

Lesson:
Crinkle Heart

Materials:

- Large paper cut-out of a heart
- Paper heart cut-outs for each participant

Length of lesson:
20 Minutes

Discussion Summary:

Words are powerful. Teasing, bullying, cattiness, name calling, gossiping, and discriminatory language can lead to depression, low self-esteem, drug and alcohol abuse, and even suicide. Similarly, compliments and kind language can build self-esteem and boost confidence. Teaching young people to use alternatives to language that hurts others and use language they are proud of helps facilitate effective communication and can help them avoid conflict.

Discussion Question:

- **How powerful are words?**

1. Begin by asking the participants to raise their hands if they've ever had their feelings hurt by something someone said. Notice that most of us have had our feelings hurt by words.

2. Ask them to raise their hands if they have ever hurt someone's feelings using words.

3. Explain that this activity is going to show how powerful words are—they can make someone feel really great or really terrible.

4. Show the large paper cut-out heart. Pass out a paper heart cut-out for each participant. Explain that this is a symbol of our own heart.

5. Explain that we're going to talk about words and actions that hurt us and make our hearts hurt. Give direction that for each word or action that makes us feel bad, crumple the heart a little bit.

6. Ask for examples of words or actions that hurt (ex: someone calls you stupid, ugly, other examples of calling names, someone tells you that you aren't good at something, someone leaves you out, silent treatment, etc.). For each negative thing, crumple up the shape a little more.

7. Ask the participants to explain what they notice about the heart. What effect did all of those mean words have on your heart? Remind them no one likes to feel sad or angry or hurt, just like they don't.

8. Now explain we're going to talk about words and actions that make us feel nice and make our hearts feel better. Give direction that for each word or action that makes us feel good, un-crumple the heart a little bit.

9. Ask for examples of words or actions that feel nice (ex: someone tells you they like you, someone tells you they think you look nice today, kind words, compliments, making new friends, being included with others, working out problems kindly, etc.). For each positive thing, smooth out the shape a little more.

10. Ask the participants to explain what they notice about the heart now. What effect did the kind words have on your heart? Remind them everyone deserves to feel happy, confident and good about themselves, just like they do.

11. Show that when the shape is unfolded, there are still wrinkles. Cruel words and acts remain inside a person for a long time. Ask the participants to remember the power of their words before they say something that might hurt someone else's feelings or the next time they hear a mean name being called.

12. Ask the participants to go around the room and say one thing they'll remember from this activity.

13. Students can tape or glue their crinkled hearts into their journals or take them home to remember the lasting power of words. The large heart can be hung in the front of the room as a visual reminder of the power of words.

**Activity originates from Girls Only Toolkit*

Kentucky Academic Standards:

PL-6-PW-U-3:

Students will understand that: the environment, lifestyle, family history, peers and other factors impact physical, social, mental and emotional health.

PL-6-PW-S-SMEH1.b:

using and describe the importance of effective social interaction skills (e.g., respect, self-advocacy, cooperation, communication, identifying and being open to different perspectives and points of view, empathy, friendship)

PL-7-PW-U-2:

interactions with others are an integral part of the human life experience and contribute to healthy relationships.

PL-7-PW-U-4:

the environment, lifestyle, family history, peers and other factors impact physical, social, mental and emotional health.

PL-7-PW-S-SMEH1.b:

using and explaining the importance of effective social interaction skills (e.g., respect, self-advocacy, cooperation, communication, identifying and being open to different perspectives and points of view, empathy, friendship)

PL-8-PW-U-3:

interactions with others are an integral part of the human life experience and contribute to healthy relationships.

PL-8-PW-U-4:

the environment, lifestyle, family history, peers and other factors impact physical, social, mental and emotional health.

PL-8-PW-S-SMEH1.b:

using and explaining the importance of effective social interaction skills (e.g., respect, self-advocacy, cooperation, communication, identifying and being open to different perspectives and points of view, empathy, friendship)