



Anti-Defamation League®

# Empowering Children in the Aftermath of Hate

A Guide for Educators  
and Parents



Anti-Defamation League®

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# WHAT TEACHERS AND PARENTS CAN DO

*How can we, as teachers and parents, give our children the tools they need to confront hate effectively in the aftermath of hate violence or terrorism in our community?*

People tend to fear or distrust other people they perceive as being different from themselves. When we convince ourselves that our way is the “right” way, we are more likely to strike out at those who seem different. In fact, intolerance of differences is at the root of much violence.

As parents and adult family members, we cannot assume that children are unaware of what is happening around them. As educators, we know that we must talk about these issues with our children. All people feel vulnerable when attackers go after “people like them.” To counteract the fear, we must ensure that children receive opportunities to express how they feel and to channel these feelings into positive actions in their own lives and in their communities.

Before any discussion begins, it is imperative that every effort be made to create an environment where children will feel comfortable expressing their views.

Establishing ground rules for discussion can be a positive way of beginning. You may want to ask children to imagine they are playing a game of basketball. Ask them if they can imagine playing the game without rules. What would happen if nobody followed the rules? Then ask the children to think about the rules they would like to see in place to help them feel safe, especially when they want to talk about issues that may be fearful to them. Points to stress include respecting one another's opinions, being open to new ideas, having empathy, listening actively, and maintaining confidentiality.

How can we begin and continue conversations about terror and violence with children? What can we say or do to help our children feel safe?

The skills we need to dialogue effectively with children change as they grow. Each child develops differently, and at his or her own pace. There are a few guidelines that are consistent regardless of the stage the child is in:

- Treat all children's questions with respect and seriousness, no matter how difficult they may seem to you. Do not shush, ignore, or dismiss them. If they make you feel uncomfortable or anxious, ask yourself why. Your own discomfort is not a valid excuse for silence. A child will most likely sense your discomfort and interpret it as an indication of danger. It is okay to tell a child that you feel uncomfortable, and you need to think about his or her question.



- Clarify the question, so that you can understand what is being asked and why. It is also important to understand what led to the question. A good way to clarify a question is to first repeat it back and then inquire why you are being asked, or how your child is feeling about this topic. Remember that what a young child may need most is reassurance, closeness and continuity with a familiar routine.
- Answer questions as clearly and honestly as you can and use developmentally-appropriate language and definitions. Be sure that you define terms in a way that is age-appropriate. Try not to preach; rather, be matter of fact. If you do not know the answer, say so and make a plan to try to find out.
- Correct yourself if you give a “wrong” or incomplete answer. Don’t be afraid of mistakes. Remember, children often make mistakes and are a lot more forgiving of them than most adults. Admitting our mistakes teaches children how to do this when necessary.
- Be alert to signs of upset. These include withdrawal, lack of interest, acting out, fear of school or other activities.
- Point out when an ethnic group is stereotyped on television or in a book and explain why it is unfair to stereotype. Address any biased comments a child makes and help them understand that words can hurt. Children who yell a racist or hurtful name as a reaction to anger or fear need to be talked with. They must learn that these words are unacceptable under any circumstances. They should be helped to understand that hate-based violence doesn't start out physically; it usually starts with words, then escalates.
- Take appropriate action against prejudice and discrimination. Children need to know that discriminatory behavior is unacceptable. They will look to adults to learn how to confront bigotry. Children should also be encouraged to know that they, too, can confront prejudice and can create positive change (e.g., painting over racist graffiti, collecting contributions for those hurt by hate).



# FEELINGS

## An Activity for Pre-School Children

### Rationale:

The purpose of this activity is to help children develop the skills and understanding that foster respect of self and of others.

