

Don't Laugh at Me

By Lyn Fiscus

Objectives

Students will

- Learn the importance of tolerance of others
- Develop empathy for other students
- Build awareness of words and actions that put people down
- Develop a plan to respond to put-downs and support others who are being ridiculed.

Time Required

1 class period

Materials Needed

- Copies of the lyrics for the song *Don't Laugh at Me*:
<http://home.att.net/~scorh5/Laugh.html>
- Audio version of *Don't Laugh at Me*: <http://operationrespect.org/cd/track1.mp3>
- Video version of *Don't Laugh at Me*: <http://operationrespect.org/videos/videohb.mov> or one done by elementary students at: www.learningismessy.com/Don't Laugh At Me.mov

Directions

Ask students if they have ever felt picked on, laughed at, or left out because of actions of their peers. Have them jot down on a piece of paper what the experience was and how they felt about it. (This is for their reference only, not for sharing.)

Play the audio version of the song *Don't Laugh at Me*. Distribute copies of the lyrics, or display them on an overhead, and ask students how they felt listening to the song. Do you think most people can relate to this song? What do the words "I'm fat, I'm thin, I'm short, I'm tall, I'm deaf, I'm blind, hey, aren't we all..." mean to them? What is the key message of the song?

After a few minutes of discussion, watch a video version of the song. Ask students whether seeing the images makes any difference in their interpretation of the lyrics. Brainstorm with students a list of situations they have seen or experienced in which someone behaved in a way that made them want to say "don't laugh at me" or "don't

laugh at him/her.” In other words, how do students put each other down? Is such behavior always deliberate?

Divide students into small groups of 3–5 students. Using the lyrics of the song and the list of behaviors generated by the class, have each group develop a role-play scenario of a student being picked on and how bystanders could stand up for or help the victim. Allow 10 minutes to develop the role-play, then have each group present its scenario.

Processing

Engage students in a discussion using the following questions:

- Are these role-plays realistic? Would you act like that in real life?
- What keeps people from intervening when they see bullying behavior?
- What can you do to avoid treating others in inconsiderate ways?
- What actions can we take as student leaders to help create an atmosphere at our school where bullying behaviors are not acceptable?

Lyn Fiscus is a former leadership class teacher and is the founder of Leadership Teacher website (www.leadershipteacher.us).