



What Are Our Experiences?

We Are Not Alone

OBJECTIVES

- To build group trust and rapport
- To enable students to feel that they share many experiences with each other
- To visualize and put to words the feelings we may hold inside and what we show to others

MATERIALS

- White Board
- Index Cards
- Pencils/Crayons

Session Outline

What Are We Doing Today?

We are finding out that people share common experiences and social challenges.

Our genius ideas from last time

Time: 10 minutes

Last session we talked about a lot of things, but let's start off with the guidelines you came up with. If you look on the board, you can see that I've written, "Guidelines for Me" and "Guidelines for Each Other." I would like you to write down the guidelines you remember that you want me to follow and the guidelines you want all of us to follow. Are there any you would like to add?

Teacher note: Remember to remind the students about confidentiality.

Now that we remember our guidelines, I want to know about the Carry It With You activity I asked you to do. Take out your drawings of dignity and respect. What do you like about your drawings? Are there any changes you would like to make? What other ideas have you thought about from the last session?

Activity: Think About It: No Assumptions

Time: 15 minutes

Purpose: To create a safe space for students to share their experiences

Teacher says:

We are going to do a quick activity that will give us some knowledge about each other's experiences while letting people keep those experiences private.

Instructions: *Take out a piece of paper and a pencil or pen. I am going to read out loud the following statements. Every time I say something that you have experienced, write down a slash or a tally. If you're worried about people looking at which ones you mark, feel free to cover your paper with your other hand. After I read all the statements I am going to collect all the papers and total the marks and then put those totals on the board for you to see.*

Here are the questions:

Have you ever....

- Been unfairly blamed for something?
- Been made fun of about something you feel bad about and the person didn't stop even though they knew you hated it?
- Felt like you were being forced to choose between friends?
- Needed to apologize to someone?
- Been left out of something and it hurt your feelings?
- Told a secret you shouldn't have?
- Teased about the way you look?
- Been so angry that you wanted to explode but didn't say anything?
- Been so worried about going to school that you didn't want to go?
- Been in a competitive situation and someone made you feel bad about losing?
- Felt like you needed a break from a friend because they weren't being a good friend?

Debrief

How did it feel to write down those marks?

How does it feel to know there are other people here who may have answered yes to the same statements?

How are you feeling right now? Remember we talked about crossing our arms and being uncomfortable? Remember if anyone feels too uncomfortable you can tell me after class but it's ok to feel uncomfortable if it means we are looking at things in a different way.

Takeaways

People in this room have had similar experiences.

You are not alone if you have struggled with a problem.

It's ok to feel bad or uncomfortable as long as we can express it some way like talking or drawing our feelings.

It can feel brave to admit hard situations you have experienced

Activity: Armor

Time: 20 minutes

Purpose: To process and put into words how students "choose" to present themselves versus how they may really be feeling.

Instructions:

We just admitted that sometimes we go to school with a lot going on but we don't show that to other people or we pretend we're fine when we really aren't. So we are going to think about and maybe draw why and how we do this. So maybe one way of thinking about it is everyone has their own personal armor they wear to get through their day.

Give each student a piece of 12" x 18" paper with a drawing of a shield on one side and a heart on the other side of the paper. Draw in pictures and/or words what you show people on the outside (the shield). On the back of the paper write what you don't show people (the heart).

Teacher says: *I am going to show you the one I did in preparation for our class today.*

Teacher shows their armor and heart to the class and explains the words they chose for each.

Debrief

- Would anyone like to share what they wrote for what they show they outside?
- Would anyone like to share what they wrote for what they show they on the inside?
- In general, what are the positives of wearing this armor?
In general, what are the negatives of wearing this armor?
- What parts of your armor or your heart are your most proud of?
- Are there any parts you would like to change?
- Are there any times when you take the armor off? When?
- Was your armor made overnight, or was it made over time?
What would happen if you showed the parts of yourself you usually keep hidden?

Takeaways

Everybody wears some form of armor.

Some share what's underneath; others keep it completely hidden.

There can be really good reasons why people hide parts of themselves or how they're feeling.

Other times, hiding feelings can make problems feel overwhelming and it's good to find someone who can help us.

Wrap Up

Time: 5 minutes

Lots of people have similar experiences

It can be hard to admit the feelings you have

Carry it With You

Between now and the next session, observe if you can feel when your armor comes on. How does that feel? Why does it come out?