### Directions:

1. Invite children to talk about familiar feelings and to use their bodies and faces to show how they look when they are feeling a particular emotion. Make sure the discussion includes a range of emotions, including anger, sadness, happiness, surprise, pride, fear and frustration.
2. Play music with different tempos and moods, and ask the children how the music makes them feel.
3. Choose a feeling, such as sadness, and ask, "Can you tell me some times when you felt sad?"
4. Let the children respond, and then add, "Do you feel sad when someone doesn't ask you to play? How about when someone hurts your feelings?"
5. Let the children explore all the different times that they feel sad. Then ask them, "What are some ways we can help a sad person feel better?"
6. Ask, "Can you tell me some times when you felt afraid?"
7. Let the children respond, and then add, "Do you feel afraid when something bad happens to someone?" "Do you ever worry that it could happen to you, too?"
8. Let the children explore all the different times that they feel afraid. Then ask them, "What are some ways we can help a person who is afraid feel better?"
9. Explore other emotions in the same manner, using examples that will heighten the children's awareness. Suggest positive feelings to counteract the negative feelings that may have come up during this activity. Examples could be acceptance, bravery, and hope.

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Adapted from The Miller Early Childhood Initiative of A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE® Institute *Bias-Free Foundations: Early Childhood Activities for Educators.*



# LEMONS

## An Activity on Generalization and Stereotypes for Elementary School Children

### Rationale:

The aim of this activity is for students to understand the relationship between generalizations and stereotypes.

### Materials & Requirements:

One lemon for every four to five students for Part I of this activity, plus a different fruit (banana, kiwi, etc.), for each small group for Part II. Room with enough space to divide the participants into smaller groups in which they can speak without disturbing other groups.

### Directions:

1. Put all lemons out on a table where everyone can see them. Ask participants to describe the characteristics of a lemon (e.g., round, yellow, sour). Write their responses on the board.
2. Divide participants into small groups and give each group a lemon.
3. Ask the participants to get to know their lemon by studying it and noticing all its special characteristics. Tell them not to mark or alter their lemon in any way. They can give their lemon a name, create a story about their lemon, and start to see it as an individual.
4. After a short time, have someone from each group tell the large group about their lemon.
5. Collect all the lemons and mix them up. Ask one person from each group to come up and pick out “their” lemon. (This usually isn’t a problem since they’ve gotten to know their lemon as unique and individual.)
6. Ask the following discussion questions:
  - Why was it so easy for you to identify your lemon?
  - Have you ever had certain ideas about someone that changed once you got to know him or her? (These ideas may be stereotypes.)
  - Has someone ever had certain ideas about you that changed once they got to know you?
  - Why can stereotypes be harmful?
7. Distribute a different fruit to each group, a kiwi, a papaya, a pomegranate, a banana, etc.
8. Tell the participants that some new fruits will be moving into Lemon Land. Each group will have five minutes to decide whether to accept or reject the “outsider” fruit. They are to create a story/role play about their decision which will be presented to the whole group.



9. Each group will have two minutes to present their skit or rationale for accepting or rejecting their “foreign” fruit.
10. Ask the following discussion questions:
  - What did you decide about letting the “outsider” fruit in?
  - Have you ever been a kiwi in a lemon world? How did you handle it?
  - Who are the "outsiders" in your school? Community? Home?
  - What are some of the ways we make people feel unwelcome? How can we help people feel welcome in our community?

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Adapted with permission from J.W. Pfeiffer and John E. Jones, eds., *A Handbook of Structured Experiences for Human Relations Training*, Vol. III (San Diego, CA: Pfeiffer & Co., 1974).



# SCAPEGOATING

## An Activity for Middle School Children

### Rationale:

The purpose of this activity is to examine how stereotyping, prejudice and discriminatory practices can lead to unfairly blaming individuals and groups for events when, in reality, the cause or causes are unclear or when the blame actually belongs elsewhere. This lesson also provides students with an introduction to the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II.

### Part I.

## Understanding the Difference Between Stereotyping, Prejudice, Discrimination and Scapegoating

### Directions:

1. Write the sentences below, minus the identifying term in parentheses, on a piece of chart paper, an overhead transparency or the chalkboard. Have students identify each statement as an example of stereotyping, prejudice or discrimination.
  - Third graders are all babies. (stereotype)
  - We don't like the third graders. (prejudice)
  - Let's not let the third graders play with us. (discrimination)
2. Review the definitions of the terms stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination with the class and then have students develop examples similar to the ones in Procedure #1. The definitions are as follows:

A **stereotype** is an oversimplified generalization about an entire group of people without regard for individual differences.

