

Lemons: An Activity on Generalizations and Stereotypes For Elementary School Children

Rationale:

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The aim of this activity is for students to understand the relationship between generalizations and stereotypes.

Materials & Requirements:

One lemon for every four to five students for Part I of this activity, plus a different fruit (banana, kiwi, etc.), for each small group for Part II. Room with enough space to divide the participants into smaller groups in which they can speak without disturbing other groups.

Directions:

1. Put all lemons out on a table where everyone can see them. Ask participants to describe the characteristics of a lemon (e.g., round, yellow, sour). Write their responses on the board.
2. Divide participants into small groups and give each group a lemon.
3. Ask the participants to get to know their lemon by studying it and noticing all its special characteristics. Tell them not to mark or alter their lemon in any way. They can give their lemon a name, create a story about their lemon, and start to see it as an individual.
4. After a short time, have someone from each group tell the large group about their lemon.
5. Collect all the lemons and mix them up. Ask one person from each group to come up and pick out "their" lemon. (This usually isn't a problem since they've gotten to know their lemon as unique and individual.)

Ask the Following Discussion Questions:

Why was it so easy for you to identify your lemon?

Have you ever had certain ideas about someone that changed once you got to know him or her? (These ideas may be stereotypes.)

Has someone ever had certain ideas about you that changed once they got to know you?

Why can stereotypes be harmful?

6. Distribute a different fruit to each group, a kiwi, a papaya, a pomegranate, a banana, etc.

7. Tell the participants that some new fruits will be moving into the formerly monocultural Lemon Land. Each group will have five minutes to decide whether to accept or reject the "outsider" fruit. They are to create a story/role play about their decision which will be presented to the whole group.

8. Each group will have two minutes to present their skit or rationale for accepting or rejecting their "foreign" fruit.

Ask the Following Discussion Questions:

- What did you decide about letting the "outsider" fruit in?

- Have you ever been a kiwi in a lemon world? How did you handle it?
- Who are the "outsiders" in your school? Community? Home?
- What are some of the ways we make people feel unwelcome? How can we help people feel welcome in our community?

Activities For the Class Room

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