

Bullying and Violence Prevention: Marvin

Lesson Title: Embracing the Spectrum

Grade Level: High School



Project and Purpose

Students discuss what it means to embrace a spectrum model of sexual orientation.

Essential Question

How can embracing a spectrum model of sexual orientation create a more inclusive and compassionate environment?

Notes

This lesson could be conducted over the course of two class periods.

Materials

- Writing utensils
- Paper
- Sign that says "STRONGLY AGREE"
- Sign that says "STRONGLY DISAGREE"

Procedure

1. Begin the class with a "human barometer" exercise.
 - Make space in the classroom so that students can line up in a straight line or U-shape.
 - On one side of the space post a sign that says "STRONGLY AGREE."
 - On the other side of the space post a sign that says "STRONGLY DISAGREE."
2. Ask students to line up in the space.
 - Before beginning the exercise, let students know that during this activity they will be asked to share their opinions about controversial topics and that throughout the activity we must treat each other with respect as we share our opinions.
3. Explain to students that in response to the prompts that you read aloud to them they need to formulate their opinion about the statement and move toward the "STRONGLY AGREE" or "STRONGLY DISAGREE" side of the room. They can choose to stand along the line between the two extremes. For each prompt students should be prepared to explain why they chose to stand in the place on the spectrum that they did.

4. Read the prompt: Blue is a boy's color.
5. Ask students to consider their opinion about the prompt and find their place on the spectrum.
6. Call upon 3-5 students to explain their position and ask them to draw upon examples to defend their choices. Then give students the option to move after hearing other people's reasons for standing where they are. Try to hear from all students by the end of the activity.
7. Repeat steps 5 and 6 after reading each of the following prompts:
 - Pink is a girl's color.
 - Nail polish is for girls only.
 - Men who sing are gay.
 - Women with short hair are sexually attracted to other women.
8. Ask students to return to their seats to debrief the human barometer activity.
 - Project or write on the board the following journal prompts for students to write their responses:
 - How did it feel having to take a stand about the prompts?
 - Were there any prompts to which you strongly agreed or disagreed completely?
 - Were there any prompts for which your opinion fell somewhere along the spectrum but not at either extreme? What if I told you that for that prompt you had to choose either of the extremes — you could not be somewhere in the middle. Would you be able to choose an extreme? Why or why not?
 - After students have had some time to write their responses on their own, ask the class to share their responses to the last prompt: What if I told you that for that prompt you had to choose either of the extremes — you could not be somewhere in the middle. Would you be able to choose an extreme? Why or why not?
9. Remind students that in the video about Marvin's experiences growing up as a gay youth, we learn that he felt misunderstood and was mistreated because he was a homosexual. His classmates called him derogatory names simply because of his sexual orientation.
10. Explain to students that there is a line of thought that human sexuality is a spectrum rather than a binary; the idea is that humans do not necessarily fall into one category — gay or straight — but that their sexual orientation can fall along the spectrum from homosexual to heterosexual. (For more on this, check out Teaching Tolerance's website: www.tolerance.org/magazine/number-50-summer-2015/feature/sex-sexual-orientation-gender-identity-gender-expression.)
11. By embracing a spectrum model of sexuality there is chance of including rather than excluding people who don't feel that they fit neatly into one category.

Conclusion

Discuss with students: How might things have been different for Marvin if his classmates embraced a spectrum model of human sexuality?

Then return to the essential question of this lesson: How can embracing a spectrum model of sexual orientation create a more inclusive and compassionate environment?