

"Human Rights"

GRADES: 6-Adult

TIME: 45-60 minutes

MINIMUM REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Paper and pens for all participants
- Spectrum Cards
- Video

Part One - Framing the Issues

Ask students questions about prejudice, such as "What is prejudice?" "Which groups of people are discriminated against, and by whom?" Also ask students to think about whether they have any prejudices against certain groups of people, and to think about where those prejudices might have come from. Ask them if they themselves feel discriminated against in any way.

Part Two - Activity: All of Me

A. Ask all participants to write down a description of themselves. Have them include their own perceptions of themselves, as well as how they might be described by others. They should include what they or others might see as both positive and negative. Be sure to help participants with suggestions of positive attributes, since these seem to be the most difficult to recognize in ourselves. Make sure participants only list the characteristics they are willing to have shared in the classroom.

B. Participants should then pair off. Ask them to share their description of themselves with their partner. Be sure to emphasize that they share only what is comfortable to them.

C. The partners will then introduce each other to the entire group in the following way. They are

to use their partner's name and only *one* attribute that many people would judge or consider negative. Give participants examples of how to do the introduction: "This is Sue, and she bites her nails," or "This is Jim, and he is overweight," or "This is Larry, and he has pimples," or "This is Karen, and she can't dance well." Make sure all students are introduced.

D. Ask if any students are willing to share how it feels to be described as only a fraction of who they are, and with a description that is often considered negative?"

ACCEPTANCE FORM

	RIGHT	WRONG
NAME	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
WEIGHT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
AGE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
RACE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
NET WORTH	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
CLASS BRACKET	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
GENDER	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SEXUAL ORIENTATION	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
RELIGION	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DISABILITIES	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DISORDERS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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ACCEPTED REJECTED

E. There are many parts of how we might describe ourselves that we may not have been comfortable sharing with our partners because these are judged too harshly by our culture. Ask participants: "What might someone *not* have been comfortable sharing with their partner?"

(Possibly their religion, an eating disorder, their sexual orientation, being an abuse victim, being an animal rights activist, being poor, being wealthy, having an illness, being a feminist, being illiterate, etc.)

F. Ask participants: “Who else in society gets judged by just a small part of who they are?” Ask them if participating in this activity has affected them, whether they still have the same prejudices, and whether they might perceive people differently now. Open for discussion.

Part Three: Video

There are many videos available on human rights issues which you will find in catalogs such as Bullfrog Films and The Video Project. Since human rights covers so many issues, choose a video that discusses a topic which you wish to introduce to the students. Some topics to consider are: sweatshops, abuse of women internationally, child abuse, domestic violence, gay & lesbian rights, civil rights, racism, etc.

Part Four: Tolerance vs. Acceptance

Is it enough to tolerate others or is our goal to accept others? There is a difference between judgments based on an arbitrary aspect such as skin color or ethnic group, and judgments based on people’s actions. For example one might find it difficult to ACCEPT people belonging to a religion which advocates animal sacrifice, or which attempts to convert by frightening people, or which denies rights to gays and lesbians, but one can still TOLERATE these people and not oppress or victimize them, while still trying to promote compassion and justice for all.

Part Five: Closing Meditation

Ask students to close their eyes and to imagine a world in which there is no prejudice. No one is judged on the basis of race, ethnicity, color, religion or any other quality. Instead, diversity and difference are appreciated and welcomed. Ask students to think about how they would feel in such a world. Finally, ask them to consider what they could do in their own lives to help bring about a more just and peaceful world.

