

Teaching Puberty: You Can Do It!

Growth & Development Curriculum Support for Grades 5 and 6

Lesson 2: Self-esteem, Feelings, and Relationships

Target Group: Grades 5 and 6
Suggested Time: 60 minutes

Learning Goals:

Today we are learning to:

- review ground rules as a class
- review key information from Lesson 1
- increase understanding of self-esteem and recognize value in ourselves and others
- increase awareness of thoughts, name feelings and needs
- practice assertive communication
- begin to explore attractions and crushes
- demonstrate confidence in asking questions
- be aware of resources that can assist us as we learn about puberty
- share our learning with an adult we trust

Suggested Materials:

- 'Facial Expressions' handouts (Appendix C)
- 'Feelings List' (Appendix D)
- 'Assertive Communication' handout (Appendix E)
- SMART board or white/black board
- flip chart paper
- coloured markers
- question box (with a small opening in the lid and the lid taped shut)
- paper for the question box (uniform colour/size)

Activity #1: Introduction

Review information from Lesson 1, including ground rules, what 'puberty' means, use of dictionary words, and the various ways that questions can be asked.

Clarify any confusion indicated through Lesson 1 Exit Cards – discuss actual questions from Exit Cards and take up answers as a group.

Activity #2: Self-esteem

Teacher prompt:

- “What does self-esteem mean?”

Write the term 'self-esteem' and its definition on the board.

Self-Esteem:

- a person's overall sense of self-worth or personal value
- a variety of beliefs about the self, such as the appraisal of one's own appearance, beliefs, emotions, and behaviours
- respect for, or favourable impression of, oneself

Teacher prompts:

- “What strengthens self-esteem?” (refer to Additional Information below)
- “What weakens self-esteem?” (refer to Additional Information below)

Have the students discuss with their elbow partner one characteristic/quality/activity that they are proud of or have been told that they are good at doing (e.g. strong listener, good at sports, able to make people laugh, artistic).

Teacher prompts:

- “How did this activity make you feel about yourself?”
- “Why is it important to recognize our own strengths and the strengths of others?” (e.g., we can build upon our own strengths and help others build upon their own strengths)

Additional Information for Activity #2:

- As we grow up, our self-esteem is influenced by interactions with our family, friends, peers, and the community in which we live.
- Starting at puberty, our self-esteem may be affected to a greater degree by interactions with peers.
- Some factors that influence or weaken self-esteem: criticism, rejection, bullying, struggling with achievement.
- Discrimination (e.g., racism, **homophobia**, **ableism**, **classism**) can have a significant impact on our **self-esteem**.
- Showing kindness, respect, and empathy for others can improve self-esteem for others and for ourselves.
- Some factors that influence or strengthen self-esteem: supportive and loving family/caregivers, peer support and respect, recognizing our strengths.

Activity #3 (Optional): Valuing Others – Advertisement for a Friend

Note: Consider expanding this activity to include a media literacy or visual arts project.

Working in small groups, ask students to create an advertisement for a friend. Give each group a piece of flip chart paper and markers as needed.

Teacher prompt:

- “Let’s say you are advertising for a friend. Create a poster using words or images of things you would want in the friend.”

Give 10 minutes for the groups to create the poster.

Have students post and present their ads to the larger group.

Ask students to choose from the advertisements the top three qualities they consider essential to a friendship. Emphasize that the qualities of a friend are more important than what someone looks like (e.g., humour, trust, respect, kindness).

Review and discuss the following statements with the class:

Teacher prompts:

- “Do friends have to do everything together?” (No, but need to have some things in common.)
- “Do friends have to like the same things?” (No, but also need to have some common things they like to do.)
- “Can friends come from different cultures, communities, and **genders**, as well as have different religious backgrounds?” (Yes, they can.)
- “Do friends have to be the same age?” (No, you can have older or younger friends, but sometimes a big age difference could bring out concerns about exploitation.)

Additional Information for Activity #3

- Friendships change throughout a lifetime, particularly at adolescence, when people have more freedom to choose their friends.
- Having friends from differing communities, diverse cultures, and experiences can increase awareness and acceptance of others.
- Having good friendships contributes to mental health and well-being.

Activity #4: Naming Feelings and Needs

Teacher prompts:

- “We are going to talk about feelings. The words that describe feelings are more than just sad, happy, and mad.”
- “Feelings can also be confusing – especially when you feel more than one at the same time. For example, when you start to notice the first signs of puberty, you might feel anxious, annoyed, excited, or all of the above.”
- “Why do you think it is important to identify and communicate our feelings to others?”
- “There are many words that we can use to describe our feelings and our experiences. Sometimes writing down or journaling how we feel about something can help us deal with an experience.”

Have students get into small groups. Give each group one of the ‘Facial Expressions’ handouts (Appendix C).

Have the groups create a mind map with words that they could use to describe the ‘facial expression’ they were given. (See the following examples.)



After the students have completed their list, give each group a copy of the 'Feelings List' (Appendix D). Give groups a few more minutes to add to their list using the handout.

Teacher Prompt: (back in the large group)

- "Were there any new words that you learned?"

Have them hold up the 'facial expression' that they were given and share their learning.

**The feeling of 'depression' will likely be named. Clarify for students that feeling upset or down for a short period of time is common, however if it lasts more than two weeks, it is important to talk to someone.¹*

Additional Information for Activity #4

- Writing about feelings and thoughts often makes the feelings less intense.
- The ability to talk about feelings (emotional literacy) can help children/youth build resiliency.

