

Giving Compliments (Grades K-5)

Free Lesson for Grades K-5



Overview:

Compliments are most meaningful when they are heartfelt and specific. In this activity, students practice giving compliments that are specific and kind. Students will also explore the right way to respond to compliments.

Character Education Objectives:

Students will:

- brainstorm specific and meaningful compliments for their classmates,
- reflect on the impact of hearing positive things about yourself, and
- discuss how to respond to compliments.

Materials:

- A sheet of paper with a star (approximately 8 inches) on it for each person
- Markers or pencils

Directions:

- Break students into small groups. Each group should stand in a circle.
- Provide each student with a paper star and ask them to write their name at the top of the star.
Students should pass their star to the person on their right.
- Ask students, "Think about the classmate whose name is on top of the star. What is their 'star quality? What's one of the best things about them?"
- Each student should write a compliment on their classmate's star.
- Encourage them to be honest and specific. Explain that the best compliments are the true ones! If needed, give suggestions as to the types of positive things they could say.
- Students can continue giving compliments as they pass their stars around the circle. Ask them not to repeat anything someone else has written. Remind them that they're looking for everyone's star qualities, not to decide who is the "star of the team." Once they have complimented everyone in their group, everyone has their own star back.
- **Note:** If your participants are young, you may need to talk first about how we each dream of being a "star of the show" and that our everyday qualities bring star qualities to our group.

Discussion Prompts:

- Why do we all need to hear positive things about ourselves?
- Why it is sometimes hard to accept a compliment?
- What should we say when someone compliments us? ("Thank you")

Following Directions and Playing by the Rules (Grades K-5)



Objective:

Playing by the rules is an important part of fairness. Students will learn that in order to play by the rules, we need to listen carefully and follow directions. We can only play fair when we understand the rules.

Character Education Objectives:

Students will:

- explore how rules or directions could be interpreted in diverse ways.
- reflect on how unclear rules or directions can lead to unfair situations.
- discuss ways you can ask questions when you are unsure.
- discuss why playing by the rules is an important part of fairness.

Materials:

- A piece of paper (the same size) for each person
- Blindfolds if desired

Directions:

1. Tell students that you are going to play the Snowflake Game. The students who follow the game's directions win.
2. Ask the students to either close their eyes or put on blindfolds.
3. Tell them you will be giving instructions and they are not allowed to ask any questions.
4. Give each student a piece of paper.
5. Give the following directions, but do not answer any of their questions.
 - Fold the paper in half.
 - Tear off the bottom right-hand corner.
 - Fold the paper in half again.
 - Tear off the upper right-hand corner.
 - Fold the paper in half again.
 - Tear off the lower right-hand corner.
6. Have participants open their eyes and unfold their papers.

Discussion:

- As they hold up their papers, ask the students what they see (the differences in each other's papers even though they all had the same directions).
- We all had the same directions, but our snowflakes look different. Why do they look different?
- No one did it wrong, but there weren't clear directions on how to do it. To be fair, we need to follow the rules and directions. So, it's important we give clear directions and make sure everyone understands the rules for a fair game.
- Ask students:
 - How could the directions be changed to make the

snowflake game fairer?

- What questions could they have asked to better understand the rules of the game?
 - Can they think of a time when they needed to ask questions to make sure they understood the rules?
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Move Beyond Stereotypes (Grades 6-12)



Overview:

This lesson explores the stories of real people to help students learn how to move beyond stereotypes. They'll learn how accepting others' authentic and unique selves demonstrates respect and fairness.

Character Education Objectives:

Students will:

- how sharing our individual stories with the world helps

- break down unfair stereotypes.
- explore Human Library stories.
- reflect on their experiences with the Human Library story.

Materials:

- Videos from Aumen Film Co. (2017) *The Human Library Trailer*.
Youtube.com. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K7vJgyRJ-zo>

Opening Discussion:

- “Stereotypes lose their power when the world is found to be more complex than the stereotype would suggest. When we learn that individuals do not fit the group stereotype, then it begins to fall apart.” – Ed Koch
 - Ask students what this quote means to them?
- Share some stereotypes (teens, elderly, rich, poor). Then, ask about a stereotype students have (or used to have) about a group or individual.

Instruction and Activity:

- Teach students about Human Library projects. It is a collection of real-life human stories you can “check out.” These stories aim to break stereotypes. In addition, they help people embrace fairness and togetherness through our differences.
 - Example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K7vJgyRJ-zo>
- Ask students to explore the Human Library to learn more about others. Most importantly, suggest choosing individuals whom they may normally stereotype.
 - <https://humanlibrary.org/meet-our-human-books/>

Discussion:

- Why did you select that particular human library book?
- What did you learn about someone else today?