**Prejudice** is pre-judging, making a decision about a person or group of people without sufficient knowledge. Prejudicial thinking is based on stereotypes. Prejudice is an attitude.

**Discrimination** is the behavior that can follow prejudicial thinking. Discrimination is the denial of justice and fair treatment in many arenas, including employment, housing and political rights.



When it is clear that students understand how the terms differ, show them the statements below and again have them identify each as an example of stereotyping, prejudice or discrimination:

- All teenagers shoplift. (stereotyping)
  - I don't like teenagers. (prejudice)
  - Teenagers aren't allowed in my store. (discrimination)
3. After students have correctly identified each of the statements, add a fourth statement as follows:
- Teenagers are the reason why prices are so high.
4. Ask students to consider the following questions about the statement, using the following questions:
- What is the underlying assumption in this statement? (e.g., teenagers are to blame for high prices.)
  - How would you determine if this information is accurate?
  - What are some other possible reasons why prices might be high? (e.g., storekeepers want to make a profit.)
  - Do you think it is fair to blame teenagers for high prices without more factual information? Explain your thinking.
  - How might stereotyping lead to blaming?

Write the word "scapegoating" on the chalkboard or on chart paper. Explain that scapegoating is when people unfairly blame a person or a group of people for something when in fact the blame lies elsewhere or when it is uncertain where the blame lies. Saying that teenagers are to blame for high prices is an example of scapegoating.

## Part II.

### A Historical Example of Scapegoating: The Internment of Japanese Americans

#### Directions:

1. Tell students that there are many examples of how scapegoating has taken place throughout history both in the United States and around the world. Among other things, groups of people have been blamed for economic problems, diseases, unemployment, illegal drug problems and wars. One example of how stereotypes, prejudices and discriminatory practices against a group of people led to scapegoating was the treatment of Japanese Americans during World War II. Ask students to share the knowledge they have about the



internment of Japanese Americans. Allow a few minutes for sharing then read the following information to the group:

Shortly before 8:00 a.m. on December 7, 1941, Japanese aircraft attacked the naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. By the time the attack was over, a large part of the U.S. Naval Fleet in the Pacific Ocean was lost. The United States immediately declared war on Japan and entered World War II.

Many people in the United States were angry and afraid. They began to worry that if the Japanese would attack Hawaii, they might also be able to attack other cities on the West Coast. Prejudice and discrimination against Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans did not start with the bombing of Pearl Harbor, however. In fact, Japanese Americans had faced discrimination in both employment and education since they began immigrating to the United States in the late 1800s. Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the U.S. military was able to pressure the government to suspend many Japanese Americans' Constitutional rights.

2. Using resources like *The Children of Topaz: The Story of a Japanese American Internment Camp* by Michael O. Tunnell and George W. Chilcoat (New York, NY: Holiday House, 1996), show students pictures of internment camps and explain the meaning of the word "internment." Explain to students that because many people were afraid that people of Japanese ancestry were a threat to the United States, they wanted to keep them in an area where they could be watched constantly. Once the government decided to relocate people of Japanese ancestry to internment camps, they were told where and when they were to report and what they were allowed to bring or not bring (e.g., no pets were allowed, people could only bring what they could carry).
3. Have students list what they would take with them if they were suddenly told that they had to leave their homes for an indefinite amount of time and could only take with them what they could carry.
4. Explain to students that there were many factors that led to the treatment of Japanese Americans during World War II. Tell students that you want them to think about the following questions:
  - What were some stereotypes about Japanese Americans that people believed prior to World War II?
  - What were some of the prejudices against Japanese Americans?
  - How was the internment of Japanese Americans an example of discrimination?
  - How did rumors and misinformation create a distrustful attitude toward Japanese Americans following the bombing of Pearl Harbor?

#### Web Site Source

National Archives and Records Administration, [www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov)

Contains photographs from various time periods in United States history, including many photographs from the time period of Japanese-American relocation and internment.



