team 2 present to Team 1.
- Give each group a few minutes to decide the order in which they will go. When everyone is ready, say “Go!” Act as timer for the presenters.
- Bring the large group back together. Debrief the activity.
 - What kinds of feelings were the easiest to guess? The hardest?
 - What feelings were the easiest to act out? The hardest? What are some reasons that some feelings might be harder to act out than others?
 - Think of a time when someone didn’t understand or know how you felt. What happened? How did you eventually resolve the problem?
- Comment on the diverse range of feelings that color our days and our lives! Point out that part of what makes feelings so rich is that they may be experienced differently by different people.

Close Together (5 minutes)

- Pair students to share one minute with their partner for each question: 1) How might you help someone feel better after he or she has been teased or called a name or excluded in some way? 2) Share a time you stood up for someone being teased or excluded or saw someone else stand up for someone. 3) Would you stand up for them now, even if you didn’t do it then? How?
- Hand out index cards and ask each participant to write one word to describe his or her feelings at the end of this session. Ask for a few volunteers to share more about why they feel that way.

Children’s Conscious Acts of Caring

Hilltop Elementary School in Lynnwood, Washington, helps build positive relationships through a buddy system where classes pair across grade levels (i.e., a sixth grade class might pair with a third grade class). During the year the buddies do projects together, share lunch, and help one another and the community. Through these friendships, a respect for differences in ages and personalities develops.



CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS (OPTIONAL)

Language Arts. Have students: 1) Write a story of a day in the life of one of the characters in the “Don’t Laugh at Me” video. They can name their character, but they cannot use the name of someone in your classroom. For example, they can focus their story on: “the little boy with glasses—the one they call a geek”; “the little girl who never smiles because she has braces on her teeth”; “the kid on every playground who’s always chosen last”; or the “single teen-aged mother trying to overcome her past.” 2) Write a letter to the main character in their story. What do you want to say to that character?

Literature. Have students read *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeline L’Engle. Discuss: 1) What are some of the problems that Meg and Charles Wallace encounter because they are “different”? 2) Charles Wallace says, “I think it will be better if people go on thinking I’m not very bright. They won’t hate me quite so much.” And Calvin says, “There hasn’t been anybody, anybody in the world I could talk to. Sure, I can hold myself down, but it isn’t me.” Discuss: What is the price these characters pay for feeling they do not fit in? What might help them feel totally safe so that they can be themselves? Have students choose a critical passage in the text related to this issue and rewrite it (imitating Madeline L’Engle’s voice) showing Charles or Calvin resolving his problem and asserting his true self and identity.

Art/Language Arts. Create and decorate papier-mâché face masks to illustrate certain feelings (such as happy, surprised, angry, etc.). Decorate your room with the masks. Build vocabulary by labeling each mask with synonyms for the feeling expressed.

Use this as a springboard to discuss (or write about) the various “masks” that we sometimes wear that hide our real selves. What are the various masks that you wear? What might it feel like to take that mask off? Is it ever appropriate to leave the mask on?

The Daily Dialogue

Young people learn how to use journaling as a way to explore and share their feelings on diverse topics.

Objectives

- To help young people explore feelings
- To facilitate young people's emerging sense of identity
- To develop a sense of intimacy and community in the classroom

Materials

- None

Gather Together (5 minutes)

- Ask for volunteers to share, "One thing I feel strongly about is . . ."
- Explain the goal of this session: "Today we're going to focus on journaling as one way that we can explore and share our thoughts and feelings with others."

Explore Journaling (15 minutes)

- Discuss: What might be benefits of writing in a journal?
- After students' have explored their own thoughts about the benefits of keeping a journal, discuss this quote:

"The stories you tell bind you close to one another, yet they give you wings to fly confidently into the larger world. They teach you how the world works and where you belong in it."—Kindig

Ask: In what ways might "telling our stories" in a journal and then sharing them with others bring us closer together? What do you think the person who wrote this quote meant by "give you wings to fly confidently into a larger world"? Any thoughts on why journaling might do this for you? Has there ever been a time in your life when sharing your feelings in writing with another person has helped you know yourself better or feel understood and accepted? Any other responses to this quote?

Note: With upper middle school students you might explore how this quote relates to the "Don't Laugh at Me" song lyric, "Someday we'll all have perfect wings . . ." Connect this to how giving each other the gift of being ourselves—without fear of ridicule or put-down—sets us free like a bird in flight.

Some thoughts to make sure are incorporated into the discussion include: A journal is a wonderful way to explore our own feelings or opinions about a topic; it helps us to get to know ourselves better. Writing our thoughts and feelings down can help us express and release our feelings so that we do not feel overcome by them when we are upset or angry. Sharing some of our journal writings with others helps us to get to know each other better. And when we listen respectfully to one another's deepest feelings, we give each other permission to be our most authentic and best self. When people share their real feelings and thoughts, we learn that every person is unique and that it is truly okay to be different. And we learn how much we might have in common with people who on the surface might appear to be different.

- Explain that you will use journaling as a "daily dialogue"—to explore your thoughts and feelings about a topic you are studying or an event that happens in your classroom, school, or life and then to share those thoughts with a partner by reading each other's journal entry and asking questions of one another.

- Share guidelines for writing in your “Daily Dialogue” journal and sharing your writings with others:
 - You will not be judged for your grammar or writing ability in these assignments. But it’s best to write so that someone else who is reading your entry can understand it.
 - Feel free to be completely yourself. (Discuss what “being yourself” means.)
 - Write the date and the topic of your entry or the question you will answer in your journal.
 - You can “pass” when we share our journals if you feel something you wrote is too personal to share with others.
 - After reading someone else’s journal entry, ask questions of her to better understand her feelings or thoughts. Don’t debate that person’s feelings, rather ask questions so that you learn more about them. Some questions you might ask: “Tell me more about . . .” “Why did you think . . .” or you may want to ask clarifying questions, “What do you mean by . . .”
 - Anything shared in our classroom will be confidential (meaning that no one outside of the room will learn about it).
 - Thank your partner for sharing his or her journal when you are finished.
- Summarize your guidelines and agreements around how you will use your Daily Dialogue journal. Ask if there are any clarifying questions or concerns.
- Explain that topics for the Daily Dialogue will be generated by both the students and the teacher.



Tip Have students generate Daily Dialogue topics. Keep a running list on chart paper in your classroom and elect a student each day to choose a topic from the list. Or allow students the option of selecting any topic from the list. Also, brainstorm with students the many different ways their journal might be used to help them explore their thoughts and feelings in addition to responding to assigned Daily Dialogue topics. Some ideas to include are: write a letter to the person who upset you (whether or not you intend to send it); describe an incident that upset you and explore your feelings about it; write a poem or lyrics to a song; write a letter of encouragement to yourself; make a list of all of your good qualities or accomplishments; write a letter seeking advice about a problem and answer it; etc.

Write Your First Daily Dialogue Entry (20 minutes)

- On the board write the first Daily Dialogue topic: “My thoughts about the ridicule, teasing, and exclusion I see in my school are . . .” Have students write continuously for ten minutes about anything they can think of related to that topic.
- Pair students to share and discuss their journal entries. Give each student five minutes to share. Ask students to thank one another for sharing.

Close Together: Pair/Share (5 minutes)

- Ask for volunteers to share, “One thing I’m looking forward to about our Daily Dialogue is . . .”



CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS (OPTIONAL)

Science. One image that often comes to mind when students discuss anger is a volcano. Explore this image with students by researching volcanoes. Like a volcano that brings up rich minerals from the earth, our anger often brings up rich insights about what we really feel and need in our relationships.

Social Studies. Have students research people who have used their anger and strong feelings constructively, like Rosa Parks, Harriet Tubman, Martin Luther King, Jr., Rachel Carson, Mother Jones, etc. Use this exercise to talk about being “strong” (assertive and constructive) with your anger, rather than being “mean” (assertive and destructive).

Art. Have students create and decorate their Daily Dialogue journals by binding loose-leaf sheets of paper into a booklet. Provide art supplies and magazines for students to personalize the covers of their journals with symbols that represent their deepest and best selves.

History. Locate some primary sources of journals that were written by someone at a specific time of history being studied. For example, if you are studying the Civil War, you might read excerpts from *All for the Union: The Civil War Diary and Letters of Elisha Hunt Rhodes* (Vintage, 1992), the inspiration behind the popular PBS documentary *The Civil War*. Ask students to imagine why the writer might have kept such a journal.

Take It to the Community

Since this is your first community initiative in the *Don't Laugh at Me* project, we recommend keeping students' efforts focused on bringing their learning to your school community (and not yet beyond).

- In pairs, ask students: "What have you learned so far in the program about feelings?" Bringing the large group back together, list on the board all the things students have learned about feelings.

Feelings

-
- all feelings are important
 - sometimes we hurt others' feelings by what we do or say
 - we need to appropriately express our feelings
 - keeping a journal is one way to calm down when we are upset
 - we can be strong with our anger without being mean

- Then brainstorm with students about how to share what they've learned about feelings with the rest of the school. Choose one project to do as a group. Perhaps students want to do a poster campaign in the halls with slogans about why feelings are important or encouraging the use of put-ups rather than put-downs or some other school-wide campaign. Your class may decide to publish their response to a specific question of the Daily Dialogue and distribute it to the rest of the school.
- Present the concept of the Daily Dialogue to your colleagues at a faculty meeting. Find out who else is using this concept and how. Share ideas and stories.

Next Steps

For young people to be truly skillful in expressing their feelings appropriately, they will need additional practice with the concepts presented in this unit, including:

- identifying feelings in self and others
- identifying anger triggers and cues in self and others
- effectively managing feelings of anger (cooling-down strategies)
- asserting needs appropriately when angry
- dealing with loss and grief

To provide these opportunities for skill building, practice, and awareness raising on the healthy expression of feelings:

- Draw on the countless wonderful activities for exploring feelings provided in *Creative Conflict Resolution* and *Conflict Resolution in the Middle School* by William J. Kreidler. Both resources are available through Educators for Social Responsibility, 800-370-2515, www.esrnational.org.
- Learn how to discuss violence and other painful issues with young people through ESR's discussion guide about Littleton, Colorado. Available free at www.esrnational.org/guide.html. Share copies of the guide with students' parents and other caregivers.

2

CARING, COMPASSION, AND COOPERATION

I Care, You Care, We Care

When young people play and work together cooperatively, they learn to appreciate the different contributions of each member of the community. Rather than winning at the expense of someone else losing, they discover that everyone can be winners when they work together. Some of the skills students begin to develop in the “I Care, You Care, We Care” unit include:

- Helping others
- Taking responsibility for one’s own actions
- Working together toward a shared goal
- Making group agreements

The Importance of Class Meetings

Class meetings are regular periods of time set aside to solve problems, make agreements, celebrate achievements, and generally check in on how things are going. Class meetings allow students a consistent place to experience the joys and responsibilities of being part of a community. They provide an opportunity for practicing the skills of problem solving, listening, cooperation, compassion, healthy expression of feelings, and appreciation of differences—building blocks that will nurture and sustain a safe, caring, and respectful classroom environment. If young people feel that they truly have a say in helping to create a caring classroom, they will feel empowered and demonstrate a greater collective will to follow through on decisions and agreements.

The Ridicule-Free Zone Constitution of Caring

One very important part of *Don’t Laugh at Me* is your classroom’s development—through working, thinking, and sharing ideas together—to declaring your classroom a “Ridicule-Free Zone” (page 38). In a class meeting, you and your students will develop guidelines and agreements regarding behaviors. You may or may not have had experience involving young people in this type of decision making, but once you do this, you will begin see a positive shift in the climate of your classroom.

Important Facilitation Guidelines: Setting Up for Success

See Appendix B, page 97, for guidelines on encouraging caring, compassion, and cooperation, including how to evaluate your routines, provide conducive space, correct unskillful behavior, help a student who is left out, and much more.

Tips for Facilitating Class Meetings

- **Keep it short.** Set time limits for each discussion. Even if the discussion is going strong, a good plan is to adhere to the agreement you made in advance to stop at a particular time. Then summarize the discussion up until that point and give students a clear idea of how and when the discussion will continue at the next meeting.
- **Help students develop skills.** Help students develop skills with gentle reminders, modeling, and supplying alternative ways of behaving when they revert to unskillful behaviors. Some important skills to nurture during a class meeting include: describing a problem without accusing another peer or using put-downs, sharing an opinion in the group, using “I” messages to express a particular view, focusing on the speaker, waiting instead of interrupting, listening to someone else’s ideas or comments, saying something positive to support another student’s idea, considering more than one possible solution, choosing to try out a solution.
- **Set students up for success.** Early class meetings can focus on issues that are easy for the group to solve, boosting your students’ confidence and helping them become familiar with

the speaking and listening agreements. For example, discuss ways to share a resource or space.

- **Find an appropriate time.** Meetings should take place when students feel calm and can handle the expectations of listening to others and speaking without using put-downs.
- **Act as a facilitator.** Your role as facilitator includes presenting the problem, summarizing different opinions, and bringing the meeting to a close with a clear goal for what the next step will be.
- **Don't be punitive.** Reassure students that during class meetings no one will be singled out and that there will not be any punishments. An exception to this is when a student's action threatens the safety of others. In this case, that student should be taken aside in private to discuss the issue, with appropriate consequences.
- **Encourage participation.** Be sure to encourage quiet or reluctant students to contribute during class meetings. Ask questions or prompt comments: "What do you think, Zephyr . . .?"
- **Solicit meeting topics.** Post a list in your classroom where students can write potential class meeting topics as they think of them. You can add to the list, as well. Return to this list at the beginning of each class meeting to choose a topic.
- **Celebrate achievements.** Be sure to use class meetings as a place to acknowledge what's going well in your classroom. Celebrate an accomplishment or special contribution of the group. If you choose to celebrate individual achievements, be certain that each student has a turn being acknowledged.

The Class Meeting Process

1. *Create a goal for the meeting:* Make sure everyone is sitting comfortably where they can all make eye contact (preferably in a circle) and everyone is ready to focus. Go over the meeting topics that both you and your students have suggested and choose (with the students, if applicable) a topic or goal and time limit for the meeting.
2. *State the problem/goal:* State the problem or outline the goal of the meeting using an "I" statement. "I'm concerned that there is some teasing and name-calling going on in our classroom. Let's find a way to avoid this in the future and show support for the kids that were made fun of."
3. *Get agreement to try to solve it:* Verify that everyone understands the problem or goal of the meeting. Then solicit agreement to work on it: "Can we all try to listen to each other to solve this problem (meet this goal)?"
4. *Explore the problem:* Ask a question to help students think about their feelings and actions related to the issue at hand: "Why do you think some kids are teasing and name-calling?" Summarize student's comments: "It sounds like some kids were using put-downs rather than remembering how bad it makes others feel when they are told they don't 'fit in.'"
5. *Brainstorm solutions:* "What are some things we need to do to make sure kids don't get made fun of?" Explain the rules of brainstorming: All ideas will be noted on a board or chart paper and no one should comment on whether an idea is good or not. Ask clarifying questions when necessary.
6. *Choose a solution:* Ask students which solutions sound like they would work best and to comment on why. Feel free to express your own opinions during this part. Paraphrase students' comments. Then work together with the students to choose a solution by consensus that sounds like it would work best.
7. *Agree to the solution:* Ask, "Can we all agree to follow this solution?" Summarize the agreement and any time frame or next steps associated with it.
8. *Evaluate the solution:* Agree to check in on how the solution is going, within a specific time frame, at another class meeting.

The Caring Being

Students name ways that they like to be treated and ways they do not like to be treated as preparation for making group agreements.

Objectives

- To raise awareness about positive and negative behaviors
- To explore creating agreements around behaviors

Materials

- Large sheet of paper (big enough for an outline of a student)
- Markers (enough for each student in your classroom)
- Two colors of construction paper (a ream of each)
- The “Don’t Laugh at Me” video
- (Optional) A waste can, red and/or orange fabric or tin foil, red and orange construction paper, scissors, clear tape

Gather Together: Play Mirrors (5 minutes)

- Have students break into pairs facing one another for a game of mirroring. Person B reflects all the movements initiated by Person A, including facial expressions. After a short time, call “change” so that the positions are reversed. Ask: “What did it feel like to mirror someone?”

