

# Teachers Guide

Grades 2-5





# Don't Laugh at Me

## Teachers Guide: Grades 2–5 Creating a Ridicule-Free Classroom

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

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*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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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.

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 children 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 children's emotional, social, and ethical development, such as character education, conflict resolution, and teaching tolerance programs.

When children 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, children 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 the children 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 other children's feelings, expressing oneself in a nonthreatening way, identifying prejudice, and learning to think beyond intolerant messages from one's past.

Concurrently, the children will need to learn how to resolve controversy and disagreements respectfully, creatively, and nonviolently. As children 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 children themselves. Children's 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](http://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 the children 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 children's 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 children, 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](http://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 children 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, sweeping initial "P".

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 children learn by doing, this guide focuses on giving children 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 children 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 children 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, 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 (RCCP) 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 afterschool 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, 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 on standardized reading and math tests.

The results of this study confirm what many educators know from their experience working with children. It is possible to create a more just, caring, and safe way of being in the world for our children. But changing the culture of your classroom and school will take time, patience, support, and sustained efforts. 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. Towards this end, throughout this guide we offer you suggestions on extending *Don't Laugh at Me* 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, (which 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 activity a day for three weeks. Minimally, we recommend you do at least two activities per week over five weeks. 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 for doing so 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, 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 children 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 40, 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 elementary school-aged children 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](http://www.dontlaugh.org).

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\* Berman, Sheldon (1997). *Children’s Social Consciousness and the Development of Social Responsibility*. Albany: 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 *Don't Laugh at Me*.

## **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.

*The Information Corner:* This is where you'll find how physically active the lesson is; what level of concentration children will need to do the lesson; the preparation time you'll need for the lesson; and the length of the lesson.

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

*Materials:* This section describes any materials you'll need to do 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 children together for the work at hand. The gathering helps you introduce the lesson to children. 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 children to think about what they just learned and how they might apply what they have learned. 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 with children.

*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 to your site's unique needs and challenges.

## **A Word Before You Begin**

Basic to this guide is the assumption that children 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. Children 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](http://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](http://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

Children need help recognizing and naming their feelings and finding ways to express them appropriately. As children 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 children 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 86, for guidelines on supporting the healthy expression of feelings in children, including how to build a feelings vocabulary, encourage discussion about feelings, reflect back children's moods, support children's empathy, infuse feelings reflection across the curriculum, and much more.



# The Torn Heart

Students explore the effect of “put-downs” and “put-ups.”

Activity Level: Low

Concentration Level: High

Activity Time: 50 minutes

Preparation Time: 10 minutes

## Objectives

- To develop empathy in children
- To build children’s awareness of actions that constitute put-downs and put-ups
- To develop children’s 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 child 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, cued to the second track where Peter Yarrow performs the song
- “Don’t Laugh at Me” song CD

## Gather Together (5 minutes)

- In a go-round, ask each student to assign a number value to how he or she feels today, from -5 (today is the worst day in my whole life) to +5 (today I’m feeling the best I could ever imagine). Ask for a show of hands for children whose response range is -5 to -2? -1 to 1? And +2 to +5? Record student responses in these ranges on the board as indicated below. Then ask for a few children to share a word that describes how each one is feeling. Acknowledge the broad array of feelings expressed by the students in the room.

From -5 to -2	From -1 to +1	From +2 to +5

- 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 and video. Explain that throughout the project you’ll be thinking about ways we hurt one another’s feelings, and how we can make sure everyone in the class feels safe and cared for and is not laughed at or treated disrespectfully in your classroom. You’ll also be looking at ways to bring that commitment of caring to the larger community of your school and even your town or city.

## Tell a Story: "The Torn Heart" (15 minutes)

### 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, and gender will be shared. Some children will be simply passing along comments they have heard, but which they may or may not even understand. Others might be reflecting the bias deeply embedded in our society. Regardless of the roots of the comment, remember that no child is born prejudiced—the ideas are learned. It's therefore important to respond thoughtfully and instructionally when the comment or label is shared. Be gentle and instructive. Correct and inform students, but do not be judgemental or shaming since it's likely the child does not grasp the cruelty and pain labeling can inflict. Here are some general guidelines for responding:

- Use children's beliefs and questions as a springboard for challenging bias.
- Provide additional information that challenges the bias.
- Ask questions of children that ask them to re-examine their beliefs.
- Encourage empathy by asking children to imagine how they would feel if that particular comment was said about them.
- Encourage children to express their anger or upset feelings in healthy ways rather than using a hurtful, derogatory label.
- Together with the children, develop policies that seek to eliminate the use of the offending labels and words.

For more information on how to talk with elementary children about sexual orientation, see the video "It's Elementary," available for purchase or rental from: New Day Films, Department FL, 22-D, Hollywood Avenue, Hoboken, NJ 07423, 201-652-5690, 201-652-1973. 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](http://www.teachingtolerance.org), or Educators for Social Responsibility, 23 Garden Street, Cambridge, MA 02138, 800-370-2515, [www.esrnational.org](http://www.esrnational.org).

- Ask for volunteers to explain what a put-down is and share a few examples. (Put-downs are ways that we make someone feel bad about themselves—either with words—name-calling and teasing—or with actions, like excluding someone.) Do not write these examples of put-downs on the board as that might reinforce them.
- Tape the large paper heart to your chest and ask children to respond to the following story, "The Torn Heart." Each time they hear a put-down 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.

# The Torn Heart

*One Tuesday morning, when the alarm clock rang, Pedro did not get out of bed. Ten minutes later, his mother opened the door to his room. “Come on,” she said. “You’ll be late for school again. You’re a lazy kid.” (RIP)*

*“But, Mama, I’m sick,” Pedro said.*

*“Why do you always act like a baby?” (RIP) Pedro’s mother said. “You’re always sick on gym day. Just get up and get ready. Your brother’s already dressed.” (RIP)*

*Pedro quickly put on his clothes and went to the kitchen to get something to eat. His older brother, Carlos, had just finished. “I’m leaving, Mama,” Carlos said.*

*“You wait for Pedro,” their mother said.*

*“That loser (RIP) is always late,” Carlos said. “I don’t want to miss the bus.”*

*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, a moron? (RIP) This isn’t a taxi. Anyway, that’s what you get for being late.” (RIP)*

*When Pedro got to school, he told his 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) I’m afraid I’m going to have to talk to your parents about this.”*

*Pedro liked to play sports, but he hated gym class, where he was the smallest of all the boys. That day at gym, 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. (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)*

*That day after school, Pedro’s brother, Carlos, was playing soccer with his friends in the field near their house. Pedro was much better at soccer than at basketball. Soccer was his favorite sport. So Pedro asked Carlos if he could play, too. “No way,” Carlos said. “You’d ruin the game.” (RIP)*

*Their mother heard this and said: “You should let your brother play with you, Carlos.”*

*“But, Mama, he’s too slow,” (RIP) Carlos said. “And he always gets in the way.” (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?
- Ask students to volunteer some put-ups for Pedro. (What are some things you could say to him, or do for him, to make him feel better?) Ask the class to give the put-ups a thumbs-up! Ask: How do you think Pedro would feel *now*, after hearing all of these put-ups?



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

- Gather the children's desks or seats close together near the video player, or children 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.) Have the children close their eyes and listen while the video of Peter Yarrow singing "Don't Laugh at Me" plays, with 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." After the song has finished, stop the video and ask a few children to share: What is this song about? What thoughts or feelings did you have listening to it? Summarize children's comments.
- Now rewind the tape to the first track on the video of Peter, Paul & Mary singing "Don't Laugh at Me." Tell the children that, in this version of the song, "Don't Laugh at Me" is sung by Peter, Paul & Mary. 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 40 years they are still working towards, 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.
- Facilitate a group discussion, allowing as many children to share as wish to. (Establish some nonnegotiable rights to create a sense of safety for this discussion: everyone has the right to privacy, so students may pass if they do not want to share something too personal; 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 everyone has the right to respect.) Summarize children's comments. 1) What did you see in the video? 2) How did the video make you feel? 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?
- Ask: "What's one thing you'd like to remember about this activity if you forget everything else?" Summarize what the children say.

### Close Together: Sing "Don't Laugh at Me" and "Puff the Magic Dragon" (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 children.
- After Peter is finished speaking, turn off the video and sing "Puff the Magic Dragon" with the song CD.
- Go around the group having each child say one kind thing they can commit to doing that day for someone they care 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.



## **CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS (OPTIONAL)**

*Language Arts.* 1) Have students reflect in a journal (or dictate for younger children) about a) a time they felt put down by another person, either a peer or adult, and how that experience made them feel; b) a time when they have put down another person or witnessed someone being put down and how that experience might have made the other person feel. 2) Have children write or dictate a) a letter to the person who put them down and b) a letter to the person they or someone else put down.

*Literature (Grades K-3).* *Oliver Button is a Sissy* by Tomie dePaola (Harcourt Brace: 800-543-1918) is a story about a little boy who is teased for doing things that are stereotypically “girl things,” such as reading, dancing, and playing dress up. Read this book and discuss what it might feel like to be harassed for things you love to do. Explore gender stereotyping in general.

*Social Studies (Grades 3-5).* 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 youngsters 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.

*Music/Media.* Use the song “Ballet Dancing Truck Driver” by Cathy Fink and Marcy Maxner (*Changing Channels*, ESR: 800-370-2515) to further explore issues of gender stereotyping and the role of the media. Have children brainstorm a list of put-downs related to gender stereotyping and explore where they learned these things. Then have children think of the things they love to do and how it would feel not to be able to do them or to be laughed at because they do them. Discuss why it’s important that we each be able to be ourselves.

