

Inclusion and Mental Health
Grades 8-12
Arts Education & Physical and 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

- ◇ Interpret and communicate ideas using symbols and elements to express meaning through the arts (Grade 8)
- ◇ Compose, interpret, and expand ideas using symbolism, imagery, and elements (Grade 9)
- ◇ Explore relationships between identity, place, culture, society, and belonging through arts activities and experiences/artistic experiences (Grade 8/9)
- ◇ Students will use symbolism and metaphor to explore ideas and perspective (Grade 8, Content)
- ◇ Communicate and respond to social and environmental issues through visual art (Art Studio 10)
- ◇ Demonstrate awareness/respect of self, others, and place through art making (Art Studio 11/12)

Physical and Health Education

- ◇ Describe and assess strategies for promoting mental well-being, for self and others (Grade 8)
- ◇ Analyze strategies for promoting mental well-being, for self and others (Grade 9)

◇ Evaluate and explain strategies for promoting mental well-being (Grade 10)
After Grade 9, Physical and Health Education becomes an elective. However, this lesson plan can still be integrated into other courses.

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

[The Power of Exclusion](#)

Guiding Questions:

- ◇ What stood out to you about Tiffany's story?
- ◇ What can we do to include people with disabilities?
- ◇ What does this video teach us about being different?
- ◇ Why is inclusion important for mental health?
- ◇ What is the possible effect of isolation on mental health?
- ◇ What does shame feel like?
- ◇ What does it mean to be excluded?
- ◇ What sort of environment do we need to create in order for everyone to feel included? What would we change about our world?

Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

Preparation: Gather canvas' for each student, acrylic paint and paintbrushes.

1. Begin the lesson by watching the video "[The Power of Exclusion](#)." The video is of Tiffany Yu, whose life changed in a matter of moments. She speaks about living with a disability and that the most challenging aspect of this is exclusion.
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 questions 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 answers to the questions. Finally, students will get to go up to the board and write their answers, and their partner's.
 - *Ask these questions:*
 - *What does exclusion look like?*
 - *What does inclusion look like?*
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. Discuss the effect of exclusion on mental health and how we can take care of our 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.
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.

8. **Follow-up Activity:** Students will interpret and communicate ideas using symbols and elements to express meaning through the arts, as indicated in the Arts Education curriculum. Each student will need a canvas and acrylic paint. Get them to paint an abstract piece that represents inclusion. Allow them to have creative freedom and do not give too many instructions.

9. **Lesson Closure:** When students are done, hang their artwork up at school to celebrate and spread awareness about the importance of inclusion. 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 this type 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.