- Why did learning about someone's story impact any stereotypes you have or had?
- How does getting to know someone else's story make you a more connected citizen?
- Describe how hearing someone else's journey impacts your own story.

Reflection:

- What did you learn about yourself today?
- How did what you learn today help you move beyond stereotypes?

Social-Emotional Learning Funded by ESSER



Social-Emotional Learning and Character Education can be funded by ESSER! An intentional focus on social-emotional learning and character skills has never been more important. Fortunately, the **Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund (I and II)** provides funding for COVID-19 relief projects. This can include professional development, curricular resources, assessment, and support services for students' social-emotional needs.

Professional Development

Our professional development workshops:

- teach strategies on creating a positive school culture,
- provide best practices on how to teach, enforce, advocate, and model social-emotional skills,
- and help educators create a plan to provide sustainable SEL services.

Curricular Resources

We have a variety of curricular resources to help you intentionally and consistently focus on character and SEL skills. Additionally, you can buy many of our digital materials as a perpetual license. Your school can use ESSER money on a one-time purchase that you can utilize long after ESSER funding runs out.

Assessments

Schools use culture and climate assessments to identify parts of their culture that may need attention. When taken annually, these surveys can illustrate how your social-emotional interventions are positively impacting school culture. Importantly, since you can use ESSER funds through September 2023, schools can gather two years of valuable data.

Get Started

We're dedicated to helping educators intentionally and consistently teach these important skills. For more information on using ESSER funds for CHARACTER COUNTS!, please

contact Jason Lamping at Jason.lamping@drake.edu.

More information about ESSER:

- U.S. Department of Education Makes Available \$36 Billion in American Rescue Plan Funds to Support Students and Institutions

Support for afterschool and summer programs:

- Afterschool Alliance: COVID-19

Funding by state:

- Department of Education Announces American Rescue Plan Funds

Making Assumptions and Respecting Others (Grades 6-12)



Overview: This lesson focuses on the importance of respecting the differences of others, the impact of making assumptions about others, and how respecting each other's differences can make relationships stronger.

Character Education Objectives:

Students will:

- watch a video about respecting the differences of others,
- discuss how to recognize and respect each other's differences,
- reflect on experiences when they made assumptions,
- reflect on how making assumptions impacts our ability to respect differences

Materials:

- Video: UNEEK Productions. 2017. *Different*. Youtube. <https://youtu.be/yu24PZIbkoY>

Opening Reflection:

- “We do not see the world as it is, we see the world as we are” – Andy Stanley
 - What does this quote mean?
 - How do our assumptions impact the way we treat others?
 - How do our assumptions affect relationships?

Watch Video:

- UNeek Productions. 2017. Different. Youtube. <https://youtu.be/yu24PZIbkoY>

Discussion:

- How were these two different from each other? You? Me?
- How did their differences impact their relationship in the beginning?
- What did they learn about one another's differences?
- How can changing your perception help you to respect differences?
- In what ways can you show someone that you respect their differences?
- How can respecting someone's differences help you develop stronger relationships?

Reflection

- Write about a time when you made an assumption about someone. Describe how you discovered that your perception of them was wrong once you got to know them.
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Our Differences Make Us Stronger (Grades K-5)



Overview: Our differences are our greatest strengths. Learning about what we have in common gives us a sense of belonging, but embracing and respecting our differences makes us a stronger community.

Objectives:

Students will:

- explore the similarities and differences of their classmates.
- discuss what it means to recognize and respect each other's differences.
- reflect on how it feels to be excluded for your differences.

Materials needed:

- Large sheets of paper—write 1, 2, 3, or 4 on each
- Marker
- One die with the 6 and 5 covered up
- List of questions (see *below*)

Directions:

1. Place one numbered sheet of paper in each corner of the room.
2. Gather the group in the middle of the room and point out the four corners.
3. Read a set of choices (use suggestions listed below or create your own) and ask students to go to the corner that best represents them. For example: “Which drink do you like the best? Go to corner 1 if you like soda the best, corner 2 for juice, corner 3 for milk, or corner 4 for water.”
4. Once the students move to the corner that represents them, ask each corner to briefly discuss why they selected their answer.
5. Ask a few students from different corners to share with the large group.
6. After a brief discussion, roll the dice. The number it lands on is the “unlucky number.” Eliminate the students in that corner. If you need to move the game more quickly, use the dice to choose the “lucky number” and that corner stays.
7. Keep playing until only a few participants are left. Play through at least two times.
8. Following the activity, ask:
 - How did it feel to be with others who are just like you?
 - How does it feel when you are different than everyone else?
 - What can we do to show respect to those who are different than us?