# How Would You Feel If...

Children empathize with young people in the “Don’t Laugh at Me” song and video and name associated feelings.

*Activity Level: Medium*

*Concentration Level: High*

*Activity Time: 50-55 minutes*

*Preparation Time: 10 minutes*

## Objectives

- To develop empathy in children
- To sensitize children 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 (10 per student)
- Markers
- A variety of art supplies (crayons, markers, stickers)
- A soft ball or object
- The “Don’t Laugh at Me” video cued to the Peter, Paul & Mary version of the song

## Gather Together (15 minutes)

- Have students gather in a circle with you. Begin by completing the sentence, “I feel sad when . . .” and toss the ball or object to another person. The child who receives the ball then repeats what the person before her said and completes the sentence, as well. “Mr. Friedman feels sad when he sees stray animals on the street. I feel sad when . . .” and tosses the ball to a new person in the circle. The ball is tossed in this way until everyone has had a turn. Or alternatively go around the circle in a similar manner completing the sentence, “I feel happy when . . .”
- Introduce the lesson: “Today we are continuing to explore feelings and learn how what we say or do can influence the way another person might feel.”



## Watch a Video: “Don’t Laugh at Me” (5-10 minutes)

- Watch the “Don’t Laugh at Me” video. Explain that while children watch they should raise their right hands when the images in the video make them feel happy, their left hands when the images in the video make them feel sad, and both hands when they feel both happy and sad at the same time. Encourage children not to be influenced by what other children are doing.
- Shut off the video and discuss: What were some of the moments in the video that made you sad? What were some of the moments that made you happy? When did you feel both sad and happy? Why?

## Play a Game: “How Would You Feel If . . .” (10 minutes)

- Arrange your and the students’ desks in a circle.
- Hand out ten index cards and one marker to everyone. For the first half of this activity, children will write down a word (or younger children can draw pictures to represent feelings) on an index card for how they would feel if . . . for each scenario here. Challenge the group to come up with a *different* word for each scenario, if possible. After each scenario: 1) Have everyone hold up their feeling card and look around the circle at everyone else’s cards. 2) 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. 3) Discuss a few of the different feelings offered and build a feelings vocabulary by offering definitions for new words.

***“How would you feel if . . .”***

- someone made fun of you because of the way you looked?
- 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 called you a bad name like “creep”?
- someone helped you solve a problem?
- no one wanted to play with you?
- someone invited you to join their game?
- you had no food and had to beg on the street?
- someone held your hand or gave you a hug when you were scared or lonely?

**Make a Feelings Rainbow (15 minutes)**

- Now ask the children to choose one feeling card from their stacks. Have the children decorate their cards with colors and images that they feel best represent that feeling.
- Holding up that one card, the children are to leave their seats and in silence line up in alphabetical order according to the first letter of their feeling.
- Now have children at both ends of the line step forward to create a half circle or arc, so that children can see each other's cards. Give everyone a moment to look at the “Feelings Rainbow” they've created.
- 1) Ask for a few volunteers to describe their cards and tell why they chose the images or colors they included. 2) Ask if there are any words which children do not understand. (If there are, have a child provide an example of a time she or he felt that way and create definitions.)
- Ask: Are there any emotions included in our rainbow that are harder for you to express than others? Choose five feelings words (representing a broad range of feelings) from the cards. As you say each word, children will raise their right hands if they find that feeling difficult to express, their left hands if they find that feeling easy to express, or both hands if it is both easy and hard or they are neutral about their ability to express that feeling (it is neither difficult nor easy to express).
- Comment on the rich and beautiful rainbow 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 children. Each child has a right to feel his or her feelings exactly the way he or she feels them.

**Close Together (5 minutes)**

- Pair students to share one minute with their partners for each question: 1) Can you think of a way you could help someone feel better after he or she has been teased or called a name or excluded from a game? 2) Can you think of a time you stood up for someone being teased or excluded? 3) Would you stand up for him or her now, even if you didn't do it then? How?
- Go around the classroom having children complete the statement, I feel \_\_\_\_\_ right now because \_\_\_\_\_.

## 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 first 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. Younger students can dictate their stories to you or a parent/guardian. They can name their characters, but they cannot use the name of someone in your classroom. For example, they can focus their stories on the boy with glasses they call a geek; the little girl who never smiles because she has braces on her teeth; or the kid on every playground who’s always chosen last. 2) Write a letter to the main character in the story. What do you want to say to that character? Ask: What could the character in your story do or say that would let you know that you had helped?

*Art/Language Arts.* Have children create and decorate papier-mâché face masks to illustrate 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.

*Literature (K-3).* In *Mean Soup*, by Betsy Everitt (Harcourt Brace: 800-543-1918), Horace’s sympathetic mother helps teach her son a coping strategy for dealing with his anger. Use this book as a launching point to talk about 1) how all feelings are valid and important and 2) the importance of appropriately expressing feelings.

# Creating a Peace Place

Children brainstorm how to set up and use a “Peace Place”—a special place to go when someone needs to center himself or herself or is feeling upset or angry.

*Activity Level: Low*

*Concentration Level: Medium*

*Activity Time: 40-50 minutes*

*Preparation Time: None*

## Objectives

- To teach children alternatives to acting out when upset or angry
- To practice group problem solving and build community

## Materials

- (Optional) *Your Own Best Secret Place*, by Byrd Baylor (Atheneum, 1991)

## Gather Together: Your Own Best Secret Place (5-10 minutes)

- (Optional) Begin by reading out loud Byrd Baylor’s *Your Own Best Secret Place*.
- Do a go-round in which each child completes the sentence, “A special place that I find peaceful is . . .” (Discuss, if necessary, what a peaceful place is before children begin.) Begin by sharing your special place. Explain: “In today’s activity you will discuss setting up a special place in your classroom which will be your very own Peace Place.”

## Brainstorm: Our Peace Place (30 minutes)

- Ask: What is the value of having a special, peaceful place? How do you use the special place or when do you go to it? Reflect back and summarize what volunteers share.
- Explain that the goal of your classroom Peace Place is to provide a place for children to go when they are too upset or angry to focus, work, and learn—or when they are beginning to feel that way. Point out that this is *not* like a “time-out,” when being asked to go somewhere separate from the group is a form of punishment. Going to the Peace Place is not a punishment. Rather, it is a place to go to honor your feelings and get ready to go back to work or join the group.
- Brainstorm: What are some ways you can calm yourself down when you’re angry or upset? Write down all the children’s contributions on chart paper. Some ideas to include are: draw, read, write in a journal, write to a friend, breathe deeply and rhythmically, think of people you care about, distract yourself with a puzzle, hug a stuffed animal, etc. (Note: As time goes on, add to and refine this list. Post it in your Peace Place.)
- Now brainstorm: If the Peace Place is to be a good place to go to calm yourself down when you’re upset, what things will we want to include in that space? (See “Using Your Peace Place” for ideas of objects to include.) Where should our Peace Place be? (Most classrooms find that it’s important to delineate the Peace Place with a rug or table or some other physical boundary.) How should we decorate it? Be sure to keep the discussion focused on how these decisions support the Peace Place being a good place for calming down.
- Discuss the circumstances for going to the Peace Place. Some guidelines to include are:
  - Going to the Peace Place is voluntary.
  - You have to tell the teacher you are going.
  - One person at a time.
  - There’s a time limit—perhaps five minutes. (Note: Include a timer in your Peace Place.)

- Ask: Does someone have to be angry, worried, sad, or upset to go to the Peace Place? (In an argument, one might want to go to the Peace Place before getting angry in order to be alone and think.) Stress that the point is not to ignore the problem, but to gain a little time to think about it before reacting.
- Summarize your agreements around how you will use the Peace Place. Ask if there are any clarifying questions or concerns.

### Close Together: Pair/Share (5-10 minutes)

- In pairs have the children say, “One thing I’m looking forward to about having a Peace Place is . . .” Ask for a few volunteers to share.



### CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS (OPTIONAL)

*Science.* One image that often comes to mind to students when talking about 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.

*Music.* Sarah Pirtle’s “Anger Chant” song and activity from *Linking Up!* (ESR: 800-370-2515) is a wonderful way for children to explore their feelings of anger through music and movement.

*Language Arts.* Institute “morning papers,” where children write continuously for ten minutes when they first arrive at school. They can write about anything that is on their minds—the only rule is that their pencils or pens cannot leave the paper; they must keep writing the whole time. Staple together the children’s morning papers into a class journal.

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

### Using the Peace Place

Situation	Using the Peace Place	Materials/Equipment
When a child is angry or upset and requests to go to the Peace Place.  or  When a child is angry, upset, or disruptive and you suggest (among other options) that he or she allow some time and space to cool down, get in touch with his or her feelings, and think of options and solutions before rejoining the group.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Take a few minutes to sit quietly until you’re ready to come back to the group.</li> <li>2. Write down or draw what you’re feeling and why—and what would help you feel better.</li> <li>3. Create or choose a feeling picture that matches how you feel.</li> <li>4. Do something distracting that will engage your attention and help you cool down.</li> <li>5. Pretend you are a balloon and, after inhaling deeply (blowing up your balloon), exhale all your anger so that it disappears into the air surrounding you.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Rocking chair or other comfortable place to sit and a five-minute hourglass timer to monitor time</li> <li>2. Feeling words, feeling stickers, paper, pencils, art supplies, clay</li> <li>3. Pictures of children that show them expressing various feelings</li> <li>4. Eye-catching toys, puzzles, books, music, and earphones</li> <li>5. A list of cool-down strategies generated by the children</li> </ol>

# Take It to the Community

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

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

## Feelings

- 
- |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | all feelings are important                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | there's a wide rainbow of feelings                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | sometimes we hurt others' feelings by what we do or don't do |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | we need to appropriately express our feelings                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | there are many ways to calm down when we're angry            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | a Peace Place helps us appropriately manage our feelings     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | we can be strong with our anger without being mean           |

- Then brainstorm with children 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 children want to do a poster campaign in the halls with slogans about why feelings are important. Or they may want to do an art project creating a Feelings Rainbow for the halls or cafeteria.
- Present the concept of a Peace Place to your colleagues at a faculty meeting. Find out who else is using this concept and how. Share ideas and stories.

