



Just Kidding

Why Are We Really Laughing?

One of the more confusing yet common experiences for students is how teasing is used to describe a wide variety of behaviors. It can be very frustrating for students because they feel like there is an expectation that teasing is harmless and if it bothers them, there's something wrong with them. This session clarifies the difference between harmless teasing and using that term as a cover to get away with hurting people.

OBJECTIVES

- To further understand the armor image and how it connects to unwritten rules of conduct for boys and girls
- To create a definition of humor
- To define good, annoying, and bad teasing
- To affirm that people are entitled to their own feelings and perceptions, and that no one gets to decide how someone else feels

MATERIALS

- Whiteboard or flip chart
- Three signs, reading Strongly Agree, Agree With Both, and Strongly Disagree, placed in areas of the room that are as far apart as possible
- Paper and pencils
- Index cards
- Masking tape

Session Outline

What Are We Doing Today?

We are learning about the different kinds of teasing and the positives and negatives of friendships.

Our genius ideas from last time

Time: 10 minutes

Reproduce on the board the Act Like a Girl and Act Like a Boy Boxes the students created last class.

Say: *Last session we talked about the Act Like a Girl and Act Like a Boy Boxes. Did anyone see any examples of the boxes influencing people?*

Activity: Let's Draw Courage!

Time: 15 minutes

Purpose: Help students personally define courage

Teacher says:

Earlier we drew what dignity and respect look like. We are going to draw and think about another word in the same way. That word is courage. First, let's draw what courage looks like: And just like before I will do the exercise with you and we will share what we come up with.

Debrief

Are there patterns or similarities to what people drew?
What images or words stand out to you from other student's work?

Now we are going to add a word before courage. The word is "social" courage. What does "social" mean? Activities where people hang out with each other. Or we say someone is social when they like to be with other people.

When we put it in front of the word courage, it means that someone is willing to protect someone's dignity even if it means that other people around them, even their friends, won't like what they are doing.

So now let's draw social courage.

Activity: Defining Friendship

Time: 15 minutes

Purpose: To identify the positives and negatives of friendships

Using the following questions, generate a discussion about friendship. Write students' responses on the board. Designate a recorder (to scribe the answers) and a reporter (to share the answers aloud) for each group. Then have each group generate a list of answers in response to the questions below and compile them as a group on the board.

You also can have each student answer the questions individually on index cards, and then compile them as a group on the board.

- **Positive:** What do you like about your friendships?
- **Negative:** What don't you like about your friendships?

If the students say jealousy, competitiveness, or being judgmental on the negative side, ask them what they are jealous, competitive, or judgmental about. You'll find that it's usually about the same things: looks, clothes, popularity, friends, and sometimes grades.

Debrief

Once they have created their positive and negative friendship lists, and you've written their responses on the board or flip chart, ask the following questions:

- What have you noticed about the list you made?
- Is there a pattern to either side of the list?
- What do you think about any patterns you noticed?

Takeaways

People have their own concepts of the positive and negative sides of friendship, but there are also patterns that they share

Activity: What's Your Experience?

Time: 5 minutes

Purpose: To have students “own” their actions

Close your eyes (or put your head on the table) and raise your hand if you know someone who has done any of the things that are on the negative side of the list. Keep your hand up, open your eyes, and look around.

Close your eyes again and raise your hand if you yourself have done any of the things on the negative side of the list. Open your eyes and look around.

Debrief

- What did you learn, and what did you feel about doing that?
- What was the most uncomfortable part?
- What was the most surprising part?

Takeaways

Say: *What we just did when you raised your hands is what this program is all about—“owning up.” But it can be uncomfortable because it’s usually way easier to focus on the things that happen to us than on what we do to other people.*

Activity: Your Friendship Bill of Rights

Time: 10–15 minutes

Purpose: To have each student define the qualities of a good friend

I am going to give you your personal Friendship Bill of Rights (see Appendix E). On it, you’ll find three questions for you to answer. The first asks you to identify what, for you, are the most important characteristics someone should have in order to be a good friend. The second asks you to state how someone would treat you were you not to consider that friendship particularly strong or dependable. The third question asks you to think about the quality of your friendships: Do they measure up to what you say you need? Are you treating people according to what you say you value in a friendship?

Debrief/Takeaways

What did you learn about yourself from doing this exercise?