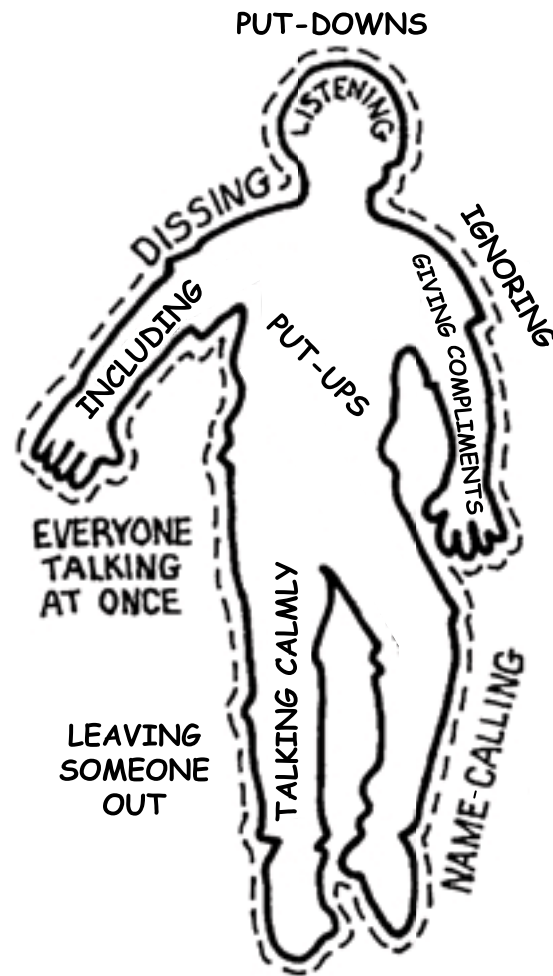
Explore Caring: The Caring Being (30 minutes)

- Pair students and ask them to stand back to back. For each question, when you indicate, students will turn around and face each other and answer the question. Each student will have one minute to answer the question. After each question is answered by both students in the pair, they will return to their back-to-back position. When you indicate, they will turn around and face one another to answer the next question, and so on. Ask for a few volunteers after each question to share with the larger group.

Ask students to think about a time when they felt they were part of a group and felt respected, cared for, and safe being themselves.

- What was it about that experience that made you feel respected, cared for, and safe being yourself?
- How did members of that group treat each other?
- How did people of that group treat nonmembers?
- How did people in that group show that they cared for each other?
- Have a volunteer lie down on a large sheet of paper. Have a few group members trace the outline of his or her body. This outline becomes your class’s “Caring Being”—a class mascot of sorts who will symbolize the agreements you will make together to help create a caring classroom. Have a short brainstorming session to think of a name for such a mascot (or simply use the Caring Being).
- Gather everyone around the Caring Being (or whatever name your class has chosen) and ask them to think about what actions, ways of treating one another, and attitudes would make your classroom the best possible place to be—a place where everyone felt included, cared for, and respected. After they have had a minute or two to think, have each student who wants to contribute take a marker and write these positive things inside the outline of the Caring Being. (Some possible things to include are sharing, listening, waiting my turn,

giving put-ups.) Feel free to include your own suggestions after the students have had a chance to share.



- Ask the group to think of some actions, ways of treating one another, or attitudes that they do *not* want as part of your classroom (thumbs-down behaviors) because of their negative consequences (put-downs, name-calling, exclusion, etc.). Have each student who wants to contribute write these words on the outside of the Caring Being. Add your ideas.
- Have each group member say what he or she meant by the words offered. Even if the words were the same as someone else's, the meaning may be slightly (or greatly) different.
- Hang up your classroom's Caring Being where everyone can see it.
- Have students as a group choose three thumbs-down behaviors each from the Caring Being that they feel they would most like to see stopped in your classroom and school. Help move the group to consensus. Then, together in pairs, ask them to create signs with fun, catchy slogans to remind one another to stop those behaviors (all on the same color of paper). Similarly, ask them to choose three thumbs-up behaviors that they would most like to see encouraged in your classroom and school and create signs to encourage each behavior (all three thumbs-up signs should be on a second color of paper). Post the colorful slogans around your classroom as a reminder to students.
- Discuss ways to bring your campaign for caring to other classrooms in your school.

Close Together (10 minutes)

- Do a go-round: Have each student complete the statement “If the Caring Being could talk, she would tell us . . .”
- (Optional) Sing “Don’t Laugh at Me” with the CD.
- (Optional) Ask for three student volunteers to decorate a waste can to represent a small campfire (using red and orange fabric, construction paper, and/or tin foil) for use in the next *Don’t Laugh at Me* activity. The goal is for the “flames” of the fire to encircle the opening of the waste can.

Tip

Throughout the Don't Laugh at Me project revisit this activity. Have students add new behaviors inside and outside of the Caring Being that reflect their deepening awareness and understanding about how best to create a caring classroom environment.



CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS (OPTIONAL)

Literature. Use *The Bridge to Terabithia*, by Katherine Paterson (Harper Trophy, 1987) to further explore friendship and caring. Jess, a middle school-aged boy who wants to be the fastest in his class, learns about friendship and himself when Leslie moves in next door. Though he is amazed and dismayed to learn that “even though she’s a girl,” she is a faster runner than he, the two develop a friendship. Some possible reflection points include: 1) What qualities do Jess and Leslie admire in each other? 2) Janice is very unkind to Jess’s sister Mary Belle. What does it feel like to be an outsider—a person who doesn’t feel accepted? How might an outsider deal with the exclusion? How might “insiders” help a new person who is excluded feel better? 3) Jess changes a great deal because of his friendship with Leslie. Is there someone that has brought out good qualities in you that you didn’t know you had?

Daily Dialogue. In their journals have students reflect for ten minutes on: How might we all make people in our school who feel excluded feel more included? Have students pair/share their journal entries for an additional five minutes (two and a half minutes each) and then ask for volunteers to share with the large group. Reflect on common themes that emerge.

Children's Conscious Acts of Caring

To minimize elitism and foster teamwork, Indiana’s Plainfield Middle School abolished tryouts for extracurricular activities. Every student who wants to can participate in sports, band, cheerleading, and student council. The goal in eliminating tryouts for extracurricular activities is to promote equity of participation, so all students can learn the lessons of cooperation, collaboration, and teamwork.

The Ridicule-Free Zone

Constitution of Caring

Students make group agreements towards committing to making their classroom and school a Ridicule-Free Zone.

Objectives

- To make class commitments to positive interactions
- To learn a process for making group agreements

Materials

- Index cards (several per student)
- A waste can (optionally decorated to represent a fire)
- The Caring Being posted in a prominent place
- Chart paper and marker
- The “Don’t Laugh at Me” song CD

Prerequisite

- The Caring Being, page 35

Gather Together: Cooperative Rainstorm (10 minutes)

- Have the group sit or stand in a circle around you. Have everyone reflect for a minute on what it feels like to be in a soothing summer rainstorm. Now imagine you’re in a driving rain and pounding thunderstorm. What does that feel like?

Explain that the goal of this activity is to work together cooperatively to simulate the sound of a rainstorm. Begin by rubbing your hands together in front of one person in the circle; that person then imitates your motion. Continue around the circle until everyone is rubbing hands at the same time. The second time around the circle, snap your fingers in front of each student to indicate he or she should switch from rubbing his or her hands to snapping his or her fingers. Everyone else will remain rubbing hands together until you pass them snapping your fingers, indicating they are to begin to snap. The third time around, make a loud pattering sound by slapping your thighs, indicating, as you go around the circle, for students to join you. Now go around the circle one more time and stamp your feet. This is the height of the rainstorm. Direct the subsiding of the storm, going around and changing the pattering to slapping your thighs to snapping to hand rubbing to complete silence. Pause for a moment of silence.

- Debrief: What skills of cooperation did it take to successfully create the rainstorm? (Listening to each other, following the leader, knowing and playing your part, being prepared, waiting your turn, being focused on a common goal, etc.) How is cooperating in our classroom like simulating the rainstorm? (Sometimes we lead, sometimes we follow; sometimes we listen, sometimes we speak; we all work best together when we share the same goal, etc.)
- Explain that the next activity will explore ways in which everyone can work together to make your classroom a caring, compassionate environment.
- (Optional) Sing “Weave Me the Sunshine” with the song CD. Ask for a few volunteers to summarize what they think the song is about.

Make Group Agreements: Your *Constitution of Caring* (25 minutes)

- You are going to build on your group agreements for behavior in your classroom using the Caring Being to create a Ridicule-Free Zone *Constitution of Caring*. Ask for volunteers to summarize the thumbs-down or inappropriate behaviors that are on your Caring Being (outside the outline).
- “What kind of agreements can we make to work toward the goal of ensuring that these behaviors never happen in our classroom?” Brainstorm a list of possible agreements with the students, adding to the group agreements generated in “Don’t Laugh at Me,” page 17. Put each student’s contributions on chart paper. Remind students that in brainstorming we simply generate as many ideas as possible, without saying whether or not the idea is a good one.
- Now ask: What were some thumbs-up behaviors from the Caring Being? Are there any agreements we can make to reinforce those? Record these ideas as well.
- After everyone who wants to has contributed, ask if there are agreements that can be combined because they are similar (many students might say the same thing in different words, so this step is important). Make sure that the students understand you are grouping similar ideas, not changing their words. Draw a circle with the same colored marker around similar items.
- Once each suggestion has been refined into an agreement, ask students if they can agree to that guideline. (You are working toward consensus, not holding a vote.) Read each agreement in its entirety: “We agree not to call each other names . . .,” etc. Later, in a very special ceremony, you will recommit to your *Constitution* by having everyone sign their names to it.
- Brainstorm: What can we do when we, or someone else, forgets to adhere to the Ridicule-Free Zone *Constitution*? (List the students’ ideas and add any of the following: do something nice for that person, apologize and tell that person something you like about her, gently remind that person about your Ridicule-Free Zone agreement.)
- Agree to check in periodically on how the Ridicule-Free Zone *Constitution* is going. Schedule this check-in for a class meeting.
- Now create one large Ridicule-Free Zone sign (8"x12") modeled on the one on the cover (the sign with the word “ridicule” in the center and crossed out) to post on the outside of your classroom door. Ask students if they want to design a ritual for remembering that when they enter your classroom, they are now part of a Ridicule-Free Zone (students might rub the RFZ sign as they walk by, or create a hand signal for entering the room, etc.).

Close Together: Celebrate Your *Constitution* (10 minutes)

- Hand out index cards and ask students to reflect for a moment on the thumbs-down behaviors they feel most committed to eliminating from their lives. Students should write down one thumbs-down behavior per index card. Allow as many index cards as students need.
- Arrange students in a circle around the waste can (or “campfire” if you had students create a symbolic flame).
- While playing the “Don’t Laugh at Me” song quietly, have each student bring their thumbs-down behavior signs to be torn and thrown into the waste can or symbolically burned in the “fire.” As each student approaches the wastebasket, he should say out loud to everyone the thumbs-down behavior he wants to work toward eliminating from his life.

What Does the Ridicule-Free Zone Really Mean?

It does not mean that ridicule, name-calling, teasing, and other disrespectful ways of treating one another will magically disappear overnight. What it does mean is that when someone in your classroom forgets and slips into old disrespectful ways of treating someone else (and this is bound to happen!), the new tools being learned in the *Don't Laugh at Me* project, such as using “I” messages and intervening in bullying or prejudice, will be available as an alternative. Students will be building a repertoire of more skillful behaviors and options that can be used to defuse a conflict, to solve a problem, or just to establish healthier and more fulfilling relationships. As teachers guiding students through this process, we encourage you to be gentle, forgiving, and patient with students’ progress with these skills.

Share the following guidelines with students:

- Success in *Don't Laugh at Me* means progress and growth, not perfection.
- Each student is encouraged to feel his or her feelings, whether they be anger, sadness, resentment, jealousy, fear, joy, excitement, etc.
- Everyone in the classroom will work together to help students find constructive (not destructive) ways to express their feelings and needs.
- Forgiveness and compassion for one another are key elements to making progress in the program.
- Individual and group successes and breakthroughs with new skills are to be shared with the class and celebrated.

WHEN STUDENTS NEED REMINDING ABOUT THEIR RIDICULE-FREE ZONE CONSTITUTION OF CARING

It's natural for students to occasionally revert to past behaviors when learning new skills. We suggest that you devise a plan for responding respectfully and nonjudgmentally when students violate your RFZ that is tailored to the culture of your classroom and the situation and takes advantage of the teachable moment presented. For example, depending on the seriousness of the problem and its frequency, you might respond in the following ways:

- Gently remind the student who violated the RFZ agreement and ask for an appropriate apology or reparation to the person(s) injured. Close with a recommitment to the RFZ.
- With the students’ permission, involve the students in a public discussion of more skillful ways to have handled the situation (applying the skills the students are learning in this project). Role-play the alternate, skillful scenario.
- In private, engage the student(s) who violated the RFZ in a problem-solving discussion (encourage perspective taking and other acts of empathy).
- Enlist the support of the student’s parents.
- Create and enforce consequences for the behavior that are instructive, rather than punitive. Be mindful to reinforce and model the positive behaviors you are seeking from the students when developing the consequences. Use an approach that emphasizes prevention and problem solving and encourages solutions that are generated together with the student.

See *School-Age Adventures in Peacemaking* by William J. Kreidler and Lisa Furlong (available through ESR at 800-370-2515) for more help with developing intervention strategies.



CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS (OPTIONAL)

Literature/History. Connect this lesson with teaching about the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights. Ask students what the words “constitution,” “right,” and “responsibility” mean to them. Guide them toward accurate definitions through brainstorming and discussion, emphasizing the reciprocal bond between “rights” and “responsibilities.”

Centuries preceding European conquest, five native tribes from across what is now New York state—the Mohawk, Onondaga, Seneca, Oneida, and Cayuga—formed a joint government known as the Iroquois Nation. Their confederacy operated under the laws set forth in “Gayanashagowa (The Great Binding Law),” sometimes called the Constitution of the Iroquois Nation. (In the mid-to-late 1700s the Tuscaroras joined as a sixth tribe.) Thomas Jefferson and others drew upon the Iroquois’ archetype for inspiration and guidance. Ask students to read and then compare a translation of the Gayanashagowa (www.msstate.edu/archives/history/USA/constitutions/iroquois) and the U.S. Constitution (usconstitution.org).

Daily Dialogue. In journals have students reflect for ten minutes on: What might be difficult about agreeing to a Ridicule-Free Zone in our classroom? Have students share their entries in pairs.

Children’s Conscious Acts of Caring

In an American Studies class at Nashville’s Hillsboro High, questions about the Columbine shootings the day before turned quickly from “How could this happen?” to “What can we do?” Within an hour, the class had come up with a plan: Put into writing a simple commitment to stop taunting classmates for the way they dress, talk, or act. More than 1,100 of Hillsboro’s 1,500 students signed the “I Will” pledge during the first week. After hearing about the project, a Nashville computer firm offered to host a website. The pledge in part reads:

I will pledge to be part of the solution.
I will eliminate taunting from my own behavior.
I will encourage others to do the same.
I will not let my words or actions hurt others.
And if others won’t become part of the solution, I WILL.

Your students can find out more and join the Hillsboro campaign against taunting by visiting www.iwillpledge.nashville.com.

Children's Conscious Acts of Caring

Students record moments of kindness, caring, and compassion through written stories, photography, poetry, songs, video, etc., to be later used for the "Take It to the Community" activity, page 86.

Objectives

- To identify specific caring behaviors
- To affirm caring behaviors
- To raise self-esteem and empathy
- To spread the spirit of the Ridicule-Free Zone beyond the classroom
- To empower students by encouraging them to act on their commitments

Materials

- A large cut-out heart or other symbol of friendship
- Cameras, art supplies, video equipment (optional)
- Slips of paper with the name of each student in your classroom
- A soft ball or object
- (Optional) "Don't Laugh at Me" song CD

Gather Together: Play the Feelings Echo (10 minutes)

- Gather students in a circle and explain the game: You'll begin by completing the sentence, "I feel cared for when . . ." Then you'll pass the soft ball or object to a student in the circle who wants to go next. This person will then echo the same beginning, "I feel cared for when . . .," adding her own ending to the statement. Ask that student to pass the soft ball to another student who has not yet contributed. Continue until every student has contributed once.
- Explain that today you will discuss kindness, caring, and friendship and find examples of it in your classroom and school community.

