



Decision Making

ABOUT MORNINGSIDE CENTER

Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility's evidence-validated programs engage young people in learning essential social and emotional skills and help educators build productive and respectful schools. The 4Rs Program combines superior children's books with engaging SEL activities that explore community, feelings, relationships, conflict, and problem-solving, adding depth to literacy instruction.

Aggressor, Target, Bystander

By: The 4Rs



Aggressors, Targets, Bystanders

Note to the teacher:

This is Lesson 3 from The 4Rs™ [Reading, Writing, Respect & Resolution] *Teaching Guide for Grade 4, Unit 6: Diversity*, pp. 106-108. All skills lessons in The 4Rs™ follow this format: Gathering / Check agenda / 1 or 2 skills activities / Evaluation / Closing.

The book selection for this unit is *The Hundred Dresses* by Eleanor Estes.

Time: 40-45 minutes

Materials: see list below

Objectives

Students will

- define “aggressors,” “targets,” and “bystanders”;
- increase their awareness of the responsibilities of bystanders;
- generate ideas for standing up to unfair treatment directed at them or at others;
- practice carrying out those ideas in role plays.

Materials Needed

- a brightly colored balloon
- agenda on chart paper or the chalkboard

Gathering: This is a hat

The students pass a balloon around. When a student receives the balloon, she uses her imagination to think of what it might be (besides a balloon). For example: “This is an idea,” “This is the biggest piece of hard candy I’ve ever seen,” “This is a cloud.”

Check agenda

Go over the objectives and the agenda.



Aggressors, Targets, Bystanders

Aggressors, targets, and bystanders

Explain that in situations where people are being treated unfairly, there are three kinds of people. “Aggressors” are those who are actively carrying out the mistreatment. “Targets” are those at whom the mistreatment is directed. And “bystanders” are people who are “standing by”; that is, they are present, they see what’s happening, but they are neither on the giving nor the receiving end of the mistreatment.

In *The Hundred Dresses*, who was the aggressor? Who was the target? Who was the bystander? How does Maddie feel about her failure to stop Peggy from targeting Wanda? Do you agree with Maddie’s conclusion that she should have stood up for Wanda and her commitment “never. . .to stand by and do nothing again”? Do you think it will be easy for her to keep this promise? Why? Why not?

What are other situations, either in literature, history, or their own lives, where people experienced mistreatment because they were different in some way? Who were the aggressors? Who were the targets? Who were the bystanders? Ask the students to take out paper and pencil and jot down some quick thoughts.

After a couple of minutes, ask the students to share what they’ve written with a partner. Then give several volunteers a chance to share their thinking with the group.

Quick Thinking

When people are being treated unfairly, both the targets and the bystanders face decisions. Will they try to stop the mistreatment or will they accept it? If they decide to try to stop the mistreatment, how will they do so?



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Although it's not easy to stand up against injustice, we can increase our effectiveness by thinking ahead of time about the kinds of situations we may encounter and practicing good responses. That's the purpose of this exercise.

Explain that you are going to describe a situation to the class. Then students, working in pairs, will have a minute or two to come up with an idea for addressing it. When the time is up, the pairs share their idea with the group. The aim is to generate lots of ideas and get people thinking, not necessarily to come up with one "best" approach.

Below are some situations you can give the students for "quick thinking." For each situation, first ask students to come up with ideas about how they could respond if they were the target. Have several volunteers share their ideas with the group. Then ask the partners to work together again and come up with ideas about how they could respond if they were a bystander.

- The most popular boy in the class (and your best friend) learns that a boy named Michael is a ballet student and starts to tease him, calling him gay.
- Ricardo is taking a special after-school reading class to improve his reading scores, and some of the boys in the class tease him, calling him a "retard."
- A group of girls is playing a chasing game. Sabrina wants to play and is told, "You're too fat."

Skits: Standing up against discrimination

Have the students work in groups of four or five. In each group, students begin with a go-round in which each student shares a time they were



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treated unfairly or watched someone else be treated unfairly. Then the group chooses one of the situations described in the go-round to develop as a skit. The skit should portray an incident in which someone is mistreated because they are different and either the target or a bystander or both standing up and stopping the mistreatment. Encourage the students to use their skills in listening and assertiveness to come up with effective responses.

Each group presents its skit, followed by a brief discussion: Have others in the class either experienced or witnessed an incident like this? What strategy for stopping the mistreatment did the skit show us? Were conflict resolution skills involved in the strategy? Do you think the approach presented in the skit would work in the real world? Why? Why not? Could you see yourself actually using that approach?

Evaluation

What's one thing you learned from today's lesson? It's not easy to stop people when they're treating others unfairly. Did the lesson help you see ways you might be able to stop people from treating others unfairly? What idea did you find most helpful?

Closing: YES!

Standing in a circle, students join hands, then bend over lowering their hands toward the floor, and then slowly rise up, bringing their hands up over their heads, while saying, "Y-e-e-e-e-e-s!"

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