Activity #5: Identifying Thoughts, Feelings, and Needs

Read the following story to the class:

Jess and Jadin are in Grade 6 and they hang out together. Lately, Jess has been getting into trouble from the teacher and has had to stay late after class for passing jokes and laughing at inappropriate times during class. Jadin is usually nearby and gets in trouble as well. Some of the other students decided they aren't going to hang out with Jess and Jadin and they say: "You two are so immature!"

Teacher prompts:

- "How do you think Jadin is feeling?"
- "How do you think Jess is feeling?"
- "What are some of the ways that Jadin and Jess might deal with this situation?"

Discuss with the class that there are three main styles of communication which can be used when dealing with conflict or disagreements: **Aggressive**, **Passive** and **Assertive** (see Additional Information below for definitions of these terms).

Teacher prompts:

- "PASSIVE: Jadin says nothing but feels upset for getting in trouble."
- "AGGRESSIVE: Jadin may push Jess as they go out for recess or say: 'You're so stupid!'"
- "ASSERTIVE communication is a more effective way to communicate. Let's look at the assertive communication formula (below) and see how we can apply it to discuss what Jadin might be feeling."

¹ Public Health Agency of Canada (2014). What is depression?
Retrieved from <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/cd-mc/mi-mm/depression-eng.php>

Write the Assertive Communication Formula on the board:

Assertive Communication Formula

I feel _____ (say how you are feeling)
when you _____ (describe the action).

What I want you to do is _____ (say what action you want from the other).

(T. Gordon. 2000)

Teacher prompt:

"Using this formula, what could Jadin say to Jess?"

**See Appendix E for more examples that students can use to practice using the assertive communication formula.*

Additional Information for Activity #5

- Naming feelings can help people understand, recognize, and address what they are experiencing.
- Passive communication is a style of communication in which someone avoids expressing their feelings or opinions and standing up for themselves.
- Aggressive communication is a style in which someone expresses their needs or desires in a way that disrespects, puts down, or violates the rights of others.
- Assertive communication is a style of communication in which someone is clear, direct, and respectful to the other person while standing up firmly for themselves.

Activity #6: Attractions or 'Crushes'

Teacher prompt:

- "A **crush**, slang for 'attraction,' is when you have a deep desire or liking for a person. It may be someone your age or a different age; it may be a famous person; it could be someone the same gender as you or different; and you may or may not ever tell anyone how you feel. Many people experience the feeling of having a crush, but not all of us do – don't worry if you have not had this feeling!"
- "Let's say someone has a crush on someone in their school. They say to a good friend: '*Don't tell anyone, but I like...*' The next day at recess, several other students come up to the person saying: 'I know who you like!' How do you think the person with the crush would feel?"

Use the assertiveness formula (as a whole group, individually, or in small groups), to outline what the person who had the crush may do in this situation.

Additional Information for Activity #6

- Crushes or attractions may begin around puberty or not for many years, or not at all.
- Attractions may be transient or go on for a long time.

- Attractions can be experienced on a continuum. Some people may only feel attractions to someone of a different sex or gender, and some people may only feel attractions to someone of the same sex or gender. Some people just feel many attractions.
- Negative attitudes in society, and repeated in the media, towards LGBTQ youth, put them at risk for violence including behaviour such as bullying, teasing, harassment, physical assault, and suicide-related behaviours. Teachers can use this exercise as an opportunity to challenge homophobia, and address why that would not be appropriate.

Activity #7: Changing Relationships

[Recommended for Grade 6]

Read the following story: (You may need to change the names based on your professional judgement.)

Micolah and Sharon are both in grade 7 and have been close friends for a long time. They spend lots of time learning about each other and having fun together. Neesha is new to the school and is in grade 6. Micolah has been asked to be a peer leader to Neesha and they have decided to spend time together after school as well. Micolah and Neesha notice their relationship has been growing stronger while the relationship between Micolah and Sharon has grown apart. Sharon is noticing the change too and does not like this new feeling. Sharon is used to having more of Micolah's attention and is now being forced to learn to share the time they usually spend together.

During the week, Sharon invites Micolah over after school and says, "I miss hanging out with you and I don't want to invite Neesha to my home, just you". Neesha is in the hallway by the locker and overhears the conversation.

Teacher prompts:

- "What is happening in this story?"
- "Who do you think is hurt and why?"
- "What do you think could happen to make things a little better?"
- "Think about if you have ever excluded someone or felt left out yourself?"
- "Who could someone talk to if they were feeling sad or left out?"

Additional Information for Activity #7

- Rejection hurts everyone; speaking to a friend or trusted adult about how it feels may help.
- Sometimes journaling feelings, exercising, or simply being kind to yourself can improve feelings.
- Relationships change throughout your life. Sometimes people grow closer together and sometimes they grow apart.

Wrap Up for Lesson 2

- Summarize what was discussed in this lesson and ask for any questions.
- Encourage students to share what they have learned with a trusted adult.
- Write the Kids Help Phone contact information on the board (1-800-668-6868, www.kidshelpphone.ca) and remind students that contacting Kids Help Phone is free, confidential, anonymous, and that it can be a safe place to discuss concerns.
- Discuss what will be talked about in Lesson 3: diversity, hormones, changes at puberty.
- Give students paper and ask for contributions to the question box. (See Appendix A)
- Distribute 'Exit Cards' and give students a few minutes to complete them and hand them in

Lesson 2 Exit Card

Name _____

Name a new feeling that you have learned from this lesson. _____

What are two things you can do to help your classmates feel better about themselves?

Lesson 2 Exit Card

Name _____

Name a new feeling that you have learned from this lesson. _____

What are two things you can do to help your classmates feel better about themselves?

Adapted with permission from Toronto Public Health (October 2022)



HEALTH
DEPARTMENT

Durham Health Connection Line | 905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729
durham.ca/sexualhealth

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.