## Next Steps

For children 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 opportunities for skill building, practice, and raising awareness on the healthy expression of feelings:

- Use fun music and movement activities through *Linking Up!* by Sarah Pirtle, available through Educators for Social Responsibility, 800-370-2515, [www.esrnational.org](http://www.esrnational.org)
- Draw on the countless wonderful activities for exploring feelings provided in *Creative Conflict Resolution* by William J. Kreidler, available through Educators for Social Responsibility, 800-370-2515, [www.esrnational.org](http://www.esrnational.org)

- Explore ways to help children coping with loss or grief through *Starting Small: Teaching Tolerance in Preschool and the Early Grades*. Available free through Teaching Tolerance's website at [www.splcenter.org](http://www.splcenter.org) or by calling 334-241-0726.
- Learn how to discuss violence and other painful issues with children through ESR's discussion guide about the tragedy at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. Share copies of the guide with children's parents and other caregivers. Available free at [www.esrnational.org/guide.html](http://www.esrnational.org/guide.html)

# 2

## CARING, COMPASSION, AND COOPERATION

# I Care, You Care, We Care

When children 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, children discover that everyone can be winners when they work together. Some of the skills children 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

### 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 children a consistent place to experience the joys and responsibilities of being part of a community. They provide opportunity for practicing the skills of problem solving, listening, cooperation, compassion, healthy expression of feelings, and appreciation of differences—building blocks which will nurture and sustain a safe, caring, and respectful classroom environment. If children 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 34). In a class meeting, you and the children will develop guidelines and agreements regarding behaviors. You may or may not have had experience involving children 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 87, for guidelines on encouraging caring, compassion, and cooperation, including how to evaluate your routines, provide conducive space, correct misbehavior, help a child who is left out, and much more.

### Tips for Facilitating Class Meetings

- *Keep it short.* Keep in mind that children have a limited attention span and will probably only be able to participate effectively in a group meeting for twenty or thirty minutes. Set time limits for each discussion. Say, “Let’s discuss this for X minutes.” Even if the discussion is still going strong, a good plan is to choose a time that seems appropriate to stop. Then summarize the discussion up until that point and give children a clear idea of how and when the discussion will continue at the next meeting.
- *Help children develop skills.* Help students develop skills with gentle reminders, modeling, and by 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 child’s idea, considering more than one possible solution, choosing to try out a solution.

- *Set children up for success.* Early class meetings can focus on issues that are easy for the children to solve, boosting their 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 children 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 children 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 child's action threatens the safety of others. In these cases, children 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 . . .?"
- *Solicit meeting topics.* Post a list in your classroom where children 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 child 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 the children have suggested and choose (with the children, 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 children think about their feelings and actions related to the issue at hand: "Why do you think some kids are teasing and name-calling?" Summarize children'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 children which solutions sound like they would work best and to comment on why. Feel free to express your own opinions during this part. Paraphrase children's comments. Then work together with the children 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 explore positive vs. negative behaviors and social interactions.

*Activity Level: Medium*

*Concentration Level: Medium*

*Activity Time: 40 minutes*

*Preparation Time: 10 minutes*

## Objectives

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

## Materials

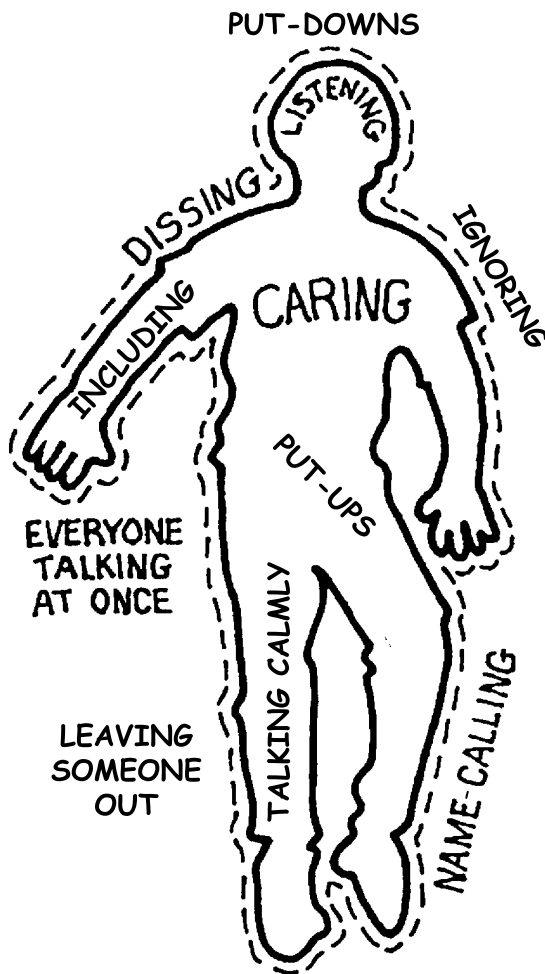
- Large sheet of paper (big enough for an outline of a child)
- Markers and art supplies (enough for each child in your classroom)
- Two colors of construction paper (a ream of each)
- Posterboard and markers
- The “Don’t Laugh at Me” video

## 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: “Was it difficult to mirror someone? What did it feel like?”

## Explore Caring: The Caring Being (30 minutes)

- Ask: “What behaviors or actions of people in this classroom have made you or someone you know feel angry, sad, or hurt?” Give students time to think, then write or draw about the incident. Then ask for a few volunteers to share their ideas, drawings, or writings (without naming names). Now ask, “What behaviors in this classroom have made you or someone you know feel good?” Allow students to write or draw about the incident. Then ask for a few volunteers to share (in this case they can feel free to use names).
- 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 the “Caring Being.” (Variation: older students can draw a smaller being to fit the paper available.)
- Gather everyone around the Caring Being 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 (thumbs-up behaviors). After they have had a minute or two to think, have each child 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. If the group wants to, name your Being!
- 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 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 signs around your classroom as a reminder to students.

### **Close Together (5 minutes)**

- Do a go-round: Have each child 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.



# The Ridicule-Free Zone Constitution of Caring

*Activity Level: Medium*

*Concentration Level: Medium*

*Activity Time: 45-50 minutes*

*Preparation Time: 10 minutes*

Students explore positive vs. negative behaviors and social interactions 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 31

## Gather Together: Play Rainstorm (5-10 minutes)

- The goal of this activity is to work together cooperatively to simulate the sound of a rainstorm. Have the group sit or stand in a circle around you. 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. This is the height of the rainstorm. Direct the subsiding of the storm, going around and changing the pattering to snapping to hand rubbing to complete silence. Pause for a moment of silence.
- 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. Announce that you are now going to “weave some of your own sunshine” by making group agreements!

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

### Note

**Include Nonnegotiable Rights.** Be sure children address in their Ridicule-Free Zone *Constitution of Caring* the following nonnegotiable rights:

- *Everyone has a right to privacy*; if you don't want to share, because something is too personal (or for any other reason), you can pass.
- *Everyone has a right to confidentiality*; anything said in the room will not go out of it.
- *Everyone has the right to be respected*; put-downs and other displays of disrespect will not be tolerated.

- You are going to create a set of guidelines for behavior in your classroom from the Caring Being, which will be called your Ridicule-Free Zone *Constitution of Caring*. Ask for volunteers to summarize the thumbs-down 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 children. Put each child'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 children 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. Make this fun for children. Ask them to create a cheer to go along with the YES! of the agreement. For each guideline, children can stand and cheer YES! or do a fun handshake with a partner, 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 children's ideas and add any of the following: make the person an apology picture, do something else nice for that person, apologize and tell that person something you like about her, etc.)
- 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 or the one on this page to post on the outside of your classroom door.

### **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 (or dictate for younger students) 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 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 promises 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, using the Peace Place, intervening in bullying or prejudice, will be available as an alternative. Children 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 children’s progress with these skills.

Share the following guidelines with students:

- Success in *Don't Laugh at Me* means progress and growth, not perfection.
- Each child 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 children 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 re-commitment 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 children when developing the consequences. Use an approach that emphasizes prevention and problem solving and encourages solutions that are generated together with the child.

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.* Books such as *Shh! We're Writing the Constitution* by Jean Fritz (Econo-Clad Books, 1999) for grades 3-6 and *If You Were There When They Signed the Constitution* by Elizabeth Levy (Econo-Clad Books, 1999) for grades 3-6 are excellent launching points for 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 "right" and "responsibility."

*Art.* Decorate t-shirts with the positive Caring Being words. Or create a Caring Being mascot for your classroom by stuffing old clothes (as one would make a scarecrow). Have children contribute items to the Being that represent caring to them: big ears for good listening, longer arms for hugging, etc.

### **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](http://www.iwillpledge.nashville.com)

# Children's Conscious Acts of Caring

*Activity Level: High*  
*Concentration Level: Medium*  
*Activity Time: 40-45 minutes*  
*Preparation Time: 10 minutes*

Children 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 77.

## 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 child in your classroom
- (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 child 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 (10-15 minutes)

**Note:** Adapt this part of the activity for younger students by facilitating the following as a large group discussion.