Explore Caring (15 minutes)

- Have students in pairs share a) one time at school that someone was kind and caring to them and how that felt to them and b) one time that they were kind and caring to someone at school and how that felt to them. Give each student one minute to share for both a) and b) questions. Ask for a few volunteers to share their stories with the whole group or, if you have time, have each pair share.
- Now have pairs combine into groups of six to 1) Brainstorm a list of ways in which we know kindness when we see it. 2) Discuss: What, if anything, keeps us from being kind to one another in this school? Elect a reporter from each group.
- Have the small groups report to the entire class.

Plan Caring Acts (15 minutes)

- Explain the next assignment: For the next period of time (see the "Note" below and give children a deadline), students will be like roving reporters, "catching" incidences of kindness, cooperation, and caring that happen at school or documenting actions of caring they themselves perform. All students should write about the act of caring they performed

or witnessed. They can also illustrate the examples with artwork they create, or through photos or video if you can give students access to a few cameras or a video camera.

Note: The Children's Conscious Acts of Caring projects are due the day you've scheduled for the last activity of this project, "You Are Powerful, We Are More Powerful" (page 91).

- Play secret pals: Put the name of each student in your classroom in a hat and have students anonymously pick the name of a student from the hat. They need to do something kind for this student before the end of that day—without anyone finding out who did it. The next day students can share the act of caring they received and try to guess who their secret pal is.

Close Together (5 minutes)

- (Optional) Sing "If I Had a Hammer" and "Light One Candle" with the song CD.
- Close the session by having all the students stand in a circle holding hands. Start the "electricity" by squeezing the hand of the person on your right. That person passes it on by squeezing the hand on her right. After the pulse has gone through the circle, go around a second time with a more difficult pattern (for example, do two short squeezes, or a long one followed by a short one). Kindness—like the "electricity" in this activity—is infectious. So pass it on!



CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS (OPTIONAL)

Language Arts. Build students' vocabulary by creating a glossary with definitions for words such as caring, compassion, kindness, exclusion, ridicule, etc., as they come up in the program. While many students will say that they know what the words mean, creating a definition as a group will deepen their thinking about the topic. For an example of such a glossary contact CHARACTERplus at 800-478-5684 or find it online at info.csd.org/staffdev/chared/Process/examples/words.html.

Media Literacy. What do television, songs, magazines, commercials, and movies teach us about the ways we should treat one another? Have students find examples that support the goals of the Ridicule-Free Zone, as well as examples that do *not* support the goals of the Ridicule-Free Zone. How do these media influence the ways young people act in your school?

Music. If you have percussion instruments available, have students pick an instrument and, while you play a song on the CD, join in one instrument at a time (whenever they feel ready to join the group). Give everyone a few minutes to become acquainted with their percussion instruments before beginning.

Daily Dialogue. Have students reflect in their journals for five minutes: What are three ways I most appreciate kindness being shown to me? Pair students to share their journal entries for two and a half minutes each. Remind students not to use names of people in the school. Ask for volunteers to share with the large group.

Children's Conscious Acts of Caring

A fourteen-year-old student from Tulsa, Oklahoma, raised more than \$65,000 for the Tulsa Day Center, a homeless shelter—all by selling lemonade!

Take It to the Community: Creating a Community Action Project

Young people design and implement a community action project.

Explore Your Community (1 class session)

- Go around your class and have each student contribute a word, phrase, or association with the word “community.” Create a web with their contributions.
- Ask: What are all the physical things that make up our (school, classroom) community? Encourage students to be as specific as possible (the cafeteria, the playground, the parking lot, etc.). You can limit this to the school community if your goal is to initiate a project within the limits of the building (or even to the classroom community if you’d like to limit it further).
- Ask students to close their eyes and “imagine that a very friendly creature takes you on a spaceship. The creature takes you back to your (town/neighborhood, school, or classroom), only it’s five years later. The (town/neighborhood, school, or classroom) is the same as it was—only now it’s perfect. Imagine going to all the places we drew on the web of our community only now it’s exactly how you would like it to be.” Ask the students to open their eyes when they are ready to return to the present time.
- In pairs have students share what they imagined.
- Have volunteers share their vision with the whole group. Allow as many students as want to share to do so.

Identify the Problems and Brainstorm Solutions (1 class session)

- Ask students to think about what problems they saw in their community that are keeping it from being “perfect.” Brainstorm problems for as long as students are interested in contributing.
- Have students select five problems from the list that they consider most important to address. Do this by conducting a “straw poll.” Ask students to vote on the top two problems they think important to address. Then tally the votes to see what the top five selections are.
- Write the five most important issues students selected on the top of five sheets of chart paper and post them around your classroom. Have students mill around the room writing ideas on the sheets of paper for ideas of how to solve each problem. For example, under “graffiti in the schoolyard” they might write, “create a public service poster campaign to discourage graffiti” or “have a regular graffiti cleanup.” When these lists are completed, read them aloud to the whole group. Discuss some of the ideas.

Choose a Project and Plan It (1 class session)

- Narrow down the project ideas to the top few that students think are best (i.e., are most effective at addressing the problems, are most meaningful and doable, etc.).
- Finally, come to consensus on one Conscious Act of Caring to do as a class in your school or community in the coming weeks. Some examples of social action projects include: holding a fund-raiser to buy library books, inviting senior citizens from a local nursing home to the school for a share session, decorating sweatshirts for the homeless, making cards for young people in the hospital, recording books on tape for the blind, working in a soup kitchen, etc.

- Create a plan and timeline for doing the project. Elect a committee of six students to organize the project and have that group elect two main coordinators. The two coordinators will research the logistics of performing the class Conscious Act of Caring, assigning various tasks to the organizing committee of six and others to subcommittees created for this purpose from the remaining students. The organizing committee should be sure to assign a role for each student in the class. For example, the logistics might include creating subcommittees for transportation, food, cleanup, thank you notes, etc. Last, have the organizing committee elect two reporters who will document the class Conscious Act of Caring and share it verbally or in some written fashion with the class or the school as a whole.
- Help students to keep their class Conscious Act of Caring doable. In their enthusiasm, students' plans can become overambitious. Tell the students that you will be there to advise them, but it is their project.
- Explain that for the next class Conscious Act of Caring a different organizing committee will be elected, so that by the end of the year all students will get a chance to be central organizers. Plan your next Conscious Act of Caring soon after the first one is completed.

Children's Conscious Acts of Caring

Middle school students from Broadmeadow Middle School in Quincy, MA, launched a successful local and national campaign to raise money and awareness to end child labor in Third World countries. Using the internet, the young people raised enough money to build and endow a school in Pakistan for students who otherwise would not receive an education, as well as help spur into action major legislation calling for an end to the importing of goods produced via child labor.

Next Steps

Students need opportunities to practice, and support from you, in order to learn how to cooperate. Likewise, building a sense of a caring community is an ongoing task for any classroom. In addition to reinforcing the skills presented in this guide and sustaining students' commitment to the Ridicule-Free Zone throughout the year, help students learn and practice the following:

- responding positively to others
- contributing ideas
- asking for help
- learning to accept help
- collaborating on a school or community service project
- putting individual needs aside to serve the group's needs

We recommend the following to nurture these skills:

- *School-Age Adventures in Peacemaking* by William J. Kreidler and Lisa Furlong (developed by ESR and Project Adventure) includes great activities for practicing the skills of cooperation and creating a caring classroom environment. Available through Educators for Social Responsibility, 800-370-2515, www.esrnational.org.
- Contact the Southern Poverty Law Center at www.teachingtolerance.org for *Responding to Hate at School*—a 64-page step-by-step guide to help administrators, counselors, and teachers react effectively whenever bias, prejudice, or hate strikes. Free copies are available individually or in bulk upon written request.

- Attend an ESR institute or schedule an on-site professional development workshop on creating a peaceable classroom. Contact ESR's professional development services at 800-370-2515 or visit the website at www.esrnational.org.
- Contact the Center for Advancement of Ethics and Character at Boston University, 605 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02215, 617-353-3262, education.bu.edu/charactered and the Character Education Partnership, 918 16th Street, NW, Suite 501, Washington, DC 20006, 202-296-7743, www.character.org for additional resources and advice about sustaining a character education program at your school.



3

RESOLVING CONFLICT CREATIVELY

Words That Hurt, Words That Heal

Conflict resolution builds on the other skills you have been developing through *Don't Laugh at Me*: expressing and managing feelings, caring, being compassionate, and cooperating. While young people rarely engage in negotiating or conflict solving spontaneously, they can be guided through the process and build skills so that they not only do it well, they enjoy it. The pride and self-confidence students develop will allow your classroom to function more smoothly, releasing you from constant pressure to intervene.

The goal of conflict resolution is to help students who are engaged in conflict find solutions that work for everyone. Some of the skills you'll be helping young people to develop in this unit are:

- Resolving conflicts without saying or doing hurtful things
- Understanding how conflict escalates
- Using "I" statements to share feelings and de-escalate conflict
- Being aware of different points of view in a conflict

Important Facilitation Guidelines: Setting Up for Success

See Appendix B, page 97, for guidelines on teaching creative conflict resolution, including how to create opportunities for practice, turn the problem over to the students to be solved, promote win-win solutions, bring the conflict to closure, and much more.

The Point of View Glasses

Students explore two different points of view in a conflict and explore the limits of teasing.

Objectives

- To explore points of view in conflict
- To practice taking the perspective of another person
- To explore the effects of teasing
- To develop classroom agreements around teasing

Materials

- One “Trouble with Teasing” script
- One set of “Trouble with Teasing” role-play cards for each pair of students
- Prepare to tell the “Maligned Wolf” story to the students.
- One P.O.V. Glasses handout per student

Gather Together: The Birthday Line-up (5 minutes)

- Ask everyone to line up *in complete silence* in order of age from youngest to oldest. (Note: In the process of doing this it is likely there will be some conflict as students try to non-verbally communicate.)
- Debrief: What did you notice about this activity? Did any conflicts arise? Since it’s likely there was at least some minor conflict during this activity, this is a good opportunity to mention how common conflict is. Conflict is a fact of life, but it needn’t be a negative thing. In fact, conflict is a growth opportunity and can even improve your relationships—depending on how it’s handled. Tell the students a short story from your own life about a conflict that, once resolved, improved your relationship with someone.
- Now explain that you’ll be learning one of many tools you need to resolve conflicts creatively and productively: taking the perspective of another person or seeing their point of view on the problem. Ask if there are two people in the group who would like to share their perspectives on the problems that developed during the birthday line-up.



Have volunteer students create a “Trouble with Teasing” skit and role-play cards, modeling the example provided here. The skit should follow the basic events covered in this skit and feature a misunderstanding around teasing with two different, but equally valid, points of view.

Tell a Story: “The Maligned Wolf” (10 minutes)

- Dramatically read the story “The Maligned Wolf” provided on the next page.

The Maligned Wolf

The forest was my home. I lived there and I cared about it. I tried to keep it neat and clean. Then one day, while I was cleaning up some garbage someone had left behind, I heard some footsteps. I leaped behind a tree and saw a little girl coming down the trail carrying a basket. I was suspicious of her right away because she was dressed strangely—all in red, and with her head covered up so it seemed as if she didn't want people to know who she was. Naturally, I stopped to check her out. I asked who she was, where she was going, where she had come from, and all that. She turned up her nose and told me in a snooty way that she was going to her grandmother's house. As she walked on down the path, she took a candy bar out of her basket and started to eat it, throwing the wrapper on the ground. Imagine that! Bad enough that she had come into my forest without permission and had been rude to me. Now she was littering my home. I decided to teach her a lesson.

I ran ahead to her grandmother's house. When I saw the old woman, I realized that I knew her. Years before, I had helped her get rid of some rats in her house. When I explained what had happened, she agreed to help me teach her granddaughter a lesson. She agreed to hide under the bed until I called her.

When the girl arrived, I invited her into the bedroom where I was in the bed, dressed like her grandmother. The girl came in and the first thing she did was to say something nasty about my big ears. I've been insulted before so I made the best of it by suggesting that my big ears would help me to hear her better. Then she made another nasty remark, this time about my bulging eyes. Since I always try to stay cool, I ignored her insult and told her my big eyes help me see better. But her next insult really got to me. She said something about my big teeth. At that point, I lost it. I know I should have been able to handle the situation, but I just couldn't control my anger any longer. I jumped up from the bed and growled at her, "My teeth will help me eat you better."

No wolf would ever eat a little girl. I certainly didn't intend to eat her. (She probably would have tasted bad anyway.) All I wanted to do was scare her a bit. But the crazy kid started running around the house screaming. I started chasing her, thinking that if I could catch her I might be able to calm her down.

All of a sudden the door came crashing open and a big lumberjack was standing there with an ax. I knew I was in trouble so I jumped out the window and got out of there as fast as I could. And that's not the end of it. The grandmother never did tell my side of the story. Before long, word got around that I was mean and nasty. Now everyone avoids me. Maybe the little girl lived happily ever after, but I haven't.

- Briefly discuss as a group: What fairy tale is this? What makes "The Maligned Wolf" different from the "Little Red Riding Hood" that you are familiar with?
- Now discuss in concentric circles: Create two rings of students—the inner ring faces out and the outer ring faces in, so that the two rows are facing one another. A person from the inner

ring is paired with a person from the outer ring for one question. *After each question* you'll have the outer ring rotate one person to their left, so that everyone has a new partner. Both outer- and inner-ring students will answer each question. Ask for a few volunteers after each question to share with the large group:

What is the point of this new version of an old story? (*shift partners*) Share a time when you had a different point of view from someone important to you in your life. How did that feel? (*shift partners*) Can you think of an example in your own life or one that you've heard about when an enemy became a friend? How did that happen?

Discuss the Point of View Glasses (5 minutes)

- Distribute the P.O.V. Glasses handout and refer to it as you present the following mini-lecture. Encourage students to take notes on the handout.

Each of us looks at the world through an invisible pair of colored glasses we're going to call the "Point of View" Glasses. Everything we see and experience is filtered through that experience. Several things in our lives contribute to the color of these lenses. Five of the shades of color on the P.O.V. lenses are needs, goals, experiences, feelings, and values. If time permits, explore with students creating definitions for needs, goals, experiences, feelings, and values.

Needs are the physical and psychological drives that we want to fulfill. Goals are the things we want to accomplish. Experiences are the things that have happened to us. Feelings are the emotional reactions we have to what we're seeing. Values are a combination of our beliefs and the things we think are important.

For example, let's say that you are hungry right before your last period class. That's a physical *need* that's contributing to your P.O.V. on going to your last period class. You develop a *goal* to meet that need before you get to class: you want to find something to eat. You know from *experience* that your friend has some cookies in his or her locker, and you know from *experience* that your friend is generous. So you find that friend, who says, "No, I only have a few left, and I'm saving them." Your emotional reaction might be one of hurt and anger because one of your strong *values* might be a belief that friends should always share with one another. So, your *point of view* on the conflict in this situation is that your friend has let you down when you needed him or her.

- Explain that in a conflict each of the people involved has his or her own point of view. Often we assume that one side (usually our side) has all the truth and goodness and that the other side is all wrong and bad. But it's not usually that simple. As we've learned from the Malignant Wolf, before deciding who's right and who's wrong, it's important to put on the Point of View Glasses and see the situation from both sides.
- Now ask for two volunteers: one to tell the point of view of the wolf and one to listen as Little Red Riding Hood. What might Little Red Riding Hood want to say to the wolf now that she's heard his side of the story? Can anyone imagine a different ending to the story?

Perform a Skit: "Trouble with Teasing" (10 minutes)

- Ask for two volunteers to act out the "Trouble with Teasing" script.
- Discuss: How do you think each person is feeling right now? Why do you think Student 2 is angry? Why is Student 1 angry? Do you think Student 1 knew that Student 2 didn't like to be called "Elf Boy"?

Do a Role-Play: Put on the Point of View Glasses (15 minutes)

- Now break students into pairs. One student will step into the role of Student 1 and another the role of Student 2. Give the students their respective role-play cards and have them silently read them. Have the students figuratively put on their P.O.V. glasses. Have each student take a turn being Student 1 and Student 2. Student 1 first explains her perspective

while Student 2 listens. Student 2 then explains his perspective. The students then switch their positions.

