

Empathy

Lesson Title: Happy Faces

Description: Everyone has a bad day once in a while. This activity helps students be sensitive to schoolmates who might be having a bad day and gives them a way to cross boundaries and bring cheer to others.

Grade: K-2

Risk: Low

Materials:

- One class session to explain the happy faces
- 3 happy faces per student
- *Alexander and the Horrible No Good Very Bad Day* Book

Objective(s):

- *Students will learn empathy*
- *Students will look beyond themselves to see the needs of others*

Procedure:

1. Begin by reading *Alexander and the Horrible No Good Very Bad Day*. Like Alexander, everyone has a bad day once and a while. Tell your students, from your personal experience, about a day that went badly for you. Tell them that you really could have used a friendly smile that day — or, perhaps, publicly affirm a student who did give you a smile that day.
2. Explain to students what a bystander is (i.e. someone who watches from the sidelines). Sometimes we see other classmates being bullied. Perhaps someone has said or done something mean to them, and we aren't sure what to do to make the victim feel better. Sometimes we stand up for that person. Sometimes we do nothing. Tell your students that doing nothing is no longer an option — because they have Happy Faces.
3. Give each student three happy faces and tell them that whenever they see someone who needs some extra cheer, they can give them a happy face and say something kind to them. Here is the catch: students can only give happy faces to someone outside of their classroom! Tell students they'll have to really look and listen before

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school, at recess on the playground, at lunch and after school to find people who need an extra smile.

4. On Friday, give students a chance to reflect on giving out happy faces. Have them silently write or draw a picture to show what they did, how it felt and the response of the person they gave a happy face to. Then share these with the whole class.

Extension Activity

Without telling your class, invite a colleague to implement this happy face activity too, with a special emphasis on watching your class. Your students will be shocked and pleased to receive their own happy faces!

Have your students go, in pairs, to give happy faces to adults in school who just need an extra affirmation for the hard work they're doing. This way, students get a chance to cross boundaries of age to affirm adults.