



THE INSTITUTE FOR HUMANE EDUCATION
P.O. BOX 260
SURRY, MAINE 04684
207.667.1025
info@HumaneEducation.org
www.HumaneEducation.org

DARE TO BE DIFFERENT

Grades: 3-5

Time: 1-2 days

Materials: White/black board; markers/chalk; definition(s) of “prejudice”; brief story demonstrating prejudice in action (see below); variety of “weird” clothing, costuming and accessories (see below)

Relevant Subjects: Social Studies and Language Arts

Pertinent Information The first four sections of this activity should be done at the beginning of the day, or at least before lunch and recess time. Be sure to inform other teachers and administrators about this activity beforehand, to avoid any confusion or unnecessary discipline.

1. Using a graphic organizer on the board (some good choices are a Venn diagram or a Double Bubble), discuss with students ways that they are different from each other and ways that they are the same. (Guide students to list differences that relate to ethnic backgrounds, race, religion, gender, and lifestyle.)
2. Ask students to carefully look at the list of differences. Ask them to think about a time when they have been treated differently because of these differences. Invite volunteers to share their examples with the class.
3. Introduce the word “prejudice” to the students. Discuss with students the meaning of prejudice and how it means to “pre-judge” another person. Ask students to think about and discuss how some of the differences that were listed on the board could lead a person to pre-judge another person. How might a person who is prejudiced treat another person? What feelings might be involved?
4. Share the following story (or a similar one) with students:

Kim was a student in Mrs. Robert's fourth grade class. She had a lot of friends, but her best friend was Deja. Deja and Kim had been friends since Kindergarten and played

together every day. One day Kim came in to class wearing her brand new glasses. She was really nervous that the other kids would make fun of her just because she had glasses. However, she knew that her best friend, Deja, would never make fun of her. All morning, Kim noticed that a lot of the kids were staring at her and hardly anyone was talking to her. At recess, her best friend Deja didn't want to play with her. Deja said that she wanted to play with some other girls instead. Kim spent the rest of the recess time alone.

After reading the story, ask the students what part of this story showed prejudice. Discuss what each character felt and why the students think that Deja decided not to play with Kim anymore. Did the other girls have an influence on Deja's decision? Was Deja's choice fair? What were some other choices that Deja and Kim could have made?

5. Let students know that today your whole class is going to feel what it is like to stand out because of differences. Bring out a variety of clothing, costuming and accessories, such as clown noses, big sunglasses, funny shoes, wigs, shirts with holes in them, eye patches, etc. Let students know that they are going to dare to be different today. Encourage students to change their appearance so that they look different. Students may put on a wig, roll up their jeans, put their shirt on backwards, wear their socks on the outside of their shoes -- anything that will make them stand out to the rest of the school. Allow students to remain like this for one entire day. (You may wish to do the first four sections of this activity on one day and this part of the lesson on a second day.)

Note: Some students may be uncomfortable with this activity and that's okay! Students should be encouraged, not forced, to participate. Even if some students do not participate, they will still find value in seeing their peers go through the day with their different appearances.

6. After the experience, have students write down a recounting of their day. Encourage them to write about their feelings, comments that they heard from others, what was hard/easy, etc. Invite students to share their experiences with the class.

Extension:

Follow up this lesson with activities that show the connections between their experiences with prejudice and the real-life situations that occur on a daily basis. Also, the discussion of what positive choices can be made in lieu of prejudiced actions is essential in the days after this lesson.

Activity by: Karen Patterson (M.Ed. Student)