

FEELING SEEN FOR WHO YOU TRULY ARE



Grades 8-12 Feeling Seen for Who You Truly Are Health Education & Visual Art

Purpose of the Lesson:

Identity is a very complex thing. For young people, there can be a great deal of inner turmoil regarding identity. This could be due to questioning one's sexuality, gender or simply where they belong socially. This lesson helps students explore their identity and understand how being authentically themselves can positively impact their mental health and set a good example for those around them. Through a visual art activity, students can creatively explore their identities while also creatively expressing themselves, which promotes mental wellness.

Curriculum Competencies:

Health Education

- Propose strategies for responding to discrimination, stereotyping, and bullying (Grade 8)
- Analyze strategies for responding to discrimination, stereotyping, and bullying (Grade 9/10)
- Analyze the potential effects of social influences on health (Grade 10)
- Propose strategies for developing and maintaining healthy relationships (Grade 8)
- Create strategies for promoting the health and well-being of the school and community (Grade 8/9)
- Explore and describe the impact of transition and change on identities (Grade 8)
- Explore and describe factors that shape personal identities, including social and cultural factors (Grade 9/10)
- Plan ways to overcome potential barriers to participation in physical activities (Grade 11/12)

Visual Arts

- Explore relationships between identity, place, culture, society and belonging through arts activities and experiences (Grade 8/9)
- Demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of personal, social, cultural, historical, and environmental contexts in relation to the arts (Grade 8/9)
- Interpret and communicate ideas using symbols and elements to express meaning through the arts (Grade 8)

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Visual Arts

- Take creative risks to express feelings, ideas, and experiences (Grade 8/9/10/11/12)
- Revise, refine, analyze and document creative works and experiences (Grade 9)
- Demonstrate respect for themselves, others, and the audience (Grade 9)
- Create personally meaningful artistic works that demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of social, cultural, environmental and historical contexts (Grade 9/10)
- Express meaning, intent and emotion through visual art (Grade 10)
- Communicate ideas through art making (Grade 10)
- Demonstrate awareness of self, others, and place through making art (Grade 11/12)
- Communicate ideas and express emotions through making art (Grade 11)
- Create artistic works to reflect personal voice, story and values (Grade 11/12)

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.
- The importance of stories and oral history as it connects to indigenous tradition

Video

[Toilets, bowties, gender and me - Audrey Mason-Hyde](#)

Guiding Questions:

- Did you learn anything new about identity through watching this video? If so, what?
- Do you think identity impacts mental health and wellness? If so, how?
- How do gender identity and other aspects of our identity connect?
- Have you ever felt limited by society when expressing yourself or your identity?

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Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

Preparation: Queue up video/set up projector

1. Begin the lesson by watching the video “Toilets, bowties, gender and me.” This can be found [HERE](#). This TEDTalk delves into various aspects of gender identity.

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

3. Have students sit in a way where they can see all of their classmates. Explain to the students that they will be getting to know each other on a deeper level through this initial activity. Inform them that this is a safe space to share and that there needs to be an agreed-upon code of conduct for this activity so everyone feels heard and their experiences feel validated. Once you have agreed on what that code of conduct should look like (can write this down on the board or use a pre-existing code designed by the class), begin explaining the activity. It is called **Just By Looking At Me**. As the educator, you should go first to give the students an idea of what the activity will look like and to lead by example.

- Share your response to this prompt, then ask each student to do so as well (encourage everyone to share, but inform them that they have the right to pass if they do not feel comfortable engaging in this activity)
- “My name is ____ and I am from _____. One thing you cannot tell just by looking at me is _____. This is important to me to tell you because_____.”
- This can be as deep and personal or as surface-level as you and your students decide. Some may feel comfortable sharing a lot, others may only want to share certain aspects of their identity in this way with the class

4. Use this opportunity to explain how our identities are not just what we see about each other, but that they are so much deeper than that. Explain this through the metaphor of an iceberg: the part of an iceberg that is visible makes up only 10% of it. 90% of the iceberg exists under the water, unseen. Share the visual on the next page so students can see this for themselves: (Source: https://www.mypspa.org/article/more/the-iceberg-theory_)

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5. Explain the curriculum connections to your students. Invite them to create visual art pieces to represent their identities as icebergs. On the top part of their art piece, they should creatively represent the aspects of their identities that are “above the surface”, or visible to all. Give examples: race, age, gender (possibly), fashion expression, height, weight, family, religion (possibly), etc. On the bottom part, they will creatively represent the aspects of their identities that exist “below the surface”, or the parts that might not be visible. Give examples: religion (possibly), gender (possibly), music taste, interests/hobbies, mental health concerns, dreams/ambitions, passions, etc. Explain to your students that this activity takes vulnerability and openness, which can be scary and challenging. Inform them that if there are aspects of their identities they do not want to share with you, they can leave them out. It is up to their comfort level how much or little they chose to share. They are welcome to use whatever visual arts mediums are available to them, including technology. **Accommodation/modification:**

- Students who are visually impaired may choose to create a story expressing their identities
- Students can write in whatever language they are most comfortable in on their art pieces, with translation provided by the educator

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6. Follow-up Activity: Invite the students to share their art pieces with partners, in small groups, or with the class. Suggest that students pose engaging questions to their peers about their art pieces. ***If these pieces feel too personal to be shared with peers and the students only want you to see them, you can skip this step and ask the students these questions yourself***

Some questions to pose could include:

- How much of your identity to you feel is visible to the world?
- Are there aspects of the invisible parts of your identity you wish were visible?
- Do you feel as though the visible or invisible parts of your identity impact the way people interact with you?

7. Lesson Closure: Facilitate a whole-class discussion about the activity. Allow the students to reflect on their experience in creating these art pieces. Discuss with your students how identity and mental health often intersect and how understanding this can positively impact mental well-being. Explain to your students that our identities are not stagnant; they change throughout our lives and understanding this can support our mental well-being as well. Invite your students to share how they feel their identities impact their mental health and well-being if you have created a safe space where your students feel comfortable doing so.