- Have students in pairs share a) one time at school that someone was kind and caring to them and b) one time that they were kind and caring to someone at school. Give each child 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? 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 (give 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 children 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 81).

- Play secret pals: Put the name of each child in your classroom in a hat and have children anonymously pick the name of a child from the hat. They need to do something kind for this child before the end of that day—without anyone finding out who did it. The next morning children 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.* *Swimmy* by Leo Lionni (Knopf Children’s Paperback, 1996) provides a great launching point for discussion about teamwork and cooperation vs. competition. Or build students’ vocabulary by creating a glossary with definitions for new words such as caring, compassion, kindness, etc., as they come up in the program. 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](http://info.csd.org/staffdev/chared/Process/examples/words.html)

*Media Literacy.* What do superheroes teach us about cooperation vs. competition? What messages do they send about using force rather than peaceful cooperation to get what we need? Challenge students to create a superhero who draws power from his ability to cooperate so well!

*Art.* Break students into groups of four to do cooperative art activities. Each group will create *one* piece of art that addresses one of the following questions (they can choose): If kindness were an animal, what animal would it be (make one up)? If kindness were a superhero, what superhero would she be (make one up)? What does kindness look like?

*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.

### Children’s Conscious Acts of Caring

Atlantis Elementary School in Cocoa, Florida, has a yearly tradition of “Random Acts of Kindness Week.” One year they made a chain during this week, with each link representing a child’s act of kindness. Another year they collected toiletries for the 900 foster children in the community.

# Take It to the Community: Creating a Community Action Project

*Activity Level: Low*

*Concentration Level: High*

*Activity Time: 3 planning sessions  
(variable for execution)*

*Preparation Time: None*

Children 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.”
- Ask: What are all the physical things that comprise our (school, classroom) community? Encourage children 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 children who want to share to do so.
- Ask students to draw a picture or write in their journals a description of what they saw in their “perfect communities.” They can then share their creation with the whole group.

## 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 children are interested in contributing. Then have students select five problems from the list that they consider most important to address.
- 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 projects to solve each problem (younger students can dictate their ideas). For example, under “fighting over swing sets” they might write, “create a sign-up sheet and time limit for using the swings.” 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 class Conscious Act of Caring to do in your school or community in the coming weeks. Some examples of projects include: a playground cleanup, 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 children 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 children 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 children. The organizing committee should be sure to assign a role for each child 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 children to keep their class Conscious Act of Caring doable. In their enthusiasm, children's plans can become over-ambitious. Tell the children 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**

After reading Mitch Albo's *Tuesdays with Morrie*, the Talent House School's elementary students in Fairfax, Virginia, adopted some seniors of their own. Every other week, the young students eagerly went to an assisted-living retirement community for "Wednesdays with Seniors" parties. Stories and scrapbooks were shared, games played, friendships built, and memories created.

## **Next Steps**

Children 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 children's commitment to the Ridicule-Free Zone throughout the year, help children learn and practice the following:

- taking turns
- responding positively to others
- contributing ideas
- asking for help
- learning to accept help
- staying with their partners or groups
- 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:

- *Early Childhood Adventures in Peacemaking* (for pre-kindergarten through grade 3) by William J. Kreidler and Sandy Tsubokawa Whittall and *School-age Adventures in Peacemaking* (for grades 1-6) by William J. Kreidler and Lisa Furlong, developed by ESR and Project Adventure, include 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](http://www.esrnational.org)

- Contact the Southern Poverty Law Center at [www.teachingtolerance.org](http://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](http://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](http://education.bu.edu/charactered) and the Character Education Partnership, 918 16th Street, NW, Suite 501, Washington, DC 20006, 202-296-7743, [www.character.org](http://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 children 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 children develop will allow your classroom to function more smoothly, releasing you from constant pressure to intervene.

The goal of conflict resolution is to help children who are engaged in conflict find solutions that work for everyone. Some of the skills you'll be helping children 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 88, for guidelines on teaching creative conflict resolution, including how to create opportunities for practice, turn the problem over to the children to be solved, promote creative solutions, bring the conflict to closure, and much more.



# Walk in Another's Shoes

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

*Activity Level: Medium*

*Concentration Level: High*

*Activity Time: 50 minutes*

*Preparation Time: 10 minutes*

## 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

- Chart paper with the outline of two big feet
- Chart paper and markers (enough for every student)
- 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 children.

## Gather Together (5 minutes)

- Ask: How many of you have ever worked on a project of any kind in a group? (Raise your hand.) Of those of you with your hand up, how many of you remember there being conflict or a problem in your group? Have those who had a conflict go to one place and those who didn't have any conflict go to another place.
- Ask: Which group is bigger? (Hmm. Not surprised, huh?) Since those who had conflict is likely the larger group, 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 children 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.

## Tell a Story: “The Maligned Wolf” (15 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.*



- Discuss as a group: What fairy tale is this? Ask for a volunteer to give a summary of the original story of “Little Red Riding Hood.” Ask: What makes “The Maligned Wolf” different from the “Little Red Riding Hood” that you are familiar with?
- 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:

What are your feelings toward Little Red Riding Hood in the original story? (*shift partners*)  
 What are your feelings toward the wolf in the original story? (*shift partners*) Why do you think you felt that way about the wolf in the original story? (*shift partners*) In the story told today, why did the wolf decide to teach the girl a lesson? (*shift partners*) What does the wolf do when he can’t control his anger any longer? (*shift partners*) Do you believe the wolf? (*shift partners*) If your feelings toward the wolf have changed since you first heard the original story, why? (*shift partners*) What would our feelings be toward the wolf if we only heard his side of the story? (*shift partners*) Share a time when you had a different point of view about something from your mother or father or another important adult in your life. (*shift partners*) What is something that you and a friend have different points of view about? (*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?

### **Perform a Skit: “Trouble with Teasing” (10 minutes)**

- Discuss the concept of point of view: According to Little Red Riding Hood, the bad wolf was trying to eat her. According to the wolf, he was merely trying to teach her a lesson. 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. Before deciding who’s right and who’s wrong, it’s important to understand both sides of a conflict.
- Ask for two volunteers to act out the “Trouble with Teasing” script or, for younger students, act it out with puppets.
- Discuss: How do you think each child is feeling right now? Why do you think Child (2) is angry? Why is Child (1) angry? Do you think that Child (1) knew that Child (2) didn’t like to be called “Miss Piggy”?

### **Do a Role-Play: Walk in Another’s Shoes (15 minutes)**

**Note:** For younger students you perform the following role-play for the entire class with puppets, following up with processing questions as listed in the third bullet.

- Now break students into pairs and have them each trace and cut out two pairs of shoes on chart paper and label them Child (1) and Child (2)—or alternatively, if class is held outdoors, students can draw the outlines of shoes in the dirt. The two pairs of shoes should face one another.
- One child will step into the role of Child (1) and another the role of Child (2). Give the children their respective role-play cards and have them silently read them. Have the children step into the outlined feet. Explain how these feet have magic powers to make the person standing in them understand one child’s point of view about the conflict. Have each student take a turn being Child (1) and Child (2). Child (1) first explains her perspective while Child (2) listens. Child (2) then explains his perspective. The children then switch their positions.

- When it looks like all the pairs have shared both Child (1)'s and Child (2)'s perspectives, ask: What's something Child (1) would like to say to Child (2), now that you have a better understanding of how Child (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 Miss Piggy anymore," etc.) Briefly brainstorm with the students the components of a good apology. Give everyone a chance to apologize. Now ask: What's something Child (2) would like to say to Child (1)? ("I'm sorry I didn't tell you sooner it bothered me to be called that name," etc.) Brainstorm with the children some other ways that Child (2) could make amends to Child (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?
- (Optional) If you have time, have children in pairs discuss the following. Give each person in the pair two minutes to respond to each question.
  - What are some conflicts you've had or seen that were caused by different points of view? What happened? What were the two different points of view?
  - How could a better understanding of the other person's point of view have helped solve these conflicts?

### **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" together holding hands. End the program 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. Fairy tales present a wonderful opportunity. For example, *The Real Story of the Three Little Pigs*, by John Sceiszka, humorously explores the story of the Three Little Pigs (Puffin, 1996) from the wolf's perspective. (This book is also available in Spanish, *La Verdadera Historia de los Tres Cerditos*, Viking, 1991.)

*Language Arts.* Have children do creative writing activities around point of view. Have them be a Martian coming to your school for the first time. Or write as a fish looking out of a fishbowl. Or have children write or dramatize a version of Jack and the Bean Stalk or another fairy tale from the perspective of the giant.

*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.

### **Children's Conscious Acts of Caring**

"One time me and my friends were talking. Then my other friend came and pulled my hair. I didn't know why she pulled my hair, but then I thought that I must have made her mad before then. I asked her, why did you pull my hair? We talked for seventeen minutes. Then after we talked I apologized and she apologized. Best friends forgive each other, no matter what."  
—from an elementary school student

## "Trouble with Teasing" Conflict Skit Script

Child (1) (*in the cafeteria in front of a long table of friends*): We're over here (*waving*), Miss Piggy. Come sit with us.

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

Child (1): Miss Piiiiggy! (*laughing*) C'mon, we're over here.

Child (2): I'm sitting with someone else . . .

Child (1): C'mon, we saved you a seat. It's a pig seat. (*friends laughing*)

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

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

# Trouble with Teasing

## Role Play Cards



### Role-Play Card: Child (1)

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

**Child (1)'s Point of View:** You think it's cute and funny that Child (2)'s nose curls up at the end and you kiddingly tease her about it by calling her "Miss Piggy." You're not best friends, but you're good enough friends that you're sure she knows you're kidding. You've been calling her that name for a long time. And it always makes all your other friends laugh. You don't know why she's acting so touchy about it all of a sudden and you think she might just be putting on a big show to get the teacher's attention.

