

Character and Life Skills

Video Title: Honesty, Self-Awareness

Lesson Title: Honest Connections

Grade Level: High School



Project and Purpose

Students participate in theatre games to physically experience power dynamics, role play situations to examine both sides of various adult/young person power struggles, and consider the need for open, honest conversations between stakeholders.

Essential Question

What are the challenges to being honest in discussions with those who have power over you?

Room Set Up

- Transitioning from open playing space to sitting for video to sitting or standing in two lines.
- Recommendation: Begin with desks/tables to the side of the room, with chairs to the side but accessible. Create two lines with chairs for the A/B conversations.

Materials

- Smart board or projector and screen for video
- Chart paper and marker or smart/chalkboard for scribing class responses

Procedure

1. Discuss how Chandler, in the video *Honesty*, struggled to talk to her parents about quitting basketball. In a way, it was about dealing with the people who had power in her life, and quite often power can get in the way of having honest discussions. Explain to students that in today's session, they will participate in theatre games designed to help them think about power structures and honesty in their own lives.
2. Introduce students to the game Columbian Hypnotism, a theatre exercise created by the international theatre for social change activist, Augusto Boal. Have students stand, in pairs, in their own space in the room.
3. Model with two volunteers:
 - This is a silent activity.
 - One student is A, one is B.
 - A holds their hand up to B's face, about an inch away.
 - B's job is to keep their face exactly that distance from A's hand at all times.
 - A moves their hand slowly, 'leading' B.
 - A can try walking, forward or backward, moving B up, and moving B down.
 - It is A's job to keep B safe. B should be able to concentrate only on A's hand.
 - Going very slowly makes this work.

4. In the first round, As will lead Bs. While they play, side-coach the pairs. Ideas might include: "Move slowly;" "Try walking a few steps;" "Try changing levels."
5. Call for partners to freeze and switch roles so Bs become leaders of As and repeat the exercise.
6. As a quick check in, ask:
 - What was it like to have the power?
 - To not have power?
 - To move from one to the other?
7. Transition students back to seats. Ask and scribe class responses to: Keeping the Columbian Hypnotism exercise in mind, think about who has power over young people. Lead a discussion using any of/all the following questions:
 - Why do these people/entities have power over you?
 - Why do these power structures exist?
 - How do these people/entities exert their power? Why do they? Do they know that they are exerting power?
 - How do you know when someone with power is acting in your best interest?
8. What happens when you and someone with power over you disagree?
 - How easy is it to talk honestly about that disagreement?
 - Transition to a theatre exercise called A and B Conversation.
 - Create two lines, facing each other, so students face partners. One line is A, one is B. Lines should be close enough to each other that partners can hear each other.
 - Give the A and B partners the following scenario: A is a Senior in high school. B is A's advisor. A has decided not to go to college. A must try to convince B, the advisor, that this decision is in their best interest. Bs may only listen, not speak.
 - Let As speak for 2 minutes. Give class a 30 second warning, and an "end your sentence" warning.
 - Give Bs the following information: B doesn't think this is a good decision. Bs have two minutes to convince student A this is not in their best interest. As may only listen, not speak.
 - Let Bs speak for 2 minutes. Give class a 30 second warning, and an "end your sentence" warning.
 - Have all As take a step to the right (the student at the far right will move to the other end of the line) so everyone has a new partner.
 - Give the new sets of partners the following scenario: A is B's parent. Parent A thinks B's best friend is a bad influence and wants them to stop spending so much time with them. As have two minutes to state their cases. Bs may only listen, not speak.
 - As speak for 2 minutes. Give class a 30 second warning, and an "end your sentence" warning.
 - Give Bs the following information: B's don't want to stop spending time with their friend. Bs have two minutes to convince parent A that they are able to make positive choices even when and if their friends don't. As may only listen, not speak.
 - Let Bs speak for 2 minutes. Give class a 30 second warning, and an "end your sentence" warning.
9. With students remaining in place, conduct a quick check in by asking:
 - Did anyone hear a very convincing argument? Describe what you heard and the strategies used by the speaker.
 - Did anyone have a hard time making their case? Why?

Conclusion

Move into a standing circle for a quick discussion of one or more of the following:

- Why are having these kinds of conversations difficult?
 - Why can it be hard to be honest?
 - What do those in power worry about, especially when it comes to the decisions of young people?
 - What came up today that gave you new insight into this kind of situation?
 - What are you leaving thinking about?

Notes