

CELEBRATING OUR DIFFERENCES: GETTING TO KNOW YOUR MIND



Grades 4-7 Arts Education & Health Education

Purpose of the Lesson:

Those who face social exclusion, even at a young age, are more likely to develop mental health challenges. Many young students haven't yet made the connection between how we treat others, belonging, and mental health. This lesson helps students explore what it means to be different, and why in order to take care of their mental health, they need to experience belonging and acceptance. They will also learn why inclusion doesn't mean we all need to be the same! Instead, it means that we can accept that we are all different and we can aim to live Stigma-Free. Through an engaging video, a group discussion, and an art activity, students will explore their own identity and their place in the world. They will learn how to communicate their ideas and feelings through creativity and art.

Curriculum Competencies:

Arts Education

- Explore identity, place, culture, and belonging through arts experiences (Grade 4)
- Explore connections to identity, place, culture, and belonging through creative expression (Grade 5)
- Explore relationships and connections between identity, place, culture, society, and belonging through arts experiences, creative expression and the arts
- Interpret and communicate ideas using symbolism to express meaning through the arts (Grade 4/5/6)
- Develop and refine ideas, processes, and technical skills in a variety of art forms to improve the quality of artistic creations (Grade 7)
- Express, feelings, ideas, and experiences in creative ways (Grade 4)
- Express, feelings, ideas, and experiences through the arts (Grade 5/6)
- Take creative risks to express feelings, ideas, and experiences (Grade 7)

Health Education

- Describe and assess strategies for promoting mental well-being (Grade 4)
- Describe and assess strategies for promoting mental well-being, for self and others (Grade 5/6/7)

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First Peoples Principles of Learning:

- Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).
- Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one's actions.

Video

We Are All Different – and THAT'S AWESOME

Guiding Questions:

- *What did you like about this video?*
- *What does this video teach us about being different?*
- *What did you learn about Autism Spectrum Disorder?*
- *How can we celebrate our differences more in our lives?*
- *How does celebrating our differences encourage belonging?*
- *Why is belonging important for mental health?*

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Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

Preparation: Print off the sock outline below.

1) Begin the lesson by watching the video “We Are All Different - and THAT’S AWESOME.” This can be found [HERE](#). This awesome video features a ten-year-old who celebrates our differences and who shares about his relationship with his friend Steven, a 44-year-old man on the Autism Spectrum.

2) Pause the video and use the Guiding Questions to spark discussion.

3) Once they have watched the video, divide students into groups of 2 and use the “Think, Pair, Share” discussion strategy. Students will answer the question below first on their own, by jotting down notes or drawing on a piece of paper. They will then turn to their partner and share with them their answer to the question. Finally, students will get to go up to the board and write their answer, and their partner’s.

- *Ask this question: What makes YOU different?*

4) Discuss the curricular objectives for this lesson with your class.

Explain to the students that we all have differences, and that is what makes us special. We each have our own strengths, and our own challenges. Also, we are all different based on our abilities, mental health, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, etc. Ask them about the connection between belonging and their identity. How does embracing your identity help your sense of belonging, and promote positive mental health?

5) Ask students to put their heads on their desks and close their eyes. Then ask them: Raise your hand if you have ever been excluded by friends or peers because of something that makes you different.

6) While keeping their answers anonymous, tell the students how many of them raised their hands (most likely it will be most of them!). Explain to them that exclusion can be very difficult on someone’s mental health, and we all need to make sure we try to be inclusive.

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Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

7) Use the “Inclusion” Downloadable Resource in the Diverse-ability and Inclusion section of the Student Mental Health Toolkit to read to students about inclusion and the importance it has for our mental health. You can find this [HERE](#). This will help students picture what inclusion really looks like, starting at school. As you go through the resource, ask the class the following questions:

- *What does inclusion mean to you?*
- *What does it look like to be open-minded?*
- *How do we understand and respect others’ needs?*
- *What does accepting that we all learn in our own way promote inclusion?*
- *What does compassion mean and how do we practice it?*

8) Follow-up Activity: Finally, celebrate the differences of everyone in class by doing the following art activity. In the video students watched at the beginning of the lesson, Cole mentioned that he likes to wear two different pairs of socks. Students will get to decorate their own pairs of socks to represent what makes them different. (Find print out of socks below.) They can draw, make a collage, or paint their socks. Write these ideas on the board to give them some help on what to put on their socks:

- *What do you like to do?*
- *What are you good at?*
- *What is sometimes difficult for you?*
- *What makes you special?*

9) Lesson Closure: When students are done, hang their artwork on the wall as a representation of their differences that we celebrate! Check in with students throughout the next week about what they learned in this lesson. When you notice a student being excluded, you can now refer to this lesson! This is a good foundation to open up further discussion about racism, sexism, homophobia, and other social justice issues. Most likely they have already been exposed to these types of exclusion or discrimination, whether it be at school or on TV. Understanding the effects that exclusion can have on someone’s mental health will allow students to reflect more on their actions, and be more inclusive and accepting.

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