### Role-Play Card: Child (2)

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

**Child (2)'s Point of View:** You've always hated it when Child (1) called you Miss Piggy, but you played along with it because you didn't want her to know it bothered you. But now you've noticed that other friends are starting to call you Miss Piggy, too. And you can't help but feel like everyone is making fun of you. You can't believe how mean Child (1) is being and now you're angry and going to tell on her to the teacher.

# Conflict Escalates

Using storytelling, children identify how conflicts get worse.

*Activity Level: Medium*

*Concentration Level: High*

*Activity Time: 45 minutes*

*Preparation Time: 10 minutes*

## Objectives

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

## Materials

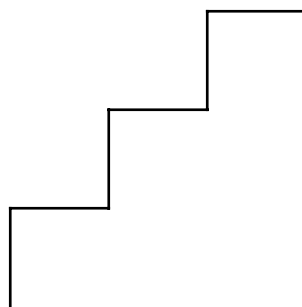
- Activity sheet, “The Backpack Conflict” (one copy per pair of children)
- Chart paper and markers
- A soft backpack (optional prop if you choose to have volunteers act out the story)
- Paste, scissors, and crayons
- A wide range of brightly colored paper (remove any black or white sheets). Origami 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 children pick out a piece of paper. Give children 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.

## Explain: Conflict Escalates (5 minutes)

- Ask the children 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 the following escalator on the board:



- Explain that when a conflict gets worse we say that it escalates. (Put the definition of escalate on the board and mark at the bottom of your escalator “You’re just a little upset” and at the top of the escalator mark “You’re VERY ANGRY.”)
- Give the following mini-lecture: “Usually a conflict gets worse step by step. 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 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 very angry.”

## Perform a Skit: "The Backpack Conflict" (20 minutes)

- Read the following story (or with two student volunteers act out the "Backpack Conflict" script):

While Danielle was getting her snack out of the coat closet, her backpack accidentally fell and clunked Giorgio on the head. "Ow!" said Giorgio, rubbing his head. "You should be careful, stupid."

Danielle felt bad about hitting Giorgio, but she didn't like being called stupid. It was an accident! "Don't be such a baby. You shouldn't get in the way," said Danielle.

Giorgio felt himself getting really angry. As Danielle bent over to pick up her backpack, Giorgio kicked it into the classroom.

Mr. Avazian, their teacher, came back to the coat closet. "What's all this shouting about?" he asked. Danielle and Giorgio pointed at each other. "He/she started it!" they both said.

### The Backpack Conflict Script

Danielle: *(reaches to get her snack out of a coat closet when her backpack accidentally falls and hits Giorgio on the head)*

Giorgio: *(rubbing his head)* Ow! You should be careful, stupid.

Danielle: *(feeling bad about hitting Giorgio, but not liking being called stupid)* It was an accident! Don't be such a baby. You shouldn't get in the way. *(Danielle leans over to pick up her backpack)*

Giorgio: *(getting really angry now, as Danielle bends over to pick up her backpack, he kicks it)*

Mr. Avazarian: What's all the shouting about?

Danielle and Giorgio: *(pointing at each other)* He/she started it!

- Divide children into cooperative groups of two or three and give each group a copy of the activity sheet, "The Backpack Conflict," a piece of chart paper, some paste, scissors, and crayons. Have them cut "The Backpack Conflict" items into strips. (Note: For younger children, perform the skit with puppets for the entire class.)
- Have the children draw an escalator with four steps on the chart paper. As you read the story one more time, have the children place the appropriate statements from the "Backpack Conflict" handout on the chart paper, identifying each step where the conflict escalated. (Note: For younger children, draw an escalator on the board and together as a whole class identify places where the conflict escalated.)
- When children have finished, discuss how the conflict escalated:
  - What was the first thing that happened in this conflict?
  - What did you place at the top of your escalator?
  - What things did the children do that made this conflict worse?

- Once you have detailed the actions in this situation, help children to generalize and identify types of behaviors that escalate a conflict. Record these answers on a sheet of chart paper entitled “Some Conflict Escalators.”
- Ask: What could Giorgio and Danielle 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 did it de-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 34).
- In pairs, have children 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 students stand in a circle and pantomime with their body: “I am conflict escalating . . .” and “I am conflict de-escalating . . .” Encourage everyone to look around the circle at the various ways children are depicting conflict with their bodies.

### **Children’s Conscious Acts of Caring**

“I saw some friends at the park and they got in a fight and I was saying stop it. I said, ‘You two are best friends. How could you do this?’ I said, ‘Give each other a big hug.’ It worked.”—from an elementary school student



## The Backpack Conflict



Danielle's backpack fell and it hit Giorgio's head.

Giorgio kicked Danielle's backpack.

The teacher said, "What's all the shouting?"

Giorgio said, "Ow! You should be careful, stupid!"

Danielle said, "Don't be a baby."



# Coming Down the Escalator with “I” Messages

Children learn about and practice “I” messages.

*Activity Level: High*

*Concentration Level: High*

*Activity Time: 45 minutes*

*Preparation Time: 10 minutes*

## Objectives

- To sensitize to the effects of “you” messages as conflict escalators
- To learn the format of “I” messages
- To practice making “I” messages

## Materials

- Handout “More Practice Making ‘I’ Messages” (enough copies of role-play cards cut into strips as indicated for each pair of children to have two or three scenarios each)
- Index cards and markers (one card per child)
- Prepare two children to present “Scenario 1” skit.

## Gather Together (5 minutes)

- Hand out index cards and ask students to write down on one side how they would feel if you said to them, “You always forget to put the art supplies away!” 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 you said to them: “I feel frustrated when the art supplies don’t get put away.” 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?

## Introduce “I” Messages (10 minutes)

- Explain that the statement “*You* always forget to put the art supplies away” 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 the art supplies don’t get put away” is an “I” message and is far less threatening than the “you” message: “You always forget to put the art supplies away.”

“I” messages usually have the following format (write on the board):

1. I feel \_\_\_\_\_
2. when \_\_\_\_\_
3. because \_\_\_\_\_

- 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 upset 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 jump rope. (I feel hurt when you don't let me play jump rope 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 students volunteer to present the following skit (or perform this skit with puppets for younger children). In this skit the conflict will escalate with Child (1) using a “you” message.

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

Lights, Camera, Action, BEGIN!

- After a minute or two call “FREEZE.” Now have Child (1) express his or her feelings about Child (2)'s behavior using an “I” message, following the format for “I” messages as you wrote it on the board.
- Break students in pairs and have them choose to be either Child (1) or Child (2). Ask children to stand back to back with their partners. Describe scenario 2 as noted below and then have children turn around to face their partners and enact it using an “I” message.

Scenario 2: Child (1) trips over Child (2)'s foot in the cafeteria and thinks Child (2) stuck it out on purpose.

- When students have finished, discuss. Child (2): How did it feel when Child (1) used an “I” message? Child (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, the child 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. 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 child 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 children turn around and begin.

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

### Close Together (5 minutes)

- Call the group back together for a go-round where everyone shares an “I” message that they would like to say to someone today.

**Tip** Throughout the course of the project, find opportunities for children to practice making “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.

## 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 wearing braces.



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.



Someone on the bus always bullies you to give up your seat for him when he gets on.





## **CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS (OPTIONAL)**

*Art/Language Arts.* Have students create “conflict toolboxes,” decorated boxes filled with items that represent key skills you need to resolve a conflict peacefully. Some possible things to include might be a large cut-out letter “I,” as a reminder to use “I” messages, cut-out shoes for perspective taking, etc. Invite students to have as much fun as possible with this. Then during transitions, such as when the class is coming back from recess or lunch, ask a few students to share what they have in their toolboxes, as a way to refocus and reconnect the group. Or invite students to get the conflict toolboxes when they are in a conflict and need help.

# Be a Bullying Buster

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

*Activity Level: Medium*

*Concentration Level: Medium*

*Activity Time: 50 minutes*

*Preparation Time: None*

## Objectives

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

## Materials

- VCR and “Don’t Laugh at Me” video cued to the Peter, Paul & Mary version
- Chart paper
- A large paper heart or other symbol of caring

## Gather Together (5 minutes)

- Pass a large heart around the circle and ask each person holding the heart to say something she likes about a friend or someone in the room. “I like when my friend helps me solve a problem,” etc. Continue until everyone has contributed.

## Explore Caring: The “Don’t Laugh at Me” Video (10 minutes)

- Ask: What happy or hopeful images do you see in the “Don’t Laugh at Me” video? (If a VCR isn’t available, have the children listen to the song and record happy images that come to mind). Have students record their answers after they watch the video or listen to the song.
- Ask for some volunteers to share what they recorded. List the images on the chart paper and the positive feelings associated with those images.
- 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.) List all the ways that people show caring in the video. If children have difficulty remembering the images, return to the video for another showing.