Activity: Three Corners Exercise

Time: 10 minutes

Purpose: To allow students to move around and begin thinking about the topics being covered in today's session

I've made three signs: Strongly Agree, Agree With Both, and Strongly Disagree. Notice that I've placed them in areas of the room that are as far apart as possible.

I'm going to read statements aloud, and when I do, I want each of you to think about the statement and then walk, without talking, to the corner you agree with.

After reading each statement, give students a few moments to get to their corners. Then ask students at "their" corner to discuss their opinion among themselves. After a few minutes ask a student from each group to report what people in the group said.

Statements:

- People are always happy when they laugh.
- When someone says, "No offense, but . . ." they really don't want to hurt your feelings.
- Boys think all gross jokes or comments are funny.
- You shouldn't take things too seriously.

Activity: Is This Funny?

Time: 10 minutes

Purpose: To break down misconceptions about why people laugh

The common assumption is that people laugh when they think something is funny. But are there other reasons why people laugh?

Examples:

- They're nervous.
- They're uncomfortable.
- They don't know what to say.

In addition, people have different ideas of what they think is funny. No one has the right to make someone feel stupid, sensitive, or weird if they don't think something is funny that you do. Let's make a list of general ideas of what is funny and what is not.

Funny	No Funny
Tickling Fart Jokes Talking about other people Cat videos	Tickling Fart Jokes Talking about other people Cat videos Girls/periods (not ever funny) Things people can't control, like acne (not ever funny)

Debrief

Everyone has their own definition of what's funny, and all are valid, as long as they don't hurt someone else.

Takeaways

The problem is, it can be uncomfortable to tell people when you don't think something is funny because it could make things uncomfortable between you, or you could appear to take things too seriously.

Activity: Breaking Down Different Types Of Teasing

Time: 15 minutes

Purpose: To define different types of teasing for students

Teasing each other and joking around can be a sign that people are close friends. But teasing can also be used to make someone feel bad, especially when people know specific things someone is sensitive about. Teasing can be really confusing for people. Sometimes you can't tell if people are really joking/teasing or if they are just pretending to be joking/teasing but really want to hurt your feelings. Even more confusing is when people say they're "just kidding," so they can be hurtful but get out of taking responsibility for their behavior and blame the person they're teasing for being too sensitive.

Let's break down the different kinds of teasing so it's easier to figure out what's going on. Let's brainstorm examples of good teasing . . .

Good teasing—people enjoy the teasing

- You feel liked by the teaser—both people enjoy the teasing
- You don't feel the teaser wants to put you down
- If you decide you don't like it, you feel like you can say something and it will stop and the other person won't make fun of you more

Let's brainstorm examples of annoying teasing . . .

Annoying teasing—the teaser finds it more enjoyable than the person getting teased

- You don't like it, and you feel the teaser should know you don't like it but somehow they don't
- What you're being teased about seems small so you feel bad or too sensitive that you don't like it
- If you try to say you don't like it the other person doesn't take you seriously

Let's brainstorm examples of hurtful teasing . . .

Hurtful teasing

- You feel like the teasing is being done on purpose to make you feel bad
- If you defend yourself, you are blamed for not being able to take a joke;
- The teasing gets much worse and the teaser brings other people into it
- The teasing doesn't stop

Debrief

Imagine that five people are all being teased about having big feet. Do you think all five people would be bothered the same amount by the teasing? Is it possible that one person doesn't mind being teased about having big feet but would really care if they were teased about having a specific color of hair? Or is it possible that one person in the group wouldn't care if people were teasing him about being slow in running but another person in the group would really care if they were being teased for running slow?

Different people have different things they feel sensitive about.

Why is it hard sometimes to tell people that you don't like being teased sometimes or being teased about certain topics?

So let's think about it in terms of small feelings, medium feelings and big feelings.

Take an index card and a pen and draw the facial expression you think best matches when they have a small feeling. Now draw an expression to show when they have a medium feeling. Now draw an expression when you have a big feeling.

Wrap It Up

Time: 10 minutes

- Everyone has the right to have their feelings and opinions respected.
- But it can be really hard to say what you feel because you can feel like you should be able to take it.
- It's not fair to take advantage of other people feeling so embarrassed that they won't say when they don't like being teased.