- When it looks like all the pairs have shared both Student 1's and Student 2's perspectives, ask:
 - What experiences of Student 2 might be coloring her point of view of the conflict? What needs? What values? What feelings? What goals?
 - What experiences of Student 1 might be coloring his point of view of the conflict? What needs? What values? What feelings? What goals?
- What's something Student 1 would like to say to Student 2, now that you have a better understanding of how Student 1 was feeling? (Some possible options include: "I'm sorry," "I didn't realize how you felt," "I didn't mean to hurt you," "I won't call you Elf Boy/Girl anymore," etc.) Briefly brainstorm with the students the components of a good apology. Give everyone a chance to apologize. Now ask: What's something Student 2 would like to say to Student 1? ("I'm sorry I didn't tell you sooner it bothered me to be called that name," etc.) Brainstorm with the students some other ways that Student 2 could make amends to Student 1.
- Bring the group back together: "Is it ever okay to tease someone?" Students will usually say they know whether someone is just good-naturedly joking or not. But, as this activity points out, sometimes it's difficult to know if your joking or well-intended kidding around is received as funny or as a put-down. When something hurts another person, then it's not very funny. What could students do to make sure that their jokes aren't hurting someone?

Close Together: Sing "Don't Laugh at Me" or "Day Is Done" (5 minutes)

- Celebrate your accomplishments thus far in the program. Sing "Don't Laugh at Me" or "Day Is Done." End the session with 30 seconds of silence and a soft group "YES."



CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS (OPTIONAL)

Literature. Most literature presents an opportunity to explore point of view and its relationship to conflict. Look for conflicts between two characters where students can role-play the two different points of view and explore the experiences, goals, values, needs, and feelings of each character as they relate to that point of view.

Language Arts. Have students write creatively around point of view. Have them be Martians coming to your school for the first time. Or write as a fish looking out of a fishbowl. Or ask students to come up with their own creative assignment that presents two different points of view on something in their lives!

Social Studies. Look at historical events from the points of view of all the players. Have students think about the point of view of Columbus arriving in the "new world" and the point of view of the Native Americans seeing him arrive in their world.

Science. Look at an environmental issue from the points of view of the various stakeholders. For example, look at the points of view of local ranchers and wildlife conservationists around the issue of the reintroduction of wolves into Yosemite National Park.

Daily Dialogue. Ask students to think about a time when they had a different point of view from another person close to them about an issue or a problem. Have students write in their journals for ten minutes: How did it feel to have a different point of view from someone close to you? In pairs, students will share their entries. As an extension to the Daily Dialogue journal writing, ask students to explore in their journal how their own experiences, values, needs, feelings, and goals influenced their point of view in the original conflict.

Children's Conscious Acts of Caring

“One day I came to school and I said ‘Hi’ to my friends. They said, ‘Hi, Lauren’ back to me in a mean way. And when they went to lunch they did not want to sit near me. I felt like breaking their heads off, but instead I went to see why they were doing that and (my friend) said, ‘I didn’t mean to.’ Now everything is okay.”—a middle school student

"Trouble with Teasing" Conflict Skit Script

Student 1 (*in the cafeteria in front of a long table of friends*): We're over here (*waving and trying to get Student 2's attention*). Hey, Elf Boy. Come sit with us.

Student 2: (*Pretending not to hear . . .*)

Student 1: Elf Boy! (*laughing*) C'mon, we're over here.

Student 2: I'm sitting with someone else . . .

Student 1: C'mon, we saved you a seat. It's an elf seat! (*friends laughing*).

Student 2: I don't want to sit with you. You're a big jerk!

Student 1: Look who's being the jerk! I saved you a seat, but forget it. We don't want you to sit here . . .



The P.O.V. Glasses

Each of us looks at the world from our own point of view. It's as if we look through an invisible pair of sunglasses called the P.O.V. Glasses. Everything we see and experience is filtered through these glasses. Many things in our lives contribute to the color of these lenses.

Five of the shadings on the P.O.V. Lenses are:

Experiences:

Values:

Goals:



Needs:

Feelings:

Trouble with Teasing

Role Play Cards



Role-Play Card: Student 1

The Conflict: Student 1 and Student 2 are good friends. Student 1 calls Student 2 a name in a friendly teasing kind of way, but Student 2 is insulted and the conflict starts to get worse.

Student 1's Point of View: You think it's cute and funny that Student 2's ears are pointy and you kiddingly tease him about it by calling him "Elf Boy." You're not best friends, but you're good enough friends that you're sure he knows you're kidding. You've been calling him that name for a long time. And it always makes all your other friends laugh. You don't know why he's acting so touchy about it all of a sudden and you think he might just be putting on a big show to get some attention.

Role-Play Card: Student 2

The Conflict: Student 1 and Student 2 are good friends. Student 1 calls Student 2 a name in a friendly, teasing kind of way, but Student 2 is insulted and the conflict starts to get worse.

Student 2's Point of View: You've always hated it when Student 1 called you Elf Boy, but you played along with it because you didn't want him to know it bothered you. But now you've noticed that other friends are starting to call you Elf Boy, too. And you can't help but feel like everyone is making fun of you. You can't believe how mean Student 1 is being and now you're angry and not going to take it anymore!

Conflict Escalates

Using role-playing, students learn what actions cause conflicts to get worse.

Objectives

- To understand that conflict can escalate
- To understand conflict escalation triggers

Materials

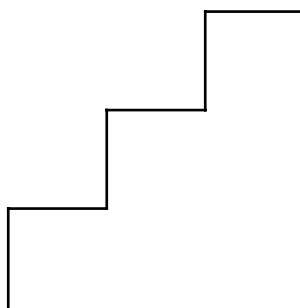
- Activity sheet, “The Big Betrayal” (one copy per pair of students)
- Chart paper and markers
- Paste, scissors, and crayons
- A wide range of brightly colored paper (remove any black or white sheets). Origami paper is especially good to use.

Gather Together: If Conflict Were a Color . . . (5 minutes)

- Lay out an array of colored paper on a table or the floor. Ask students to choose a color of paper that represents conflict to them. Say, “If conflict were a color, it would be . . .” and have students pick out a piece of paper. Ask everyone to hold up their colors. Give everyone a minute or two to share in pairs what color they chose and why. Ask for a few volunteers to share with the larger group. Make the point that often we see conflict as negative. But conflict doesn’t have to be negative. In fact, it can be positive, depending on how we deal with it.

Explain: Conflict Escalates (5 minutes)

- Ask students to describe an escalator. If they are unfamiliar with escalators, explain that an escalator is a set of stairs that moves either up or down. Draw an escalator with four steps to it on the board:



- Explain that when a conflict gets worse we say that it escalates. Give the following mini-lecture: “Usually a conflict gets worse step by step. When a conflict gets worse, we say it is escalating. A conflict might begin when someone says or does something that makes you a little upset. And then you might say something back (now that you’re upset) that makes the



Have volunteer students create a “Big Betrayal” skit, modeling the example provided here, to be used for this activity. They should be sure that their skit includes an example where the players progressively become more and more angry with one another. Some common conflict escalators to include are:

• name-calling

• blaming and finger pointing

• statements that begin with “You always” or “You never”

• rehashing ancient history (other fights or problems)

other person even more upset. Before you know it, both of you are very angry. Sometimes being in a conflict can feel like taking a ride on an escalator—once it starts, you're on your way to the top. Fortunately, understanding better what makes conflict escalate can help you stop the escalator—before both of you are so angry that you might say or do something that you regret.”

Perform a Skit: “The Big Betrayal” (20 minutes)

- Have two student volunteers act out the “Big Betrayal” script or one your students have written for this purpose.
- Divide students into cooperative groups of two or three and give each group a copy of the “Big Betrayal” script, a piece of chart paper, and a marker. Have the students draw an escalator with five steps on the chart paper. Have students identify each step in the script where the conflict escalated and write it on the ascending steps of the escalator. Alongside the steps where the conflict escalated, also write the feelings that were probably present at that moment. For example, the first step might be: Sasha accuses Terry of telling her secret; the second step: Sasha accuses Terry of lying; the third step: Terry insults Sasha’s relationship with Ronnie; fourth step: Terry interrupts Sasha and insults her; fifth step: Sasha threatens to hurt Terry.
- When students have finished, in small groups have them discuss how the conflict escalated. After each question, ask for volunteers from the small groups to share with the large group.
 - What things did Sasha and Terry do that made this conflict worse?
 - How did the feelings escalate as the conflict escalated?
 - When someone is in a conflict, how do feelings affect the way they behave?
- Help students to generalize and identify types of behaviors that escalate a conflict. Record these answers on a sheet of chart paper entitled “Some Conflict Escalators.” (Some “escalators” related to this example include: blaming, name-calling, insulting, threatening, interrupting or not listening, assuming, etc.)
- Ask: What could Sasha and Terry have done differently, so that the conflict would not have escalated? How do you imagine they solved their problem?
- Discuss: Have you ever had a conflict like this? How did it escalate? How might you have handled it differently?

Hold a Class Meeting: Ridicule-Free Zone Check-In (10 minutes)

- Review the Ridicule-Free Zone (RFZ) *Constitution of Caring* in its entirety, using the class meeting process (see page 38).
- In pairs, have students share (one minute each) how they think the RFZ is going. What’s working? What’s not working?
- Come back as a large group and discuss. Have volunteers share their pair’s perspective with the larger group.
- Ask students if there’s anything they would like to add to or refine in their *Constitution of Caring*. If you add or change anything, remember to ask for agreement from the entire group. Set a time to check in again on the RFZ.

Close Together (5 minutes)

- Have a few volunteers finish the statement, “One thing that escalates conflict that I will try to avoid in the future is . . .”



CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS (OPTIONAL)

History. Look at the events leading up to and during any major conflict in history and identify points where the conflict escalated. Chart these events and the feelings on all the sides of the conflict on the escalator.

Theater/Literature. In literature or plays, identify points where conflict between characters escalates and explore the motivations and reasons for the escalations. Role-play the escalation to help students explore the reasons and then role-play an alternative scenario where the problem does *not* escalate to help students identify problem-solving strategies.

Daily Dialogue. Have students respond to the following question in their journals for ten minutes: What do you feel are your conflict escalators i.e., what “pushes your buttons” the most and makes you angry when you are in a conflict? Have students share their entries in pairs. Later, with the whole group, identify common conflict escalators.

The Big Betrayal Conflict Script

Characters: Sasha and Terry, who have been close friends.

Scene: Sasha confronts Terry at a basketball game.

Sasha: (*sarcastically*) Thanks a lot.

Terry: What did I do?

Sasha: I can't believe you told everyone about Ronnie and me breaking up. It was a secret.

Terry: I didn't tell anyone.

Sasha: This is so typical of you. First you betray me, then you deny it.

Terry: Don't blame me because you can't keep a boyfriend. I didn't tell anyone. Not that anyone would care about you and your stupid crush!

Sasha: You are such a liar! Tayla knew all about the break up and I never . . .

Terry: (*interrupting*) Oh, right! So just assume it was ME that told her. Least I'm not a jerk to my friends! No wonder you lost Ronnie. Get out of my way, I'm leaving.

Sasha: (*furiously*) I'm going to get you later . . .

Terry: (*sarcastically*) Oh, I'm so scared!

Coming Down the Escalator with "I" Messages

Students learn about and practice "I" messages.

Objectives

- To become aware of the effects of "you" messages as conflict escalators
- To learn the format of "I" messages
- To practice creating "I" messages

Materials

- Hand out "More Practice Making 'I' Messages" (enough copies of role-play cards cut into strips as indicated for each pair of students to have two or three scenarios each)
- Index cards and markers (one card per student)
- Prepare two students to present "Scenario 1" skit or ask for a few volunteers to create a different scenario based on the example provided.

Gather Together (5 minutes)

- Hand out index cards and ask students to write down on one side how they would feel if someone they care about said to them, "You are such a slob!" (Ask for a show of hands of students who might have heard that statement before!) Have all students hold up their card for everyone to see their feeling word. Invite students to look around at everyone else's cards. Point out the range of emotions. Ask: What do these feelings have in common?
- Now have students write on the back of their index cards how they would feel if someone they care about said to them: "I feel frustrated when you don't clean up your room because we've agreed that it was something you would do once a week." Have all students hold up their cards for everyone to see their feeling words. Point out the range of emotions. Ask: What do these feelings have in common? Any thoughts on why the responses to the second statement feel better?

Introduce "I" Messages (10 minutes)

- Explain that the statement "*You* never clean your room" is a "you" message. "You" messages begin with "you" and tend to escalate or make conflicts worse. The other person feels attacked so they try to defend themselves or retaliate with a counterattack. And that can send both parties up the conflict escalator. "You" messages are like a big finger pointing and poking at another person. Almost everybody tries to defend themselves from the poking, pointing finger. "You always forget . . ." "You are lazy," etc.
- Introduce "I" messages as a way of getting what you need by being strong but not mean. With an "I" message the speaker identifies his feelings about a problem instead of attacking the other person. This makes the listener feel more willing to try to solve the problem. Point out that the statement "I feel frustrated when you don't clean your room" is an "I" message and is far less threatening than the "you" message.
- "I" messages usually have the following format (write on the board):
 1. I feel _____ (*state the feeling*)
 2. when _____ (*state the behavior*)
 3. because _____ (*state the effect the behavior has on you*)

- Practice making “I” messages with the group. Ask for a volunteer to turn the following “you” messages into “I” messages using the format on the board.
 - You never save me a seat in the cafeteria. (Example: I feel disappointed when you don’t save me a seat in the cafeteria because I want to sit with you.)
 - You always leave me out when you play soccer. (I feel hurt when you don’t let me play soccer because I worry that it’s because you think I’m not good at it or that you don’t like me.)

Perform a Skit (25 minutes)

- Have two student volunteers present the following skit. In this skit the conflict will escalate with Student 1 using a “you” message. Lights, camera, action, begin!

Scenario 1: Student 1 is standing in line in the cafeteria when Student 2 pushes right in front of him or her.

Student 2: (*pushing in front of Student 1 in line and waving to a friend in the front of the line*)
Hey, Josh . . .

Student 1: Wait a minute. You can’t just push in front of me like that! What kind of jerk are you?

Student 2: (*angry*) Looks like I just did, loser. What are you going to do about it?

- After a minute or two call “FREEZE.” Explain that, in this skit, the student used a “you” message.
- Now ask the class how Student 1 can express his or her feelings about Student 2’s behavior using an “I” message, following the format for “I” messages as you wrote it on the board. Have the same volunteers replay the skit using the “I” message students provide.

Scenario 2: Student 1 is standing in line in the cafeteria when Student 2 pushes right in front of him or her.

Student 2: (*pushing in front of Student 1 in line and waving to a friend in the front of the line*)
Hey, Josh . . .

Student 1: (*using an “I” message*) I feel disrespected when you get in front of me like that because I’ve been waiting my turn.

Student 2: I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to cut in. I was just trying to get my friend’s attention.

Note: When students are first learning “I” messages they will likely complain that the format feels artificial. Explain that, at first, any new skill you are learning feels awkward. As students become more skilled in using “I” messages they will be able to deviate from the strict format.

- Break students in pairs and have them choose to be either Student 1 or Student 2. Ask students to stand back to back with their partners. Describe scenario 2 as noted below and then have students turn around to face their partners and enact it using an “I” message.

Scenario 2: Student 1 trips over Student 2’s foot in the cafeteria and thinks Student 2 stuck it out on purpose. Student 1 has to deliver an “I” message.

- When students have finished, discuss. Student 2: How did it feel when Student 1 used an “I” message? Student 1: How was that different from the first skit when a “you” message was used?
- Give students more practice with “I” messages. Still working in pairs and back to back, have students pick three role-plays each from a hat or box (see “More Practice Making ‘I’ Messages”). For each scenario on their role-play card, one student will make an “I” statement to her partner about her feelings about the action, using the “I” message format as described on the board.
- Note: In advance, review the scenarios included on the role-play cards. The first four scenarios are for students just beginning to use “I” messages. As students become more skillful (or if “I” messages are familiar to your students), they can try the last four scenarios, which are more advanced. Also, if a scenario included here applies to only one student in your classroom, substitute it with a less emotionally charged scenario. For example, if there is only one student in your classroom in a wheelchair, instead of using the scenario “A classmate makes fun of a student in a wheelchair,” substitute something related, such as “A classmate makes fun of student with an arm or leg in a cast.”

Have the students turn around and begin.

- (Optional) Have students suggest new scenarios from their own lives to further practice “I” messages.

Tip Throughout the course of the project, find opportunities for students to practice using “I” messages and bring this tool to their daily lives. Weave such practice in when appropriate moments arise or include as a gathering for an activity.

Close Together (5 minutes)

- Call the group back together. Give everyone a few minutes to write down an “I” message that they would like to say to someone today to let another person know what they feel and need. Ask for a few volunteers to share their “I” messages with the group.



CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS (OPTIONAL)

Literature. *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* (Bantam Books, 1993) presents ample opportunity to explore conflict and its escalation and de-escalation. 1) Much of Anne’s diary describes her relationships with other teenagers. What does Anne seek from those relationships? What problems sometimes arise to complicate relationships between young people? How are those problems resolved? 2) Anne’s relationship with her mother is frustrating to her. Do you ever find it hard to maintain a good relationship with members of your family? How have you improved these relationships?

Children’s Conscious Acts of Caring

“One time my sister hit me on the shoulder. Instead of hitting her back like I would normally have done, I thought and thought and remembered about ‘I’ messages. When my sister was calm, I told her what I thought was mean, how I felt about it, and what I wanted her to do. Now she doesn’t hit me anymore and we are very, very close friends.”—a middle school student

More Practice Making "I" Messages Role-Play Cards



A classmate keeps teasing you about your glasses. They may not mean to hurt you, but it bothers you anyway.



A friend of yours wants you to join in making fun of a homeless person.



Some kids at lunch make fun of the clothes you are wearing.



A classmate makes fun of a student in a wheelchair.



You hear that a student you don't know well is spreading gossip about you that isn't true.



A friend of yours is being teased for being fat, thin, short, or tall.



Your parents do not speak English. You find out that someone in your class, who you thought was your friend, makes fun of your parents behind your back.



You notice that a new kid is always left out of ball games.



Be a Bullying Buster

Students look at the role of bystanders and allies in instances of bullying and other unkind behavior and identify appropriate ways to respond.

Objectives

- To identify positive ways to respond to unkind behaviors
- To practice assertion skills and “I” messages
- To learn boundaries for when to intervene and not intervene in a conflict
- To be sensitized to the important role of bystanders and allies

Materials

- VCR and “Don’t Laugh at Me” video cued to the Peter, Paul & Mary version
- Chart paper
- One handout per student: “Five Steps for Sending Assertive Messages”
- One index card per student (one third labeled “target,” one third labeled “bully,” one third labeled “ally”)

Gather Together: Explore Caring (5-10 minutes)

- Show the “Don’t Laugh at Me” video. Ask students to record the positive or hopeful images they see in the video.
- Discuss: What do these images have in common? (Many of the images include people showing caring—either by putting an arm around someone or giving someone an award, cheering for them, etc.)

Introduce Bullies, Targets, Bystanders, and Allies (15 minutes)

- Now explain that you are going to turn your attention to what we can do when we see someone being treated unkindly or bullied. Ask: What types of behavior constitute bullying? (Explain that someone is being bullied when he or she is repeatedly called names, made fun of, picked on, hit, kicked, shoved, pushed, pinched, threatened, or excluded from a group.)
- Ask for a show of hands of everyone in the room who has seen someone being bullied or been bullied themselves. (Likely everyone will raise their hands.) Point out that everyone in this room will or already has at some time found themselves in a situation where they are either a target of bullying (the person being bullied) or a bystander (someone who witnesses the bullying). When we witness a situation in which an individual or a group is targeted, we can make a choice to be a bystander who doesn’t say or do anything to change the situation. Or we can choose to be an ally, someone who works with and acts in support of a targeted person or group. Today we’re going to learn 1) how to be an ally when you see someone being bullied and 2) how to stand up for yourself if you’re bullied.
- Create groups of three students. Randomly distribute cards so that in each group there is one student per role: ally, target, bystander. Give each student one minute to tell about a time when he or she was an ally, a target, or a bystander (the role as assigned on their card).

Give the groups one minute for the bystanders and allies to respond.

- When everyone has finished give the groups three minutes to debrief (one minute per question): What did it feel like to be the target? What did it feel like to be the bystander?

What did it feel like to be the ally?

- Now brainstorm with students a list of things you can do when you or someone else is being hurt or bullied. Explain that you are looking for ideas that are nonviolent. Explore with students why a violent response would be a bad choice.

Now record ideas on chart paper in two columns: ideas that mean confronting the bully and ideas that do not. Add to the students' ideas with suggestions from the following:

- Refuse to join in (doesn't involve confrontation).
 - Report bullying you know about or see to an adult (doesn't involve confrontation).
 - Invite the person being hurt to join your group (might involve confrontation). Then ask the person who was bullied if it's okay to have the bully join your group if the bully apologizes (does involve confrontation).
 - Speak out using an "I" message. Say, "I don't like it when you treat him like that." "I want you to stop calling him that name." "I wouldn't want someone to say that to/about me." (Does involve confrontation.)
 - Be a friend to the person who has been bullied by showing him you care about him: put an arm around him, give him a put-up, etc. (doesn't involve confrontation).
 - Distract the bully with a joke or something else so she stops the behavior (does involve confrontation).
 - Share your perspective (does involve confrontation). Say, "That sounds like an assumption to me . . ."
 - Provide accurate information (does involve confrontation). "Here's what I know about (the situation/person) . . ."
- Give students copies of the handout "Five Steps for Sending Assertive Messages" for their review. Go over the steps.
 - One important rule is that if students see someone being hurt physically or see an interaction that might escalate into physical violence, they should *not* confront the bully. Rather, they should quickly go and get help from an adult. Discuss with students signs that might indicate such a physical threat.

Intervene in Bullying: The Bullying Buster Machine (15 minutes)

- Introduce the next activity: It takes practice and courage to act strong without being mean when you or another person are being bullied. Tell the students you are going to create a Bullying Buster machine. To form the machine, have students break into two lines facing one another about three feet apart. They should imagine that they have switches on their arms. When you touch an arm, the Bullying Buster machine switches on. You will walk down the aisle between the students, pretending to be a bully. Once a student is "switched on," that student should give out an assertive (strong, but not mean) message to the bully.
- Walk along the aisle between the students. Recite a scenario from the ones listed below, or act it out if you are comfortable doing that. Then choose a student randomly and switch him or her on with a touch on the arm for a strong Bullying Buster response. Practice with several students before moving on to another scenario. Some possible situations:
 - Someone calls you a bad name. (Possible Bullying Buster machine response: "I feel hurt and angry when you call me that name. Please don't do that.")
 - Someone tells you to do something you don't want to do.
 - Someone is calling someone else a bad name.
 - Someone is making fun of someone because she is blind.
 - Someone wants you to call someone else a bad name.
 - Someone tells you you can't sit with them at lunch.

- Someone demands that you give him some money.
- Someone is teasing a friend of yours and she doesn't like it.
- Debrief the activity: What messages do you think were most effective?

Close Together (5 minutes)

- Ask for a few volunteers to share: What are some feelings you had during this activity?



CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS (OPTIONAL)

Literature. Lois-Ann Yamanaka's book *Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers* (Harvest Books, 1997) is the coming-of-age tale of a 12-year-old Japanese-American girl living in Hawaii named Lovey Nariyoshi. Lovey struggles to fit in in a world where it feels important to have "straight blond hair and long Miss America legs." Use this book as a launching point to discuss the various ways that young people in your school who do not fit in, or are different in some way, are treated. Also, explore the role of peer pressure in acts of bullying. Ask: Has there ever been a time that you did something like make fun of another kid, just to fit in? How can we make being caring and being appreciative of others who are different "cool" in our school? Any ideas?

Daily Dialogue. Have students write in their journal for ten minutes: My feelings about being an ally to someone being bullied are . . . Who is someone you know who is a good example of an ally? What qualities does he possess? Have students in pairs share their entries.

History. Connect this lesson to a look at groups who have been bullied by other groups in history (i.e., African-Americans, Northern Ireland, etc.).

Tip

Discuss with students why sharing an incidence of bullying with a teacher or other responsible adult is not tattling. Explain that being in a caring classroom carries some rights and responsibilities. "We all have the right to feel safe in this school and we all have the right to be protected. Your responsibility as a member of this community is to help ensure that sense of safety is possible for every student."

FIVE STEPS FOR SENDING ASSERTIVE MESSAGES

1. Prepare the “I” message. Think about it ahead of time. Talk about it with another person. It may be a good idea to practice saying it.
2. Give the message to the person. Use body language and a tone of voice that reinforces the message.
3. Wait a moment or two. The other person may not respond immediately. When the response comes, it may be defensive—the other person may offer excuses, attack, or withdraw.
4. Listen actively to the response, paraphrasing what the other person is saying and reflecting feelings. Ask questions that encourage the other person to look for a solution. Restate the problem and ask, “What do you think would be fair? What can we both do now?”
5. Look for a solution that meets both of your needs.

Note: Depending on how the other person responds, you may need to go through the steps above several times before reaching a solution.

Inclusion and Exclusion at Our School

Students explore inclusion/exclusion and other examples of bullying in their school.

Objectives

- To explore inclusion/exclusion in the school community
- To identify ways to promote inclusion and appreciation of differences

Materials

- Prepare for the Rotation Stations by writing each of the following questions for the stations at the top of a large piece of chart paper, leaving room for student responses. Post them around the room and provide eight markers in a cup at each station.
- One handout, “Rotation Station Questions,” for each student
- Two gift boxes: One wrapped neatly in gift paper and ribbons and the other wrapped crudely with no ribbon. Inside each box put the same item.

Gather Together: The Gift Box (5 minutes)

- Hold up the two gift boxes you prepared. Have students vote for the box they wish to open and share. Open the box they selected. Then open the other box to show students that it contains the same thing. Discuss the following:
 - Why did you choose the first box?
 - What assumptions did you make about what was in each box?
 - When might we judge people in the same way?
 - When you are making friends, what might be missed by looking on the “outside” and not the “inside”?

Explore Bullying: Rotation Stations (15 minutes)

- Hand out the “Rotation Station Questions” to all students. Give students five minutes at their desks to briefly answer the questions.
- Divide students into four equally sized groups, so that one group can stand by each posted question. Students will have two minutes at each station to record their responses. Notify groups when it is time to move to the next station.

Station 1: Thinking about your school, in what classes, activities, projects, and events do you notice the most genuine mix of students from different groups or “cliques”?

Station 2: Thinking about your school, in what classes, activities, projects, and events do you notice the most segregation of students into different “cliques”?

Station 3: Thinking about your school, what rules or ways of doing things make all people feel included and welcome?

Station 4: Thinking about your school, what rules or ways of doing things lead to segregation?

Debrief the Activity (20 minutes)

- After groups have finished responding to all the questions, ask students to walk around in silence for ten minutes reading the responses.
- When they have finished reading, debrief:
 - Are there any clarifying questions about something someone wrote?

- How does it feel to be part of these groups? How does it feel to be excluded from these groups?
- What are some things we can do to make everyone feel included and welcome in all groups?

Close Together (5 minutes)

- Ask for volunteers to share one thing they can do to become a better ally to targeted groups and individuals.



CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS (OPTIONAL)

Geography. On chart paper taped together, have students draw one huge, to-scale map of your school and its school grounds (perhaps teaming with other classrooms who would take certain zones of the school). As an extension of the Caring Being, have students create the “Caring School.” Have them write in the words and ideas that they would like to see characterized in each place. Use this map as a launching point for discussion in “Take It to the Community.”

Language Arts/History. Have students respond to the quote by Mahatma Gandhi, “All humanity is one undivided and indivisible family, and each one of us is responsible for the misdeeds of all the others.” Connect this quote to Gandhi’s political life and actions.

History. Read stories about people who fought against injustice. While Martin Luther King, Jr., and others are critical role models, also aim to include some “unsung heroes” like Laura Haviland, a Quaker who helped end slavery through the Underground Railroad, or Rigoberta Menchu, a Nobel Peace Prize winner in Guatemala, and Audrey Shenendoah, a Haudenosaunee of the Six Nation Iroquois Confederacy. Include examples of young people changing the world. See *It’s Our World, Too!—Stories of Young People Who Are Making a Difference* by Philip House (Little, Brown, 1993).

Daily Dialogue. Have students write in their journals for ten minutes: “One thing we could change that would help all people in this school feel like they were included and valued is . . .” In pairs, have students share their writings.

Inclusion and Exclusion at Our School Rotation Stations Questions

Station 1: Thinking about your school, in what classes, activities, projects, and events do you notice the most genuine mix of students from different groups or “cliques”?

Station 2: Thinking about your school, in what classes, activities, projects, and events do you notice the most segregation of students into different “cliques”?

Station 3: Thinking about your school, what rules or ways of doing things make all people feel included and welcome?

Station 4: Thinking about your school, what rules or ways of doing things lead to segregation?

Take It to the Community

- Together with the students, develop or refine a policy on teasing for your classroom as part of your Ridicule-Free Zone *Constitution*. Encourage students to develop a campaign around their policy so that the whole school considers adopting it.
- Using the “Developing a Community Action Project” process, page 44, help students identify a problem in your community to solve. Encourage students to invite community leaders (police officers, activists, ministers, politicians, etc.) to join them in their efforts. Ask the community leaders to visit the class and see what the students have done and discuss ways to spread the students’ work to the community. Plan a panel discussion of concerned adults on the problem or another community-wide event to either kick off your project or close it.

Next Steps

Resolving conflict creatively does not always come naturally to young people—or adults. Some of the essential skills to build in students that are not covered in this guide include:

- exploring concepts of peace and conflict
- using active listening to de-escalate conflict
- following a sequence of problem-solving steps
- win-win vs. win-lose solutions
- suggesting one’s own solutions to conflicts
- cooperating to put solutions into practice
- distinguishing between positions and interests (demands vs. real needs)
- negotiating
- mediating

To help you in the task of teaching these skills and concepts beyond the *Don’t Laugh at Me* project, consider the following:

- Your efforts to teach young people conflict resolution will be more successful if they are understood and generally supported by the entire school staff. To help you spread the program throughout your school, facilitate some of the activities in this guide with your fellow teachers during staff meetings. Share the stories of success from your classroom with your administration.

You can draw from the success and lessons learned by Educators for Social Responsibility. Contact ESR at 800-270-2515 or www.esrnational.org for more information about professional development opportunities. Or order one of the many resources ESR has available for teaching additional conflict resolution skills:

- *Waging Peace in Our Schools* by Linda Lantieri and Janet Patti (Beacon Press, 1996): learn more about how to implement a conflict resolution program in your school.
- *Conflict Resolution in the Middle School* by William J. Kreidler: conflict resolution skill-building activities. Includes a student guide.
- *Peace Posters*: a colorful set of posters that help reinforce the themes and skills of creative conflict resolution.



CELEBRATING DIVERSITY

4 Together We Can

Don't Laugh at Me will help young people begin to appreciate diversity in an unself-conscious way. By learning to acknowledge differences without judgment, students help to create an environment in which each person feels comfortable about the ways he or she is different from others. They can feel safe taking risks or standing apart from their peers. And they will naturally begin to question and challenge prejudice.

Some of the skills young people will begin to learn in this unit are:

- Identifying differences and similarities in a nonjudgmental way
- Appreciating differences
- Becoming sensitive to acts of prejudice and bias

Important Facilitation Guidelines: Setting Up for Success

See Appendix B, page 98, for guidelines on creating an anti-bias classroom, including how to foster inclusion, acknowledge differences, intervene to prevent exclusion, take a stand against bias, and much more.

The Power Shuffle

Students explore issues of power as they relate to the themes in the video.

Important Note

It's best to do this activity after you've built trust and safety in your classroom over the course of the *Don't Laugh at Me* project and the school year. We recommend teaming up with your school's guidance department for help in facilitating this and following up on any strong emotions that students exhibit. Also, we strongly recommend involving parents/guardians in any concerns you might have for students who have been chronically teased or bullied in school.

See "Facilitating This Activity" for more information, as well as "Discussing Sensitive and Controversial Issues" in Appendix B, page 99.

Objectives

- To sensitize to the effects of prejudice, ridicule, teasing, and other hurtful behaviors
- To recommit to the Ridicule-Free Zone (and make any necessary refinements)

Materials

- A line of masking tape across your classroom floor, with space on either side for all the students in your class (standing a few lines deep)
- The "Don't Laugh at Me" CD and player
- Large chart paper (one sheet per student) and masking tape
- Markers
- Slips of paper with each student's name in your class written on it (and hat or box)
- One copy of the Human Bingo Card for each student

Gather Together: Play Human Bingo (10 minutes)

- Share with the group: The goal of this session is to discover people who are different from you and celebrate those differences. Just by asking questions, students will find that there are many different experiences, backgrounds, and preferences in the group.
- Give each person a pen or pencil and Human Bingo Card. For each question on the Human Bingo Card, students have to find a person in the group who would answer it differently than they would. That person then signs his or her name in the box next to the category. For example, if you are right-handed, when you find someone who is left-handed, he will sign his name in the corresponding box on your Human Bingo Card. You can use each name only once. Variation: You can shorten this activity to ten minutes by applying the typical rules of bingo. The first person to fill in five in a row (across, down, or diagonally) wins.
- Tell everyone to begin! The first person who fills her card yells, "Human Bingo!" and reads her answers to the group. She must also explain how each person who signed her card is different from her.
- End this activity by handing out paper and markers. Choose a category from the Human Bingo Card for which students are likely to have a wide range of answers (such as "favorite music group"). Have students write their answers on paper in large letters, then call out

their answers popcorn style (one at a time in random order) while holding up their signs. Or ask students to organize themselves in groups around the room representing their various preferences in that category. Make note of the diversity!