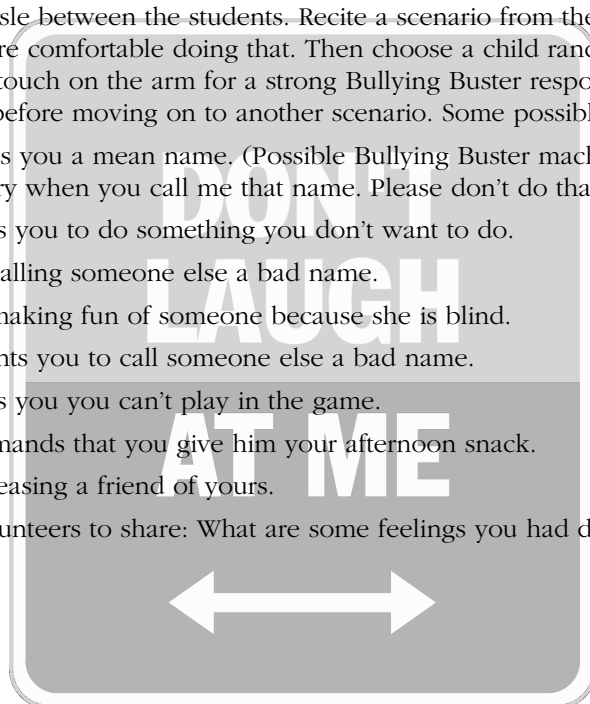
## Explore Bullying (10 minutes)

- Now explain that you are going to turn your attention to what we can do when we see someone being treated unkindly. 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 raised hands: How many of you have ever seen or heard about someone being bullied? Have students turn to a partner and tell each other about what they saw. Ask for a few volunteers to share.
- Now ask: Did anyone in this class ever do anything to help when someone was bullied? Or did any of you stand up for yourself when you were being bullied or treated badly? (If someone did, have him or her share what he or she did.)

- Brainstorm with students a list of things you can do when you or someone you see is being hurt or bullied. Record ideas on chart paper in two columns: ideas that mean confronting the bully and ideas that do not. Add to the children’s 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’m going to tell a counselor right now.” (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).
- 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 child are being treated unkindly or bullied. Tell the students you would like them to pretend they are a Bullying Buster machine. To form the machine, have children 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 child is “switched on,” that child should give out a 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 child 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 mean 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 play in the game.
  - Someone demands that you give him your afternoon snack.
  - Someone is teasing a friend of yours.
- Ask for a few volunteers to share: What are some feelings you had during this activity?



## Close Together (10 minutes)

- Ask students to individually write a pledge to be a “Bullying Buster.” What promises are they willing to make to the rest of the class today? What promises are they willing to make to the rest of the school today? They can begin their pledge with, “I promise to . . . ”
- Do a go-round where each child reads his or her pledge.
- (Optional) Gather the pledges together in a Bullying Buster book to keep in your classroom or have students incorporate their pledges into a notebook or other personal item they carry often.

### Tip

Discuss with children that sharing an incidence of bullying with a teacher is not tattling. Explain that being in a caring classroom carries some rights and responsibilities. Say, “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 child.”



## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS (OPTIONAL)

*Literature.* Part of the popular Joshua T. Bates series, *Joshua T. Bates, Trouble Again* (Random House, 1998) by Susan Richards Shreve, is a good chapter book to discuss standing up to bullies with grades 2-5. Also use the book as a launching point to discuss the effects of peer pressure on our behaviors. 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 caring “cool” in our school? Use the book *King of the Playground* by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor to further discuss how to respond to bullies.

*Geography.* On chart paper taped together, have children draw one huge 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.” Brainstorm a list of where they would most like to feel safe (the playground, the bus, the cafeteria, the library, home, etc.). 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.”

## Children's Conscious Acts of Caring

“When I was on a bus this boy was making faces at us. I [asked] him why he was making faces at us. He told me, ‘Because I feel like it.’ But I told him can you stop making faces at us. We shook hands and now we are friends.” —from Vicky Leiva, elementary school student, San Francisco, California

# Take It to the Community

- Together with the children, develop or refine a policy on teasing for your classroom as part of your Ridicule-Free Zone *Constitution*. Encourage children to develop a campaign around their policy so that the whole school considers adopting it.
- Using the “Creating a Community Action Project” process, page 40, help children 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 children have done and discuss ways to spread the children’s 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 children—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. Really Needs)
- negotiating
- mediating

To help you in the task of teaching these skills and concepts beyond the *Don’t Laugh at Me* project, you can draw from the success and lessons learned by Educators for Social Responsibility and its Resolving Conflict Creatively Program.

- Your efforts to teach children 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.
- Call ESR’s Professional Services Department (800-370-2515) to find out more about services available to help you start a school-based conflict resolution program. Order *Waging Peace in Our Schools* by Linda Lantieri and Janet Patti (Beacon Press, 1996) to learn more about how to implement a conflict resolution program in your school.
- Use *Elementary Perspectives: Teaching Concepts of Peace and Conflict* and *Creative Conflict Resolution* by William J. Kreidler for conflict resolution skill-building activities. See ESR’s catalog on-line at [www.esrnational.org](http://www.esrnational.org) or call 800-370-2515.
- Learn how to infuse conflict resolution into your curriculum through ESR’s Conflict Resolution Through Literature and Language Arts program. Call 800-370-2515, extension 19 for more information. William J. Kreidler’s *Teaching Conflict Resolution Through Children’s Literature* (available on-line at [www.esrnational.org](http://www.esrnational.org) or by calling 800-370-2515) is also a valuable resource.



- Once students have practiced skills of problem solving, negotiating, and mediating, you can extend the use of your Peace Place. When students have a conflict, they can use the Peace Place to work out a solution together, or invite another student to help mediate. Call ESR's Professional Services Department for help setting up a student mediation program at your school, 800-370-2515.
- If you are worried about the violent messages that children receive from TV and other mass media, we recommend ESR's *Changing Channels* by Grammy-nominated songwriters Cathy Fink and Marcy Maxner. The kit is packed with fun-to-sing and educational songs and stories. Also helpful is *Teaching Young Children in Violent Times* by Diane E. Levin, Ph.D. Both resources are available through ESR, 800-370-2515, [www.esrnational.org](http://www.esrnational.org)





## CELEBRATING DIVERSITY

# Together We Can

Children are trying to build an understanding of the world around them. Their interest in learning who they are makes them aware of ways they are different from or similar to others who share their world. They notice differences in gender, color, language, and physical ability. More importantly, they absorb the often unspoken attitudes that the people around them hold toward those differences—be they positive or negative.

*Don't Laugh at Me* will help children begin to appreciate diversity in an unself-conscious way. By learning to acknowledge differences without judgment, children help to create an environment in which each child 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 children 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 88, 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

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

*Activity Level: Medium*

*Concentration Level: High*

*Activity Time: 50 minutes*

*Preparation Time: See notes and facilitation information*

## **Important Note: This activity is for grades 3 and up.**

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 children exhibit. Also, we strongly recommend involving parents/guardians in any concerns you might have for children who have been chronically teased or bullied in school. You can adapt this activity for younger students by having children raise their hand or lift a "yes/no" card at their desks for each "cross the line" category that applies to them.

See "Facilitating This Activity" for more information.

## **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 children in your class (standing a few lines deep)
- The "Don't Laugh at Me" CD and player
- Large chart paper (one sheet per child) and masking tape
- Markers
- Slips of paper with each child's name in your class written on it (and hat or box)
- 1 copy of the Human Bingo Card for each person

## **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 snack food, 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!

### Do an Activity: The Power Shuffle (30 minutes)

- Line up all the children 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 child in the skit called her friend ‘Miss Piggy’ without knowing it bothered her. 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 someone. Other times, people are mean to someone just because of *who they are*—just because of the color of their skin, or their ethnicity, 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 the laws that get made? 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 cannot 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 you call 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 picked last in games or sports or felt left out or excluded from an activity altogether.”
- “Cross the line if you’ve ever been called a mean name or put down just because you’re a girl.”
- “Cross the line if you or someone you care about has ever been teased because of your religious background.”
- “Cross the line if you or someone you care about has ever been judged or teased because of the color of your skin.”
- “Cross the line if you’ve ever been 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.”
- “Cross the line if you’re a boy and you’ve ever been told you shouldn’t cry, show your emotions, or be afraid.”
- “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 weight, 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 and said or did nothing because you were too afraid.”
- “Cross the line if you’ve ever wanted to speak out because you thought something was wrong but were too uncomfortable, shy, or afraid to say something.”
- In the large group, 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? About others?
  - 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. 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 child choose four names of students out of a hat or box. Have everyone tape a large sheet of chart paper on their backs with their name written on the top. As someone plays the “Don’t Laugh at Me” song, children will circulate with markers and write put-ups on the sheets of the four children 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 children that perpetuate acts of unkindness. Children 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 children can be appreciative and supportive when they reveal those feelings. Through becoming sensitized to the effects of cruelty—without bearing the burden of guilt—children 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 children 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 children 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 children 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 children as they move through this activity.
- Reassure children 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)

*Language Arts/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 children’s examples. See *It’s Our World, Too!—Stories of Young People Who Are Making a Difference* by Philip House (Little, Brown, 1993).

*Language Arts.* Read *Green Eggs and Ham* (Econo-Clad Books, 1999) by Dr. Seuss and use it as a launching off point to discuss how one form of prejudice is not liking something before you’ve tried it. Explore the distinction between not liking something and being prejudiced toward it. Also use Dr. Seuss’ *The Sneetches* (Random House, 1988). In this story, the Star-Belly Sneetches think they are better than the Plain-Belly Sneetches. However, the clever Plain-Belly Sneetches soon learn how to place stars on their bellies, and then how is anyone to tell who is better than whom? Discuss: How did the Star-Belly Sneetches learn prejudice? What can we learn from this story about how people behave?

*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?

*Art/Music.* Have children learn the song “This Little Light of Mine.” Identify people in your school or community who are making a positive difference. Create and decorate papier-mâché torches for use in the Graduation closing ceremony, page 81.