- How could our differences make us a stronger group?
- What did it feel like when you were eliminated from the game because of your differences?

Question Suggestions:

- Which music do you like best...rock, rap, country, or classical?
- Which do you wear most often...tennis shoes, sandals, bare feet, or boots?
- Which drink do you like the best...soda, juice, milk, or water?
- Are you most like a...square, triangle, circle, or oval?
- What type of movie do you like best...action, romance, comedy, or science fiction?
- Where would you most like to go on vacation...the beach, mountains, an amusement park, or camping?
- What color do you like best...green, purple, pink, or blue?

Adapted from Team-Building Activities for Every Group

Achieve and Avoid



Good communication requires us to respect each other. A tip for respectful conversations is to consider:

- what we want to achieve.
- what we want to avoid.

Achieve and Avoid

It is easy to focus too much on what we want to achieve in our conversations. For example, “I want to convince this person that I am right” or “I want to make this person realize that they are not considering all of the facts.” But, we should be putting the same focus on what we want to avoid during the conversation. We want to avoid insulting the other person, or even worse, ruining a relationship from a conversation gone wrong.

Before a conversation, if we think about what we want to achieve, we could want to:

- express our own opinion.
- give examples of our perspective.

We want to avoid:

- insulting the other person.

- making someone else feel insignificant or disrespected.

Approaching with Respect and Tolerance

It is important to remember that showing someone respect doesn't mean you are endorsing their beliefs. We don't have to agree with another person to give them respect and accept that their beliefs are valid to them.

Therefore, if we genuinely want to engage with someone who has different opinions, we need to approach them with respect and acceptance. A quick look at social media can show us that sometimes differences in opinion bring out criticism of people who think differently than we do. Criticism and judgment in those moments are precisely what we wanted to avoid. It will cause others to shut down communication and entrench them more deeply into their ideas and beliefs.

Your Next Conversation

Of course, we don't always prepare for each conversation and think through what we want to achieve and what we want to avoid. But, if we practice being aware of what we want to achieve and avoid, we'll get better at having respectful conversations that both people feel good about.

Trustworthy Friends (Grades K-5)



Overview: This activity will demonstrate ways that reliable and trustworthy friends can help you achieve things that feel impossible. Knowing how to identify traits of a trustworthy friend and the benefits of being one will help students as they develop their character skills.

Character Education Objectives:

Students will:

- engage in an activity that will require that they trust and rely on their partner.
- share the elements of a trustworthy friendship.
- reflect on their own friendships and consider how trust is vital to relationships.

Directions:

- Divide students into pairs.
- Partners sit facing each other with the soles of their shoes pressed against the other player's shoes.
- Ask students to reach out and grab their partner's hands.

- Next, ask students to pull their partner's hands. As they pull at the same time, they should try to pull each other into a standing position
- Have participants try this activity with a new partner (start with similar size partners and then try varied size partners).

Discussion:

- When do we have to rely on each other? How does that make you feel?
- Share about times when others have gone beyond the usual to show that they care for you. Ask students to share their experiences.
- What happens in a friendship when you cannot rely on the other person?
- Why is it important to have trustworthy friends?

Trustworthiness is one of the Six Pillars of Character. Click [here](#) to learn more about the Six Pillars!

Connection, Character, and Role Models



In our CHARACTER COUNTS! workshops, we discuss how being a positive role model is a key part of teaching good character. Think about a role model who made an impact on your life. Then, consider how that person was able to make such a positive impact on you. The answer we hear often is that the people who impact us take the time to learn about and connect with us. Connection is an important element of being a good role model and making a positive impact on others. Connection helps others trust us and believe in our integrity.

We hear amazing stories about people who make a positive impact because they connected with others and built trusting relationships. We learn about coaches who taught athletes how to overcome adversity in their lives, mentors who guided important, life-altering decisions, and teachers who inspired their students to become educators themselves.

Meaningful, sustainable connections aren't just the key to building relationships. Connecting with others also builds a positive culture, whether it be at home, work, school, or another organization. An easy first step in building connections is asking questions. Be curious and engaged about the other person. Look for commonalities and express interest

in your differences.

How can you make a positive impact on others? Get started by asking yourself these three questions:

1. Who made a positive impact on your life? In addition, how did that person make a difference in your life?
 2. Who could you positively impact by making a deeper connection with them?
 3. How can you make a deeper connection with those individuals?
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Fairness and Appearances (Grades 6-12)

This lesson explores injustice based on appearances. The lesson explores a group of children who could not live with the lack of fairness shown to one couple.