Facilitate an Activity: The Power Shuffle (25 minutes)

- Line up all the students along one side of the masking-tape line across the floor, facing the line. Introduce the activity: “Sometimes when someone hurts another person he is just being mean or maybe he is being careless—like when the kid in the skit called his friend ‘Elf Boy’ without knowing it bothered him. Or maybe they’ve forgotten the Ridicule-Free Zone agreement. Or maybe they feel pressure from their friends to join in when other people are teasing or excluding someone. Other times, people hurt other people just because of *who they are*—just because of the color of their skin, or their ethnicity, or their sexual orientation, or their religious beliefs. These ways of being mean can even be supported and encouraged by our society—where privilege and laws give some groups more power than other groups. For example, you may know that there is almost an even number of men and women in the U.S. Does anybody know how many women are in Congress, making our laws? So even though 50% of our society is women, only 11% are making our laws. How might that influence those laws that do get made? And similarly people of color are underrepresented in Congress. How might that influence our laws? That’s an example of how discrimination—treating some *groups* of people unfairly, not just individuals—is part of our society. In this activity we’re going to look at ways we hurt each other and how differences can sometimes be used to divide us.”
- Explain how to do the activity: “It’s best to do the activity we’re about to do in complete silence. You might have some strong feelings during this activity—sadness, anger. So we need to be very respectful and caring to one another. No laughing or talking, so we can all feel safe. Raise your hand if you can agree to the ‘no-talking, no-whispering, no-laughing rule.’ If someone forgets, please gently remind him or her. Tears might come up in this activity. Remember, all our feelings are important. It’s OK to feel sad. If someone near you starts to cry, what could you do to comfort her? (Put your arm around her, put a hand on her shoulder for comfort, etc.) We’re going to stay right here together, though, throughout the entire activity.”
- Say, “I’m going to call out a group and if you belong to that group, please cross the line and turn around to face the students on the other side of the line. If you do not feel comfortable crossing the line, even though you are part of that group, that’s okay. You can stay right where you are and notice any feelings you are having.” For each group that is called out, people in that group will cross the line. They will then turn around to face the students who have not crossed the line. When you tell the group that crossed the line to return, they will return to their original places on the other side of the tape, so that the entire group is standing together once more.

Important Facilitation Note: After each of the “cross the line” categories, you will 1) pause until the students who have crossed the line have turned to face the other students; 2) then you will say: “Now notice how it feels to cross the line and notice how it feels to watch other people cross the line (pause). Look who is with you (pause). Look who is not with you (pause)”; 3) ask everyone to come back together.

- “Now, cross the line in silence if you’ve ever been teased or called a bad name or made fun of.”
- “Cross the line if you’ve ever been judged, put down, or teased about your accent or your voice, or told that you couldn’t sing.”
- “Cross the line if you or any one of your family members or any friend of yours has a disability that you can or can’t see.”

- “Now cross the line if you’ve ever seen someone else being teased or called a bad name or made fun of for any reason at all.”
 - “Cross the line if you’ve ever been called a name or put down or made fun of or whistled at or harassed or told you couldn’t do something you wanted to just because you’re a girl.”
 - “Cross the line if you’re a boy and you’ve ever been told you shouldn’t cry, show your emotions, or be afraid or told you couldn’t do something just because you are a boy.”
 - “Cross the line if you’ve ever been picked last in games or sports or felt left out or excluded from an activity altogether.”
 - “Cross the line if you or someone you care about has ever been judged, put down, teased, excluded or discriminated against because of your religious background.”
 - “Cross the line if you or someone you care about has ever been judged, put down, teased, excluded, or discriminated against because of the color of your skin.”
 - “Cross the line if you or someone you care about has ever been judged, put down, teased, harassed, or discriminated against because of your sexual orientation or suspected sexual orientation—whether or not it is true.”
 - “Cross the line if you’ve ever been told by an adult that you’re too young to understand or been called a name by an adult or had your dress or appearance criticized by an adult.”
 - “Cross the line if you’ve ever felt alone, unwelcome, or afraid.”
 - “Cross the line if you or someone you care about has ever been teased or made fun of for wearing glasses, braces, a hearing aid, or for the clothes you wear, your height, your complexion, or for the size or shape of your body.”
 - “Cross the line if you’ve ever been told you’re a bad, ungrateful, no-good, or worthless kid.”
 - “Cross the line if you’ve ever felt pressure from your friends or an adult to do something you didn’t want to do and felt sorry or ashamed afterwards.”
 - “Cross the line if you’ve ever felt ashamed for speaking from your heart or sharing your worries, fears, or secret hopes and dreams with someone.”
 - “Cross the line if someone’s ever been mean to you and you’ve been reluctant or too afraid to say anything about it.”
 - “Cross the line if you’ve ever stood by and watched while someone was hurt or bullied and said or did nothing because you were too uncomfortable, shy, or afraid to say something.”
 - In pairs, have students debrief the activity:
 - What are some feelings that came up for you during this activity?
 - What was the hardest part for you?
 - What did you learn about yourself? What did you learn about others?
 - In the large group, have students debrief the activity:
 - What do you want to remember about what we’ve just experienced?
 - What, if anything, do you want to tell others about this experience?
 - Ask for volunteers to raise their hands to share with the entire group for each of the questions above.
 - Sum it up: “When you crossed the line, that didn’t make you any less deserving of respect and caring. In fact, many of those times were probably when you needed respect or caring the most. It’s important to know that our differences do not cause us to hurt one another. The differences, however, are used to justify already existing power imbalances in our society.
- “For many of us, it takes courage to cross the line. If you noticed, lots of us crossed the line many times. Everyone here knows what it feels like to get hurt, or to see someone be hurt

and not stand up for them. But maybe we forgot that hurt because we pushed it inside. If we can remember what we've shared here today—that we've all been hurt—hopefully we can teach others about our Ridicule-Free Zone and try to make sure no one else gets hurt these ways again.”

- Make a recommitment to your Ridicule-Free Zone (RFZ). Ask the large group: “Is there anything anyone would like to add to our RFZ *Constitution*? Anything you want to change?”

Close Together (10 minutes)

- (Optional) Sing “If I Had a Hammer” and “Blowin’ in the Wind” with students. After each song ask: What do you think this song is about? What does it mean to *you*?
- Have each student choose four names of students out of a hat or box. Have everyone tape large sheets of chart paper on their backs with their names written on the top. As someone plays the “Don’t Laugh at Me” song, students will circulate with markers and write put-ups on the sheets of the four students they picked from the hat. Tell them to try to be as specific as possible about the helpful, kind, and wonderful things they’ve noticed about that person during the program. Let students keep their put-up sheets.

Facilitating This Activity

The goal of this activity is to help break down the barriers between students that perpetuate acts of unkindness. Young people become aware that others face many of the same insecurities, fears, and challenges that they do. They learn that showing your feelings doesn’t make you a weak person, rather it takes courage. They learn that other students can be appreciative and supportive when they reveal those feelings. Through becoming sensitized to the effects of cruelty—without bearing the burden of guilt—students recommit to making their school a Ridicule-Free Zone.

- Be careful not to be judgmental or shaming in this activity, rather be supportive and accepting. Everyone in the class will probably have a reason to cross the line. All students may have been targets at some point, or joined in on making fun of another, or at the very least have seen someone hurt and not done anything about it. Many students will need your support in realizing that they might be modeling behaviors they have seen or passing along treatment they have themselves received. With your help and guidance students can change such hurtful behaviors.
- Pair with your school guidance department to facilitate this activity. Assign some counselors and/or teacher’s aides to participate and others to circulate to support students as they move through this activity.
- Reassure students that showing their feelings is healthy.
- Allow a comfortable space of silence after each “Cross the line . . .” before inviting students back to their original places or commenting. The slow pacing of this activity is important to its success.



CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS (OPTIONAL)

Daily Dialogue. In journals have students respond to the Power Shuffle: 1) My feelings about crossing the line in this activity were . . . and 2) My feelings about not crossing the line and watching others cross the line were . . . In pairs, have students share their entries.

Literature. In *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, by Mildred D. Taylor (Puffin Books, 1997), the Logan family must live in fear because the white people in the community do not see black people as equal. Explore examples of discrimination in the book and look for examples in students’ lives.

In *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* (Bantam Books, 1993) Anne says, “I still believe that people are basically good,” even though she is in a dire situation caused by prejudice against Jewish people. Have students discuss this quote in a pair/share. Do you think that people are basically good? If yes, what, if anything in your life helps you to keep your faith in the basic goodness of people? If not, what in particular most discourages you from believing in the basic goodness of people?

Music. Discuss the application of different media to solving a problem. Why might a song like “Don’t Laugh at Me” be more effective at making people change than someone giving a speech? When might it be less effective? Why? Have students research examples of music being used to motivate people to action.

Art/Music. Have students learn the song “This Little Light of Mine.” Discuss the place of spirituals in African-American history. Then identify people in your school or community who are making a more inclusive world and celebrate their accomplishments in a photo or video essay (possibly synchronize the essay to music of the students’ choosing).

Human Bingo Card

| | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Favorite TV show | Ethnic background | Favorite holiday | Country you would most like to visit | Right-/left-handed |
| Most typical meal your family eats | Favorite video game | Favorite breakfast | Has ever planted something | Favorite sport |
| Sleeps with a stuffed animal | Favorite subject in school | Favorite music group | Has been fishing | <i>Insert student created-category here</i> |
| Has a pet | Sings in the shower | City and state of birth | Has been in a play | <i>Insert student created-category here</i> |
| Is bilingual or multilingual | Birth order | <i>Insert student created-category here</i> | Favorite snack food | Has had poison ivy |

Family Ties and Fabric Tales

Using props, students tell stories about themselves and then later incorporate those props into a square that optionally becomes part of a classroom “quilt.”

Objectives

- To celebrate differences
- To expose students to different cultures and different families
- To understand the concept of “culture”

Materials

- The song “Don’t Laugh at Me” and CD player
- Rope circles approximately four feet long (one for every three students). You can create the circles by tying the ends of a four-foot-long section of rope together.
- A large area of open floor
- Sheets of paper, art supplies
- A copy of the nine-patch square for each child in your room (have extras on hand for students who wish to start over on their projects)
- (Optional) Fabric and sewing supplies for creating a cloth quilt

Gather Together (10 minutes)

- Distribute rope circles to students in the classroom randomly. Have students put their rope circle on the floor and stand inside it.
- Explain the game: “This game is a variation on musical chairs. Only our goal is the opposite of the usual game of musical chairs—instead of leaving someone out, we’ll need to make sure that *everyone* is included by the time the music stops. When the music begins, students will walk around and find someone (it can be many students) with whom they have a difference—someone who comes from a family with a different number of people, someone whose hair is another color, etc.—and invite him or her to join them inside their rope circle. Someone is considered part of the rope circle as long as they have both feet inside the circle. When the music stops, students in rope circles will need to invite in anyone who’s not yet in a rope circle by finding a difference between them.”
- Play the song “Don’t Laugh at Me” and begin. Be sure to give students plenty of time before turning off the music. Do a second round if you have time.

Note: A fun variation on this game is to take away one rope circle after each time you stop the music. Yet the same rules apply. When the music stops, all students must have their both their feet within someone’s rope circle. This is a wonderful opportunity for students to work on problem solving how to fit half the class, and eventually the entire class, into one rope circle. (Hint: if students sit and put their heels into the circle, with one foot on top of the other, you can usually fit everyone.)

Explore Families (30 minutes)

- Write the word “culture” on the board and ask students what the word means to them. What words or phrases come to mind when they hear the word? Write their contributions on the board in the form of a web diagram, connecting related ideas with lines to the word “culture” or to other related words. Use the students’ words to help the class create a definition of culture that includes the particular values, beliefs, customs, and ways of life of groups of people.

- Introduce the activity: “Families are an important part of culture. There is great variety in the kinds of families people live in today. In this activity we’re going to celebrate many of the differences in the families in our classroom.” Explain that families are not only comprised of people who are blood related. Discuss what makes someone part of your “family.”
- To start students thinking about the different family arrangements and cultures represented in the class, ask some of the following questions (write them on the board):
 - With whom do you live? Who else do you consider to be part of your family? What attributes make someone a “family” member? What are some of the things you like to do with members of your family? What are special foods in your family? What holidays do you celebrate?
- Distribute art supplies and a copy of the nine-square patch, page 84, to each student. Ask students to decorate the middle square of the patch with the names of their families and drawings (or optionally a photograph) showing all the members. The remaining eight squares could describe, with words, symbols, or other images, things that are important to their families. Students can include anything they want—special foods, pets, holidays they celebrate, memories, important events, values, beliefs, etc.
- When students are finished, have them pair with a partner to share the stories of their families depicted on the patch.
- (Optional) In another class period, students can glue their patches onto construction paper backings and then work together to join their individual blocks on a large piece of butcher paper to form one class Family Ties and Fabric Quilt. Alternatively, they might connect the patches horizontally along the wall in a banner form. Or create a real quilt by decorating squares of fabric using markers or fabric paint and then sewing all the squares together into one class quilt.

Close Together (5 minutes)

- Hang all the patches or display them on a table. Have students walk around and see the various patches.



CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS (OPTIONAL)

Math. Ask students to graph differences in your classroom: how many have different colors of hair, how many like certain TV shows, how many have older/younger sisters and brothers, how many like certain music groups, and so on.

History. Extend this lesson into a study of immigration. What are some of the countries your students’ families are from? Be sure to discuss the First Americans—those indigenous to the land—and also talk about African-Americans who were forcibly transported to America as slaves. How might having one’s family forcibly taken to America or being displaced make for a different experience of your heritage compared to someone whose family chose to come to America?

Literature. Read *Tuck Everlasting* by Natalie Babbitt (Sunburst Books, 2000) with students. In this book, the Tuck family is very different from Winnie’s family. How do you think they feel about being different? Have you ever felt different? How has that impacted how you act with your peers?

Daily Dialogue. Have students write in their journals for ten minutes: My feelings about what constitutes a family are . . . Then have students pair and share their journal entries.



Love Makes a Family, an exhibit from Family Diversity Projects, sensitively looks at lesbian and gay families. It is available through P.O. Box 1209, Amherst, MA 01004-1209, 413-258-0502, www.javanet.com/~famphoto

Children's Conscious Acts of Caring

Quilt making became a passion at Mount Fort Middle School, an urban school for grades 6–8 in Ogden, Utah. Students there can be found tying quilts before and after school hours. When students finish a class assignment, they go to the back of the classroom and tie quilts. It's a total school effort. As a result, the school presented nearly 30 quilts to a local homeless shelter. And at Roosevelt Middle School in California, middle school students created a Peace Quilt, honoring their student body's diversity and commitment to caring. The quilt hangs proudly in the school's lobby.