# Human Bingo Card

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

# Family Ties and Fabric Tales

*Activity Level: Medium*  
*Concentration Level: High*  
*Activity Time: 2 class periods (optional)*  
*Preparation Time: 10 minutes*

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

## Objectives

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

## Materials

- The song “Don’t Laugh at Me” and CD player
- Hula hoops or rope circles (one for every three children)
- Sheets of paper, art supplies
- A copy of the nine-patch square for each child in your room (have extras on hand for children who wish to start over on their projects)

## Gathering

- Distribute hula hoops in the classroom randomly.
- 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, children will hop on their hula hoops (or jump rope if you’re using rope big enough) and find someone with whom they have a difference (someone who comes from a family with a different number of children, someone whose hair is another color, etc.). When they find someone with whom they have a difference, they’ll invite him or her to join them inside their hula hoop or rope circle. When the music stops, children in hula hoops will need to invite in anyone who’s not yet in a hula hoop or rope circle by finding a difference between them.”
- Play the song “Don’t Laugh at Me” and begin. Be sure to give children plenty of time before turning off the music. Do a second round if you have time.

## Core Activity

- Write the word “culture” on the board and ask students what the word means to them. (For younger students use the word “family.”) 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 children’s words to help the class create a definition of culture which 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 children 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 part of your family? 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 to each child. Ask students to decorate the middle square of the patch with the names of their families and perhaps drawings showing all the members. The remaining eight squares could describe, with words or images, things that are important to their families. Students can include anything they want—special foods, special pets, holidays they celebrate, special memories, 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.

### **Close Together (5 minutes)**

- In a go-round ask each person to talk about something that is depicted on his or her patch.

# Family Ties & Fabric Tales

## **NINE-PATCH QUILT BLOCK**

	<b>NAME AND DRAWING OF FAMILY</b>	

# Next Steps

It's important that children see adults who are invested in teaching tolerance. Sustaining your work in helping children appreciate diversity and countering bias beyond *Don't Laugh at Me* is therefore critical. To continue helping children 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; *One World Poster Set*, eight 4-color 18x24-inch posters featuring artwork and text from *Teaching Tolerance* magazine. (includes a teacher's guide); *Starting Small: Teaching Tolerance in Preschool and the Early Grades*, a video-and-text teacher training kit for early childhood educators (includes a 58-minute video and five copies of a 250-page text focusing on seven exemplary tolerance education programs). Free, one per school, upon written request on letterhead from elementary principal, day care director or teacher education department chair.
- The Southern Poverty Law Center offers other diversity related activities on-line at [www.splcenter.org/teachingtolerance/tt-index.html](http://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 children, teachers, and caregivers.
- ESR's curricula and training will help you nurture the appreciation of diversity. Contact ESR at 800-370-2515, [www.esrnational.org](http://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

- Children's written stories, photos, drawings, etc., from the "Children's Conscious Acts of Caring" activity (page 38) and (if you created them) from the "Take It to the Community: Creating a Community Action Project" (page 40)
- 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 children pair and share the acts of kindness they "caught" or did in the "Children's Conscious Acts of Caring" activity (page 38).
- 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 children as want to contribute (optionally, use a talking stick or other symbol to designate each child's turn to speak and a microphone so that children's voices can be heard by everyone).

### 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 a 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 children signing.)
- Have students work in groups of four or five to each fill out and decorate their own *Don't Laugh at Me Constitution of Caring* pledges.

## Plan a Community-wide Event (15 minutes)

- Brainstorm with children 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. 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" song 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, faith-based leaders, 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 children 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 children's pledges.
- Post your Children's Conscious Acts of Caring to the *Don't Laugh at Me* website at [www.dontlaugh.org](http://www.dontlaugh.org). See what other children 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 children's 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 children. 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 children to create your own *Constitution of Caring*.)

The children, teachers, and staff of \_\_\_\_\_ school or classroom hereby sign their names on this document in order to affirm their commitment to pursuing the dream for children, 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 their 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

*Activity Level: Low*  
*Concentration Level: High*  
*Activity Time: 45 minutes*  
*Preparation Time: None*  
*Preparation Time: None*

Children 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 strong yarn or string
- (Optional) Stuffed planet Earth (like Hugg-a-Planet) or a Nerf ball
- A symbol children 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
- (Optional) Papier-mâché torches made in “The Power Shuffle” Curriculum Connections (page 71)

### 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 statement with as many words as you want.) Then, still holding one end of the string, toss the ball to a child 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 child then will repeat the previous child's wish, “(Insert name's) wish for the world is \_\_\_\_\_. My wish for the world is \_\_\_\_\_.” He then tosses the ball to another child across the circle, and so on, until you have created a spider's web within the circle. Remind each child to hold onto the string when she throws 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. After a few students have shared with the large group, sum it up. Remind everyone how much more powerful we are when we are together than when we are alone! (To illustrate this, you can bounce a stuffed Earth ball, or a Nerf ball that could represent the Earth, 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 children 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 children hold hands in a circle and move around the gifts. When the music stops, children will pick up whatever gift is closest to them. Each child 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, children 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. If you created papier-mâché torches in the Curriculum Connections of “The Power Shuffle” (page 71), have children hold their torches while they sing and pretend to light one another’s torches, “passing” the light around the circle.

## A Closing Word

Congratulations on completing the first leg of your journey toward a more caring future for our children. 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, 25 percent of children report that one of their most serious concerns is fear of bullies. Yet many elementary students say their teachers seldom communicate with them about bullying. Most children 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 children 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 children 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 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 children 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 instances, 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 bullies themselves. While being the target of bullying erodes self-esteem, many bullies feel powerful and 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 children 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](http://www.reclaiming.com)), a non-profit educational organization that operates the Black Hills Seminars and provides worldwide training with professionals serving students at risk. Dr. Brendtro has had forty years experience as a teacher, psychologist, and educational leader and has served on the faculty 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

Children 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 children 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 for children to acquire in everything you do—from how you facilitate your daily lesson plans to how you respond to children's feelings during an intervention to how you yourself manage and express your feelings with the children. So, throughout your day, create and seize opportunities to support children's healthy expression of feelings.

- **Build a feelings vocabulary:** Take every opportunity to help children 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 child 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).
- **Reflect children's moods:** You can help children make the connection between feelings and behavior by noticing and giving words to their moods and feelings. You might say, "You look like you're feeling happy today, Mina. Did anything special happen?" or "Michael, your tone of voice sounds angry. I wonder why."
- **Model:** Show children how to label and express feelings by naming your own feelings during the day. When you do this, it not only helps children recognize feelings but gives them permission to talk about their own feelings.
- **Promote reflection:** Use the reflection questions and topics at the end of each activity to help children reflect back on their feelings. This will help children identify their feelings and encourage them to think about why they feel the way they do.
- **Assure children:** Look for opportunities to assure children that whatever feelings they bring to the group are okay. For example, when one child says to another, "You're a baby, because only babies cry," you can take the opportunity to explain that all of us feel sad and hurt sometimes and that it's okay to cry. This is particularly important in helping children break out of stereotypical gender roles.
- **Clarify children's feelings:** When children are in the grip of emotion, it helps if an adult can clarify what is going on for them. Some useful phrases are: "It seems like you might be feeling . . . Is that true?" "Does this [situation] make you feel . . .?"
- **Support children's empathy:** When children sense that another child is sad, lonely, or upset, they are often curious about what is going on. These situations are opportunities to build empathy. Encourage children to look for physical cues that will help them identify how the other child is feeling. Then help them explore the reason behind the feeling and think of ways they can help.

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\* Adapted with permission from William J. Kreidler and Sandy Tsubokawa Whittall, *Early Childhood Adventures in Peacemaking* (Cambridge, Mass: Educators for Social Responsibility, 1999).



- **Provide outlets and strategies:** Provide outlets for children when they are frustrated, overexcited, or sad. Allow them to choose (with your guidance) cooling-off activities or set aside quiet places for them to be with one or two others to regroup (see “Creating a Peace Place,” page 25).
- **Infuse feelings reflection into your curriculum:** Look for opportunities when studying literature, history, social studies, etc. to discuss feelings with children 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?”

## Encouraging Caring, Compassion, and Cooperation

**Keep group sizes small:** Children will find it easier to cooperate if groups are small. To start teaching cooperation skills and activities, divide the children into pairs. As children become more skilled, they can work in groups of three or four.

**Match pairs and groups:** When forming pairs or small groups, try to match children with strong cooperation skills with others whose skills are just emerging. To prevent problems, avoid grouping the most active children together.

**Decide what your goals are:** In cooperative activities, one goal is for children to work together to produce something special, like a quilt or a mural. A different goal is for children to learn to share materials. Sometimes it’s hard for children to try to accomplish both things at once. If your focus is on teaching children to use a new material, be sure each child has enough. If your focus is on sharing, brainstorm with the group about how to share materials.

**Provide conducive space:** You can modify the physical environment to support and promote cooperative activities. For instance, you can push tables or groups of desks together to enhance opportunities for sharing and cooperation.

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

**Provide examples:** Children often hear adults use words like “helpful,” “responsible,” or “cooperative,” but they do not always understand how these concepts translate into practice. For young children, demonstrate these concepts through role-plays with puppets. For older children, you can create and post charts that list what “caring,” “helpfulness,” or “respect” look and sound like.

**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—whining, quitting, leaving the group, interrupting, disagreeing, or arguing. Help children suggest reasons why these are not good ways of working together. End by role-playing behaviors that make cooperation easier.

**Correct misbehavior:** Be directive when necessary. You may need to remove a child who is not cooperating from a group, but offer that child a way to get back in. For example, “I’ll know you’re ready to work again when you tell me you can be quiet.”