Family Ties & Fabric Tales

NINE-PATCH QUILT BLOCK

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | | |
| | NAME AND DRAWING OF FAMILY | |
| | | |

Next Steps

It's important that students see adults who are invested in teaching tolerance. Sustaining your work in helping students appreciate diversity and countering bias beyond *Don't Laugh at Me* is therefore critical. To continue helping students explore the complexities of diversity, you'll need to build some additional skills not addressed in this guide, including:

- understanding culture
- identifying the groups we belong to
- identifying compassion for and appreciation of people different from us
- countering bias
- exploring clout, power, and privilege
- understanding scapegoating
- understanding diversity as it relates to conflict

Fortunately, there are many excellent resources for doing this important work:

- Teachers and other educators can order the following free resources from the Southern Poverty Law Center (one per educator) by sending a request on school letterhead to the Southern Poverty Law Center, 400 Washington Avenue, Montgomery, AL 36104: *Teaching Tolerance*, a free semiannual 64-page magazine providing educators with resources for promoting interracial and intercultural understanding, and *One World Poster Set*, eight 4-color 18x24-inch posters featuring artwork and text from *Teaching Tolerance* magazine (includes a teacher's guide).
- The Southern Poverty Law Center offers other diversity related activities on-line at www.splcenter.org/teachingtolerance/tt-index.html
- Contact Challenge Day, P.O. Box 2208, Martinez, CA 94553, 925-957-0234, to plan a day-long workshop for students, teachers, and caregivers.
- Order a copy of the video "Names Can Really Hurt Us" from the Anti-defamation league, 800-343-5540, and explore how to help reduce prejudice, increase tolerance, and create harmony.
- ESR's curricula and training will help you nurture the appreciation of diversity. Contact ESR at 800-370-2515, www.esrnational.org

PLANNING AN EVENT

Take It to the Community

Students share their *Conscious Acts of Caring* and plan ways to bring *Don't Laugh at Me* to the community.

Objectives

- To acknowledge all the various *Conscious Acts of Caring* by students
- To ratify the RFZ *Constitution of Caring*
- To bring *Don't Laugh at Me* to the larger community

Materials

- Student's written stories, photos, drawings, etc., from the "Children's *Conscious Acts of Caring*" activity (page 42) and (if you created them) from the "Take It to the Community: Creating a Community Action Project" (page 44)
- A large version of your Ridicule-Free Zone *Constitution of Caring* on paper with enough room after it for every student to sign it (you can roll the paper). See the sample *Constitution of Caring* provided here for a model.
- One copy of the "Constitution of Caring Pledge" for each student
- (Optional) A talking stick
- (Optional) An instant camera

Tip

Pair with other classrooms who have implemented *Don't Laugh at Me* for this activity.

Gather Together (10 minutes)

- Have the students pair and share the acts of kindness they "caught" or did in the "Children's *Conscious Acts of Caring*" activity (page 42).
- Bring the entire group back together: Do you think things have changed in our classroom/school since *Don't Laugh at Me* started? How? Have you changed? How? Let as many students as want to contribute (optionally, use a talking stick or other symbol to designate each student's turn to speak).

Hold a Ceremony: Celebrate Your *Constitution of Caring* (20 minutes)

- Ask for a few volunteer students to read aloud the RFZ *Constitution of Caring* from the scrolled paper. Explain that you will celebrate your commitment to your *Constitution* by having everyone "ratify it" or sign it. Now announce, "All those who can commit to our *Constitution* should say Yea." YEA! Or use another cheer if you've developed one.
- One by one have students come up to sign the *Constitution of Caring*. (If you have a camera, take photos of students signing.)
- Have students individually fill out and decorate their own *Don't Laugh at Me Constitution of Caring* pledges.

Plan a Community-wide Event (15 minutes)

- Brainstorm with students how to celebrate all the ways your classroom/school has improved since *Don't Laugh at Me* through a school or community-wide event or assembly. Make this a student-driven and -designed event! Some ideas you might wish to incorporate

include: Plan a multimedia presentation (music, art, skits, drama, videos, etc.) showing the Children's Conscious Acts of Caring artwork and other creations produced in the program synchronized to music. Have your chorus/band perform the songs from the "Don't Laugh at Me" CD or other appropriate songs. Do a few activities or skits from this guide with the attendees. Have attendees also sign and ratify your *Constitution of Caring*.

- Some important elements to remember when planning your event are:
 - Schedule it for the evening or another time when parents and others can attend.
 - Invite police, community activists, elders, the media, the faith-based community, politicians, etc. You can ask these community leaders and representatives to participate in the event directly by having them fill out their own pledges in advance describing concrete actions they will take to support spreading *Don't Laugh at Me* throughout your community. Incorporate these pledges into your event. Have a few community representatives read or tell about their pledges!
- Create a timeline and workplan, assigning students in small groups to various tasks. (Note: This step most likely will need to be done in another class period to accommodate involvement of your school administration in scheduling the event.)

Close Together (5 minutes)

- Do a go-round in which students complete the following statement: "The thing that I'm most proud of about my accomplishments in *Don't Laugh at Me* is . . ."
- (Optional) Sing "If I Had a Hammer" with the song CD.

Share Your *Constitution of Caring* with the Community and Elected Officials

- Send a copy of your signed *Constitution of Caring* to a local elected official of your choosing: a council person, a mayor, a governor, and/or a state senator. Optionally, include copies of students' pledges.
- Post your Children's Conscious Acts of Caring on the *Don't Laugh at Me* website at www.dontlaugh.org. See what other students in other classrooms are doing to make their schools and communities a better place. Is there a project or another school's campaign with which you would like to join?
- Additionally, join schools across the country in the campaign to bring national attention to your acts of caring. Bundle together all the individual students' pledges and any photos you've taken of the signing and place them, along with your scrolled and signed *Constitution of Caring*, in a tube or box that is colorfully decorated by the students. Send your box to the President of the United States, White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, DC 20500. The goal is to encourage the President and other important elected officials to support efforts to assure that our schools, communities, and camps are safe and free of taunting, ridicule, bullying, and violence. Thank you and your students for your commitment and leadership in addressing this important local and national issue!

Our Constitution of Caring

(Note: This is a suggested form and language for your *Constitution of Caring*. Feel free to work with students to create your own *Constitution of Caring*.)

The students, teachers, and staff of _____ school or classroom hereby sign our names on this document in order to affirm our commitment to pursuing the dream for young people, both in and out of school, of a way of life and being together that is loving, nurturing, and respectful.

All those who sign this constitution pledge to do our utmost to uphold the principles and pursue the actions that are listed below to help sustain _____ school or classroom as a Ridicule-Free Zone: a place of compassion, tolerance, and respect.

Our Articles of Caring

(List those agreements that you reached to create your Ridicule-Free Zone.)

Name

Address

Don't Laugh at Me

Constitution of Caring Pledge

Name _____ City and State _____

Age (optional) _____ School _____

student

teacher

staff member

I promise to

My Conscious Act(s) of Caring

Please join us, Mr. President and lawmakers, to help assure that our schools, communities, and camps are safe, respectful places, free of taunting, ridicule, bullying, and violence.

GRADUATION

You Are Powerful, We Are More Powerful Together

Students celebrate their successes in the *Don't Laugh at Me* project.

Objectives

- To celebrate successes in the *Don't Laugh at Me* project
- To identify the qualities necessary to resist ridicule, teasing, prejudice, and hurtful behaviors
- To commit to the ongoing success of the Ridicule-Free Zone

Materials

- Large ball of strong yarn or string
- (Optional) Stuffed planet Earth (like Hugg-a-Planet) or a Nerf ball
- A symbol students bring from home, which they are willing to give away, that represents something they promise to carry into the future
- The “Don't Laugh at Me” song CD

Gather Together: Play Human Web (10 minutes)

- Begin by holding one end of the ball of string. Then say: “My wish for the world today is _____.” (It doesn't have to be one word—it can be a short statement.) Then, still holding one end of the string, toss the ball to a student across from you in the circle, who will catch the ball (grabbing onto the string with one hand and the ball with the other). This student will then share his wish. He then tosses the ball to another student across the circle, and so on, until you have created a spider's web within the circle. Remind students to hold onto the string when throwing the ball. (It's common to be tempted to release the string when you throw the ball, so your reminders are helpful.)
- While everyone holds the string, ask for a few volunteers to share why being connected like a spider's web might help us accomplish all the wishes we just shared. Try to bounce a soft ball or globe on the web. Ask, “What do you think would happen if one of us drops her string?” (Allow volunteers from the inner circle to answer.) Say, “Let's try it.” Have one volunteer drop her string, then another and another. “See how quickly the web falls apart when even one of us is left out or doesn't do our part?”
- Ask, “Do you think we could hold up the globe now?” Try bouncing the Earth ball on the web again. Summarize: “Everyone in this classroom is important and powerful. We need all of us, working together, to make the world a better place.”

Brainstorm: Next Steps (20 minutes)

- Summarize *The Wizard of Oz* to students: “Some of you have probably seen the movie *The Wizard of Oz*. In it, Dorothy and her friends go to the great and powerful Wizard of Oz in hopes of being given qualities that they think they do not have. Dorothy wants to go home. The Tin Man wants a heart so that he can love. The Cowardly Lion wants courage. And the Scarecrow wants a brain for solving problems. But it turns out they already had what they wanted right inside them.”
- “Today I want you to think about the qualities YOU want to carry on that you've learned about in *Don't Laugh at Me*. What are the things that you already have right inside you that will help you to keep being caring and kind?” (Have students turn to a neighbor to share.) Ask for a few volunteers to share with the large group.

- Brainstorm: “How might we go further with *Don’t Laugh at Me*, now that we’re finished with the activities in this guide?” (Explain that there are other programs available with more activities like this. Students can become peer mediators, etc.) “What rituals from the project might we continue after the project ends?” (See “Next Steps” in each chapter for some ideas.)

Closing Ceremony: Promises Give-Away (15 minutes)

- Invite students to bring a symbol that represents their promise for carrying on *Don’t Laugh at Me* (and that they are ready to give away to someone else) to the center of a circle. Using the “Don’t Laugh at Me” music, have students hold hands in a circle and move around the gifts. When the music stops, students will pick up whatever gift is closest to them. Each student then finds the person who received his or her gift and describes what it means. The recipients should be sure to thank the givers. Since the givers and recipients will not be reciprocal, students will need to do two rounds of sharing in order for all of them to talk to their gift givers.
- Ask for volunteers to share what their gift means to them.
- Thank all the students for their hard work throughout the program and for the gift of their promises.
- Sing “Light One Candle” with the song CD.

A Closing Word

Congratulations on completing the first leg of your journey toward a more caring future for our students. We wish you continued success and offer you our blessings and encouragement as you extend this work. Together with your students, celebrate your many accomplishments from *Don’t Laugh at Me*.



APPENDIX A

Lessons from Research on Ridicule

by Larry K. Brendtro, Ph.D.

Each day, hundreds of thousands of students are teased and taunted by their peers. When verbal aggression escalates into physical violence, most schools respond decisively. But the vast majority of school bullying is not overt violence but covert psychological warfare. It comes in the form of social ridicule, psychological intimidation, and group rejection.

Teasing can be innocent fun, and all of us participate in the good-natured banter that is a bond of friendship. But when teasing mutates into ridicule it is no longer play. Neither is ridicule a natural social learning experience preparing children to better cope with a rough and tumble world. Ridicule is a powerful social ritual designed to demean certain individuals and set them apart from others. Those so stigmatized become what anthropologists call “polluted persons,” and they are made to seem less than human. This devalued status gives license for members of the in-group to abuse this outcast with impunity.

Ridicule is a variant of bullying behavior. Like physical bullying, psychological bullying come in many nuances and forms. It can include mocking, insults, and “humor” designed to make the person an object of scorn or derision. Insults can target a person’s clothing, appearance, or personality and demean family, race, gender, sexual orientation, or values. Ridicule doesn’t even require words, as dirty looks and gestures will accomplish the same ends. All of these have in common that they cross the line from playful teasing to disrespect and demean a person.

Peer victimization is one of the most overlooked contemporary educational problems. Even in schools with abundant resources, twenty-five percent of students report that one of their most serious concerns was fear of bullies. Yet many elementary students say their teachers seldom communicate with them about bullying. Most young people quickly discover that they cannot rely on teachers to protect them from bullies. In fact, much bullying behavior occurs in or around school, but outside the immediate surveillance of teachers. Victims of school bullying tell us they navigate through the school with an internal map of unsafe zones such as bathrooms, the playground, and the route to school. Fearful young people who try to keep close to teachers only risk peer ridicule as teacher’s pet.

Subtle bullying can occur since some forms of ridicule are calculated to avoid detection, such as when peers roll their eyes in derision or participate in the social banishment of a fellow student. Sometimes teachers spot these behaviors but choose to ignore them in the hope that young people will learn to handle these problems independently. In 400 hours of video-documented episodes of bullying at school, teachers noticed and intervened in only one out of every twenty-five episodes (Marano, 1995).

Research on Bullies, Victims, and Bystanders

Until recently, most researchers assumed that physical aggression was the most damaging form of bullying behavior. Certainly physical abuse is intolerable, which is why schools have zero-tolerance policies for such acts. However, in the last decade, we have learned that the long-term effects of ridicule can be equally damaging to victims. Hoover (2000) reviewed a series of studies in which students reported that teasing was the most prevalent type of bullying they experienced. This verbal ridicule and harassment was often as devastating as periodic physical abuse by peers.

Since ridicule is a direct attack on a child’s sense of self-worth, if it persists it can have life-altering effects. The ridicule experience evokes strong negative emotions of shame, anxiety, and fear. Most young people also become angry at their mistreatment but feel helpless to stop it. Some conclude that they are worthless individuals who must deserve their rejection. Instead of recognizing that

others are treating them badly, they see themselves as bad and shameful persons. When continual ridicule overwhelms a child's ability to hope and cope, a crisis ensues. The person may become depressed and self-destructive or in isolated circumstances strike out at others. In many dramatic cases of school violence, persons who see themselves as victims of ridicule acquire weapons or anti-social allies and take vengeance on their victimizers.

Bullying has an entirely different effect on the provocateur. While being the target of bullying erodes self-esteem, many bullies feel powerful and actually build an inflated sense of self-esteem by putting others down. Bullying research suggests that many bullies have lots of confidence, enjoy dominating others, and are comfortable with aggression. They are also unlikely to feel much empathy for their victims. Usually this is not because they are devoid of conscience, but they learn to justify their behavior with thinking errors. They give demeaning labels to victims ("he's a wimp") minimize the hurting impact of their own behavior ("we were just kidding"), and blame the victim ("he had it coming"). By using these cognitive distortions, a youth can silence the voice of conscience (Gibbs, Potter, Goldstein, and Brendtro, 1998). Changing these persons will involve nurturing their empathy for others and challenging their distorted thinking.

While "bullying" is a term with male overtones, girls become very proficient bullies, notably in the realm of ridicule. Mary Pipher (1996) notes that traditional role expectations restrict overt aggression by girls, who then rely on ridicule and character assassination. They mock peers who don't have the right clothes or fail to conform to cultural stereotypes about femininity. A girl might punish a peer by calling her on the phone to tell her there is going to be a party, but she is not invited. They scapegoat other girls for failing to achieve the same impossible goals they are unable to achieve. Sometimes they even pick on a particular girl who seems relatively happy in order to make her life as miserable as theirs.

When students don't feel socially and physically safe, the school climate is rife with ranking and ridicule. In such environments, even ordinary students are capable of extraordinary meanness. Cliques are formed with membership dictated by race, style of clothing, athletic prowess, or other superficial traits which Polly Nichols (1996) calls "lookism." Joining these alliances gives students a sense of superiority and belonging at the expense of those who are banished.

The Important Role of Bystanders

Research shows that a small percentage of students, perhaps less than 10 percent, are active bullies, and a similar number are perpetual victims. But when bullying is studied in greater detail, it becomes clear that the most powerful role in the drama is played by the audience. Some become the cheering section for bullies, while a silent majority of bystanders enable bullying by their silence.

Although students who observe bullying may feel some empathy for the victim, they seldom step forward to defend this peer lest they also become targets for ridicule. This failure to help is particularly tragic since a student who knows he or she has at least one friend can better endure the adversity of rejection. But changing the school climate requires more than recruiting a few brave young people who will be buddies with rejected students. Indeed, bullying behavior can best be extinguished when it comes to be seen as repugnant to the silent majority.

Creating Caring Communities

Even with the most difficult populations of students, the quality of the youth peer cultures is largely determined by adult behavior (Gold and Osgood, 1992).

A caring community can only exist when helping becomes fashionable and hurting of any kind becomes unacceptable to a preponderance of students. This might seem overly idealistic in a world where ridicule is prime-time entertainment; where bullying is modeled by athletes, street culture, and often in the home. Still, there is growing evidence that concentrated interventions like the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP) arrest the trajectory towards hostile

thinking and aggression. Teacher ratings of RCCP show significant student gains in emotional control, prosocial behavior, and academic achievement (Aber, Brown, and Henrich, 1999; Lantieri, 2000). Our own research on alternative schools for highly anti-social students shows that caring environments can transform peer ridicule into peer concern and rekindle motivation for learning (Brendtro, Ness, and Mitchell, 2000).