**Help a child who is left out:** If there’s a child who no one wants to be partners with, set the stage for inclusion by saying, “We are all learning how to take turns and listen. Jerry is, too. You are all getting really good at it, and I know you can help him remember how, too.” Offer positive reinforcement to the children who try to help an excluded child.

# Teaching Creative Conflict Resolution

**Posters:** Have children create posters to reinforce key ideas in the curriculum and post in your classroom.

**Practice, practice, practice:** Allow some time for role-playing or games when children aren't involved in a problem and can focus on how the techniques work. Be explicit with children 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.

**Turn the problem over:** Whenever possible, turn the problem over to the group. When a child needs help, you can have him ask another child, or have one small group consult with another group. You can have a rule: "Ask three before you ask me," meaning that children should ask three others for help before coming to an adult. Or hold a class meeting and ask the class to brainstorm solutions to the problem.

**Give starters:** Try giving starters to help children talk about conflicts as they arise. Be neutral and non-blaming. For example, "I saw that you were fighting on the playground with (insert name) over the ball."

**Paraphrase:** Help focus the conversation towards resolution. For example, "So you were trying to tell Justin to stop hitting and he wouldn't stop. That must have been hard. What happened next?"

**Validate feelings:** Children need some validation of their feelings before they can solve a problem in a safe and structured way. You may need to help by providing possible descriptions and words: "So you were feeling angry and frightened . . ."

**Give time to cool off:** Don't try to solve problems with children when emotions are still running high. Give them a chance to cool off in the Peace Place.

**Promote creative solutions:** Help the children 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. Children 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 children decide whether all the parties in a conflict would give a particular solution a thumbs-up or a thumbs-down sign. 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.** Many children will need help developing the skills to make friends and join others' play. To help foster a sense of inclusion, take time to celebrate each child 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 children 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 children 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. Also, provide children with art supplies to represent a wide variety of skin colors.

**Address accessibility:** Many classrooms and play spaces are not accessible to children with special needs. To ensure that a program can meet these children's requirements, it may be necessary to modify equipment or reorganize the room so that all children have access to materials.

**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 children to overcome any fears or stereotypes they have already formed.

**Acknowledge differences:** Neutral observation helps children see differences in a nonjudgmental light. For example, if children are playing with one another's hair, a teacher might give them words to describe the texture of each: "Julia, your hair is curly, isn't it? Anna, your hair is straight." 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 children making comments that exclude a child on the basis of gender, race, or physical ability. Instead of changing the subject or tackling it head-on, try asking why a child 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:** Children 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? What nice thing could you say to him instead?"

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

**Empower children:** Help the offended child stand up for herself. Support her hurt feelings and give her suggestions of words to say. For example: "I'm proud that I'm a girl, and I can play where I want to."

**Meet with parents:** If a child in your room consistently uses words or behaviors that are hurtful to others, it may be helpful to meet with his parents. Explain to the parents why you think this is an important issue and discuss how you are dealing with it in the classroom. Ask them for suggestions for managing their child's behavior and encourage them to reinforce anti-bias messages and practices at home. If parents support their child's biased words and actions, make it clear that in your class you will not allow children to act out of prejudice and that you hope they can support you in that effort.

**Avoid activities that exclude:** Be sure not to hold activities that might exclude some children, such as a Mother's Tea or making Father's Day cards.

## 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](http://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](http://www.esrnational.org/about-rccp.html)

The Southern Poverty Law Center, 400 Washington Avenue, Montgomery, AL 36104, [www.teachingtolerance.org](http://www.teachingtolerance.org)

The Character Education Partnership, 918 16th Street, NW, Suite 501, Washington, DC 20006, 202-296-7743, [www.character.org](http://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](http://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](http://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](mailto:long@tt.net)

The Stone Center, Wellesley College, 106 Central Street, Wellesley, MA 02481, 781-283-2500, [www.wellesley.edu](http://www.wellesley.edu)

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# 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*



27  
Don't laugh \_\_\_\_\_ at me. \_\_\_\_\_  
*Coda* *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 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 think I don't notice that our eyes never meet Don't laugh at me".

## 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. Bridge

D Bm G D/F# Em7 A

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

**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.

2. I'm that

9

**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

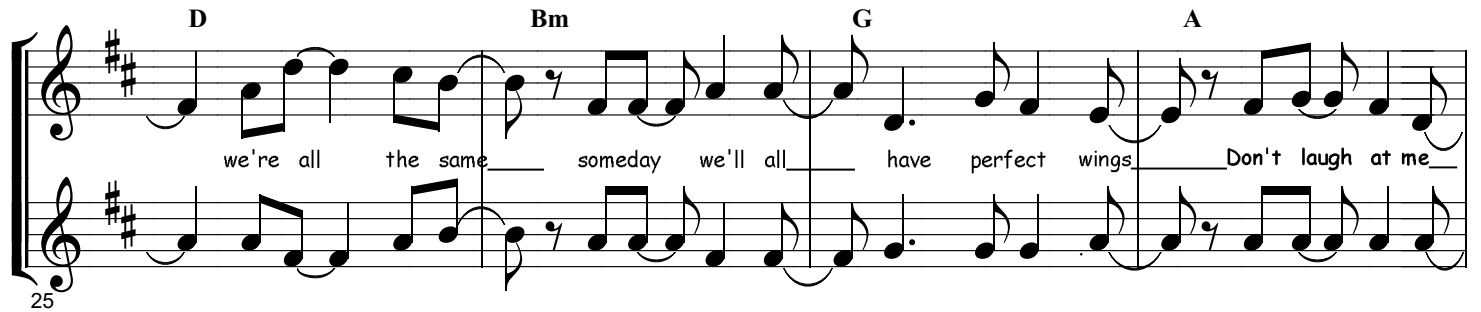
# Don't Laugh At Me, p.2

**1st Chorus**      D                                  Bm                                  G                                  A



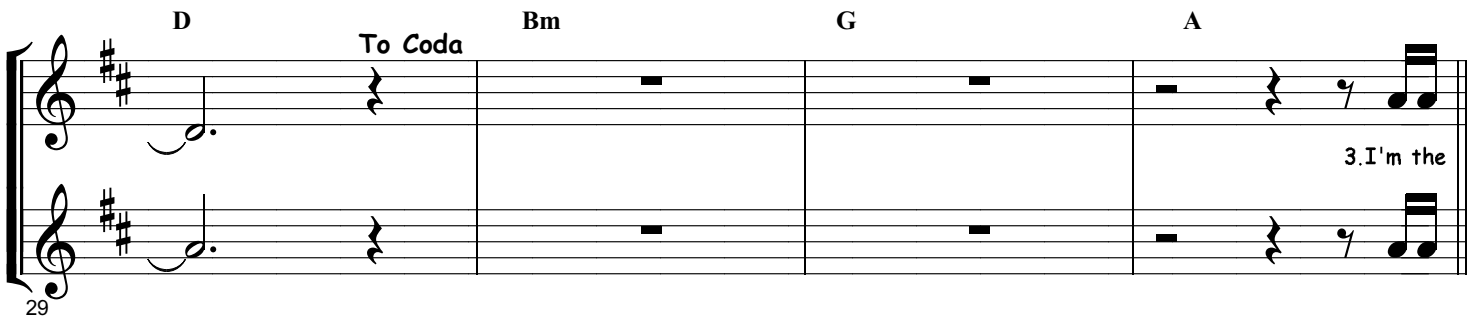
21                                  Don't get your plea—sure from my pain                                  In God's eyes  
Don't call me names

                                D                                  Bm                                  G                                  A



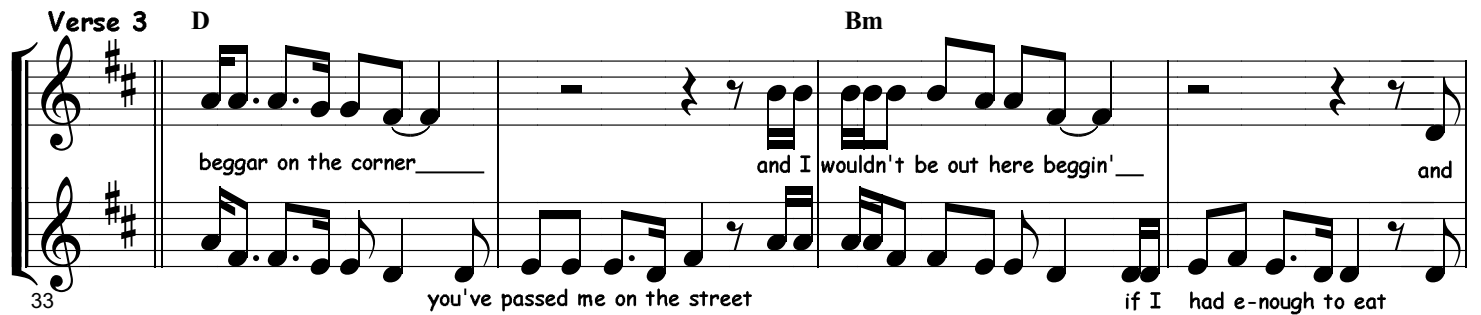
25                                  we're all the same                                  someday we'll all                                  have perfect wings                                  Don't laugh at me

                                D                                  To Coda                                  Bm                                  G                                  A



29                                  3. I'm the

**Verse 3**      D    Bm



33                                  beggar on the corner                                  and I wouldn't be out here beggin'                                  and  
you've passed me on the street                                  if I had e-nough to eat

                                G                                  D/F#                                  Em7                                  A



37                                  don't think I don't                                  notice                                  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.

Fine





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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