Dr. Larry Brendtro is president of Reclaiming Youth International (www.reclaiming.com), a non-profit educational organization that operates the Black Hills Seminars and provides world-wide training with professionals serving students at risk. Dr. Brendtro has had forty years experience as a teacher, psychologist, and educational leader and served on the faculties of the University of Illinois, Ohio State University, and Augustana College. His numerous publications include the book Reclaiming Youth at Risk and he is co-editor of the journal Reclaiming Children and Youth.

APPENDIX B

Important Facilitation Guidelines*

Promoting the Healthy Expression of Feelings

Young people will learn as much—if not more—about the healthy expression of feelings from how you manage your classroom as from the direct skill instruction provided in this unit. If young people are given ample opportunity to practice responding to one another's feelings in a caring way, they will eventually require little prompting from you. Slowly, the shift to a more caring culture will become apparent in your classroom.

To achieve this shift, it's important to model the skills you hope young people to acquire in everything you do—from how you facilitate your daily lesson plans to how you respond to students' feelings during an intervention to how you yourself manage and express your feelings. So, throughout your day, create and seize opportunities to support young people's healthy expression of feelings.

- **Build a feelings vocabulary:** Take every opportunity to help young people learn new words to describe their feelings. Make sure you give words for positive emotions at least twice as often as negative ones.
- **Encourage discussion about feelings:** Use class meetings to talk about feelings. Check in with students in a go-round, asking each student to say one word that describes how they are feeling that day (or to pick from a stack of Feelings Cards made on index cards for this purpose).
- **Model:** Give young people permission to express their feelings by naming your own feelings during the day.
- **Promote reflection:** Use the Daily Dialogue at the end of each activity to help children reflect on and share their feelings about that particular topic.
- **Assure:** Look for opportunities to assure students that whatever feelings they bring to the group are okay. For example, when one student says to another who is crying, “Don't be a baby,” you can take the opportunity to affirm that crying is okay—regardless of our age or gender.
- **Create a sense of safety:** Together with the students, create agreements for making your classroom a place of safety for every one. This includes creating confidentiality policies, including a right to pass if something is too private, and discussing the limits of teasing and other potentially hurtful behaviors.
- **Support empathy:** Encourage young people to look for physical cues that will help them identify how another person is feeling. Then help them explore the reason behind the feeling and think of ways they can help.
- **Infuse feelings reflection into your curriculum:** Look for opportunities when studying literature, history, social studies, etc., to discuss feelings with young people and connect them to their own lives. Ask: “What do you think that character in a book (from history, etc.) is feeling about that (event, conflict, relationship, etc.)? Have you ever felt that way? How might those feelings have influenced his behavior? How have similar feelings influenced your behavior?”
- **Give girls extra encouragement:** Help girls stand up for themselves, speak out, and to value their own needs and feelings as much as someone else's.

Encouraging Caring, Compassion, and Cooperation

Provide opportunities for positive social interactions: Community-building activities such as the gatherings and closings of each of the lessons in this guide give students an opportunity to learn about each other in safe, nonthreatening, and fun ways. These types of activities also build mutual respect and caring and reduce exclusion.

Match pairs and groups: When forming pairs or small groups, try to match young people who otherwise might not have much exposure to one another. Avoid groups where there are well-established friendships or common bonds between most but not all students.

Evaluate your routines: You can use classroom routines to create opportunities for young people to work cooperatively in small groups. Ask yourself: Are there certain activities that could be done in small groups or pairs? Can students take turns with certain tasks, such as distributing materials?

Give positive feedback: Look for opportunities throughout the day to comment positively on examples of cooperation as you see and hear them.

Name the problem: Discuss behaviors that make cooperation difficult—quitting, interrupting, disagreeing, arguing, etc. Also help young people identify behaviors conducive to cooperation.

Gradually allow more autonomy: Include young people in decision making and problem solving that affects them. As youth develop problem-solving skills, gradually provide leadership opportunities.

Set clear limits and expectations: Clear expectations help create a sense of safety for oftentimes self-critical and unsure young people.

Teaching Creative Conflict Resolution

Practice, practice, practice: Allow some time for role-playing or games when young people aren't involved in a problem and can focus on how the techniques work. Be explicit with students that learning these skills takes time and practice. And be forgiving and gentle when students slip into old behaviors. Correct the mistaken behavior and then give students an opportunity to try it the right way. Positively reinforce good behavior.

Model skill behavior: Young people are tuned into the messages that you send through your own dealings with conflict. Model the skills and behaviors you wish your students to learn.

Explore identities: Journal writing, role-plays, and small group discussions give students opportunities to explore their thoughts, feelings, and preferences. Students will be more likely to understand and accept others' points of view if they have practiced listening to varied thoughts and opinions.

Turn the problem over: Whenever possible, turn the problem over to the group.

Give starters: Try giving starters to help children talk about conflicts as they arise. Be neutral and nonblaming. For example, "I saw that you were fighting with (insert name) at lunch."

Give time to cool off: Don't try to solve problems when emotions are still running high. Give everyone a chance to cool off first.

Promote creative solutions: Help young people find creative solutions. Ask questions like "What could you do if this happens again?" or "What could you do now to make this situation better?"

Bring the conflict to closure: Many conflicts are over before an adult has the chance to intervene. Young people may still need to learn from the experience, however. To bring a conflict to closure, bring the participants together and ask the following questions: What happened? How do you feel? What could you do if this happens again? What could you do now to make things better?

Evaluate solutions: During problem solving, have students decide whether all the parties in a conflict would be happy with suggested resolutions. Also, after a predetermined interval, check in on how the solution is working and suggest adjustments if needed.

Creating an Anti-Bias Classroom

Foster inclusion: To help foster a sense of inclusion, take time to celebrate each student as an important member of the group. By discussing ways that friends may be alike or different, you can create an atmosphere of tolerance rather than conformity.

Provide appropriate materials: Post pictures around the room that depict young people from diverse backgrounds interacting. Some sources for these kinds of images include: UNICEF, the Children’s Defense Fund, the National Black Child Development Institute; magazines such as *Indian Artist*, *Ebony*, and *Latino Today*. Images of people doing everyday things make diversity more meaningful to young people than photos featuring traditional costumes or exotic settings, which may reinforce stereotypes (“All Japanese girls wear kimonos”). It’s also helpful to display pictures showing people with a variety of body types or different physical abilities.

Create diverse groups: Make a conscious effort to set up small groups that integrate children across racial, ethnic, and gender lines. Research shows that working in a small, cooperative group is a powerful way for young people to overcome any fears or stereotypes they have already formed.

Acknowledge differences: Neutral observation helps young people see differences in a nonjudgmental light. The more children see that you are comfortable with differences and that you talk about them with ease and respect, the more they will be able to accept differences. Also point out similarities.

Intervene to prevent exclusion: Be prepared to intervene when you hear young people making comments that exclude someone on the basis of gender, race, or physical ability. Instead of changing the subject or tackling it head-on, try asking why a student made that comment. For example: “I wonder why you think girls can’t be firefighters?” Help children see that the source of their thinking is misinformation and support them in finding a new way to look at their assumptions.

Take a stand against bias: Young people who use offensive language or gestures should not be reprimanded for their behavior. Instead, help them to see why such acts are hurtful. For example, model the skills learned in the Resolving Conflict Creatively unit. Use “I” messages: “I feel bad when you call him that name because I know it hurts him.” Invite perspective-taking: “If someone said something like that about you, how would you feel?”

Extend thinking: Help young people become aware of their prejudices and see that stereotypical thinking is based on misinformation.

Provide varied opportunities: Young adolescents need help finding out what they are good at doing. They can be painfully self-conscious and self-critical. Therefore, they require frequent and varied opportunities to explore competence and achievement. And they are more likely to be tolerant of differences if they experience an environment where different abilities are clearly valued.

Discussing Sensitive and Controversial Issues*

Plan Ahead

- Become comfortable with the issue(s) yourself. Identify and clarify your own feelings and try to recall concrete incidents from your own experience that might help your students understand the issue(s) at hand more clearly.
- Approach discussion as a curious learner yourself. If you are relaxed and open to hearing different perspectives, your students will be more likely to do the same.

Create a Comfortable Climate

- Students will be more comfortable discussing sensitive issues when they can see each other face to face. Consider rearranging the room or moving to another setting to accomplish this.
- Assure students that the goal of these discussions is to learn from one another, to recognize similarities and differences, and to discover common principles such as respect and fairness.

Establish Ground Rules

- Help your students develop some guiding principles for discussions. This will enable everyone to participate freely and safely.

Don't Dominate the Discussion

- Remember that your role is to listen, interpret, and prompt, not to judge. Refrain from telling and preaching.
- Give students time to reflect on ideas that are raised in the discussion; don't jump in with a comment to fill an awkward silence.
- Encourage students to think about comments by asking questions such as: What do you base your opinion on? What do you think would change that? Why might someone believe this?

What If . . .

- Someone breaks the ground rules? Stop the discussion and repeat the rules.
- The debate becomes heated? Remind students that the goal is to learn and grow in a spirit of collaboration, not to win an argument.
- Someone introduces false information or stereotypes? Present the facts without judgment. Remind students that while each person has a right to his or her opinion, all views should be supported with factual evidence. If there is a disagreement over facts, challenge students to find evidence for their positions.

Closure/Debriefing

- Provide opportunities for students to reflect on what they learned from a discussion. Ask: What discoveries did we make today? Do we share some common values? How do we differ?
- Encourage social action. Elicit ideas for concrete follow-up actions such as cleaning racist graffiti from a public site, writing a reasoned opinion article for a newspaper, or designing posters with messages about tolerance.
- Remind students that you will have discussions about these topics throughout the year so they will have additional opportunities to learn from one another and examine and clarify their beliefs.

* Adapted with permission from "Talk about It," in the Fall 1992 issue of *Teaching Tolerance*, a publication of the Southern Poverty Law Center.

APPENDIX C

For More Information

For curricula, training, and other support in extending or facilitating the *Don't Laugh at Me* project contact:

Educators for Social Responsibility, 23 Garden Street, Cambridge, MA 02138, 617-492-1764, 800-370-2515, www.esrnational.org

The Resolving Conflict Creatively Program National Center, 40 Exchange Place, New York, NY 10005, 212-509-0022, www.esrnational.org/about-rccp.html

The Southern Poverty Law Center, 400 Washington Avenue, Montgomery, AL 36104, www.teachingtolerance.org

The Character Education Partnership, 918 16th Street, NW, Suite 501, Washington, DC 20006, 202-296-7743, www.character.org

The Center for Advancement of Ethics and Character at Boston University, 605 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02215, 617-353-3262, education.bu.edu/charactered

Challenge Day, P.O. Box 2208, Martinez, CA 94553, 925-957-0234.

Facing History and Ourselves, 16 Hurd Road, Brookline, MA 02445-6919, 617-232-1595

CHARACTERPlus, 8225 Florissant Road, St. Louis, MO 63121, 314-516-4523 or 314-872-8282, 800-478-5684, info.csd.org/staffdev/chared/characterplus.html

Community Celebration of Place, Box 581601, Minneapolis, MN 55458-1601, 612-874-2455, 612-874-2422, long@tt.net

The Stone Center, Wellesley College, 106 Central Street, Wellesley, MA 02481, 781-283-2500, www.wellesley.edu

Additional Resources

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- Pirtle, S. *Linking Up*. Cambridge, MA: Educators for Social Responsibility, 1998.

Don't Laugh at Me

Words and Music by
Steve Seskin & Allen Shamblin

(capo on 2nd fret)



Verses 1-3



1. I'm a lit-tle boy with glasses, the one they call a geek. a lit-tle girl who never smiles cause I've got
3. I'm the kid on ev'ry playground who's always chosen last. a single teen-age mother tryin' to
beggar on the cor-ner you've passed me on the street and I wouldn't be out here beggin' if I



4
braces on my teeth and I know how it feels _____ to cry my-self to sleep. _____
over-come my past you don't have to be my friend _____ but is that too much to ask? _____
had enough to eat and don't think I don't notice _____ that our eyes never meet. _____

1.

2., 3. Chorus



8
2. I'm that Don't laugh _____ at me _____ don't call me names _____ don't get your plea-



12
_____ sure from my pain. _____ In God's eyes _____ we're all _____ the same. _____ some-day _____ we'll all _____



16
_____ have perfect wings. _____ Don't laugh at me. _____
To Coda *D.C.*

2. Bridge



22
I'm fat _____ I'm thin _____ I'm short _____ I'm tall _____ I'm deaf _____ I'm blind _____ Hey aren't we all?
D.S. al Coda

Coda



27
Don't laugh _____ at me. _____
Fine

piano accompaniment

Don't Laugh at Me

Words and Music by
Steve Seskin & Allen Shamblin
Arranged by Robert DeCormier

Introduction

Musical notation for the introduction, featuring a treble and bass clef in 4/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The melody is in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. Chords are indicated above the staff: D, Bm, G, and A. The piece ends with a repeat sign and a first ending bracket labeled '1. I'm a'.

Verse 1

Musical notation for the first line of Verse 1. Chords: D, Bm. Lyrics: little boy with glasses, the one they call a geek. A little girl who never smiles 'cause I've got braces on my teeth and

Musical notation for the second line of Verse 1. Chords: G, D/F#, Em7, A. Lyrics: I know how it feels to cry myself to sleep. 2. I'm that

Verses 2 & 3

Musical notation for the first line of Verses 2 & 3. Chords: D, Bm. Lyrics: kid on ev'ry playground who's always chosen last, a single teenage mother tryin' to overcome my past. You don't
3. beggar on the corner you've passed me on the street, and I wouldn't be out here beggin' if I had enough to eat And

Musical notation for the second line of Verses 2 & 3. Chords: G, D/F#, Em7, A. Lyrics: have to be my friend, but is it too much to ask? Don't laugh at me
don't think I don't notice that our eyes never meet

Chorus

Musical notation for the chorus. Chords: D, Bm, G, A. Lyrics: Don't call me names, Don't get your pleasure from my pain. In God's eyes,

Don't Laugh At Me, p.2

25

D **Bm** **G** **A** *To Coda*

we're all the same. Someday we'll all have perfect wings. Don't laugh at me.

29

1. **D** **Bm** **G** **A**

3. I'm the

33

2. **D** **Bm** **G** **D/F#** **Em7** **A** **Bridge**

I'm fat, I'm thin, I'm short, I'm tall, I'm deaf,

37

G **D/F#** **Em7** **A**

rit. *a tempo* *D.S. al Coda*

I'm blind, hey, aren't we all. Don't laugh at me

40

Coda **D** **Bm** **G** **A** **Dmaj7** *Fine*

rit.

Don't laugh at me

vocal

Don't Laugh at Me

Words and Music by
Steve Seskin & Allen Shamblin
Arranged by Robert DeCormier

Introduction D Bm G A (vocals 2nd time only)

soprano

alto

1. I'm a

Verse 1 D Bm

little boy with glasses, the one they call a geek a little girl who never smiles cause I've got braces on my teeth, and

5

G D/F# Em7 A

I know how it feels to cry my-self to sleep.

9

2. I'm that

Verse 2 D Bm

ooh

ooh

kid on ev'ry playground who's always chosen last, a single teenage mother tryin' to over-come my past. You don't

13

G D/F# Em7 A *♩* (a tempo)

aah

Don't laugh at me

have to be my friend, but is that too much to ask?

17

Don't Laugh At Me, p.2

1st Chorus D Bm G A

Don't get your plea—sure from my pain In God's eyes

21 Don't call me names

D Bm G A

we're all the same someday we'll all have perfect wings Don't laugh at me

25

D To Coda Bm G A

3. I'm the

29

Verse 3 D Bm

beggar on the corner and I wouldn't be out here beggin' and

33 you've passed me on the street if I had e-nough to eat

G D/F# Em7 A

don't think I don't notice

37 that our eyes never meet. Don't laugh at me

Don't Laugh at Me, p.3

2nd Chorus D Bm G A

41

Don't call me names Don't get your pleasure from my pain In God's eyes

D Bm G A

45

we're all the same someday we'll all have perfect wings Don't laugh at me

Bridge D Bm G D/F#

49

I'm fat I'm thin I'm short

Em7 A G D/F# Em7 A D.S. al Coda

52

I'm tall I'm deaf I'm blind Hey aren't we all.

Rit.

⊕ Coda Bm G A Dmaj7 Fine

55

Don't laugh at me.

Rit.



This Don't Laugh At Me Teachers Guide is dedicated to the Harris Foundation, whose early financial support was crucial to its development and creation.

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