- Do you think people felt they had to blame someone for the bombing of Pearl Harbor? Explain your thinking.
  - How were Japanese Americans scapegoated?
5. End this lesson by having students read a book about the internment of Japanese Americans and write one or more diary entries from the perspective of one of the characters in the story.

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Adapted from *A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE® Institute Anti-Bias Study Guide, Elementary/Intermediate Level* (New York: Anti-Defamation League, 2000).



# THE PYRAMID OF ALLIANCE

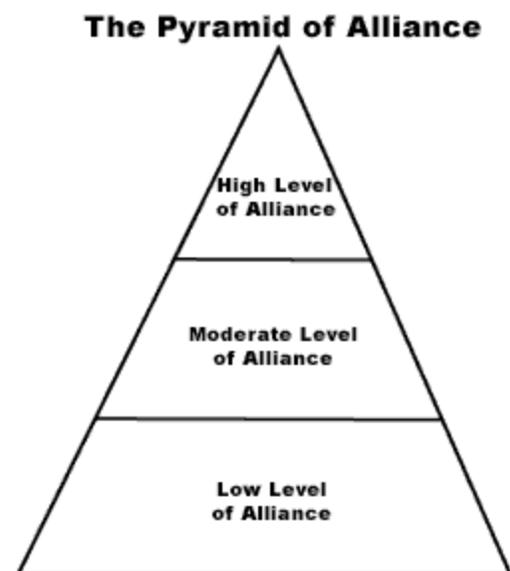
## An Activity for Senior High School Students

### Rationale:

The purpose of this activity is for students to examine some of the ways that people take action against bigotry. The activity also gives students an opportunity to consider some of the ways a person can be an ally and to assess how building alliances strengthens a community.

### Directions:

1. Explain to students that in this activity they will explore some of the ways that individuals and communities fight bigotry.
2. Have students brainstorm the kinds of things people have done or can do to fight hate in their communities. List their suggestions on a piece of chart paper. Discuss how these measures can be effective in both curtailing hate activity and in helping victims of hate.
3. Explain that many individuals do play an active role in combating hate. When the Anti-Defamation League and the National Urban League joined together and asked people to make donations to help rebuild the African-American churches that were burned in 1995 and 1996, hundreds of individuals wrote letters and sent personal contributions.
4. Explain that expressing sympathy and sending donations are two ways that people can be an ally to others, but there are other actions that can be taken as well.
5. Draw the *Pyramid of Alliance*, as illustrated to the right, on the board or chart paper. Briefly review the pyramid and then divide students into small groups of four to five students. Give each group chart paper and markers and instruct them to select a recorder and a reporter.
6. Each group is to draw a pyramid similar to the one shown here and then identify actions that represent the different levels of alliance (e.g., low level of alliance might be interrupting a joke about a particular group of people; moderate level of alliance might be attending a rally or march supporting a group; high level of alliance might be helping to rebuild a mosque or a church or clean a synagogue that has been desecrated). Allow 15 to 20 minutes for groups to build their pyramids.



7. Have each group share its *Pyramid of Alliance* with the class. Students should notice that what some individuals see as a low level of alliance may seem like a high level of alliance to others. Sometimes an act of alliance may require a greater degree of risk because of the circumstances (e.g., if a student interrupts a joke with a classmate the risk may not be great, but if a student interrupts a joke told by a teacher or parent, the risk may be greater).
8. After all groups have presented and the pyramids are displayed around the room, lead a group discussion using the following questions:
  - Have you ever been an ally? For whom? What motivated you to act?
  - For which groups have you not been an ally? Why not?
  - Have you ever attempted to be an ally to someone but your efforts were rejected? How did you feel?
  - What are some possible reasons why someone would reject an ally? What else can you do in that situation?
  - Who, if anyone, has been your ally? What level of the *Pyramid of Alliance* did the individual or group's behavior represent?
  - How does building alliances strengthen a community?
9. As a homework assignment, have students listen to the local news or read the local paper and identify situations where it would be beneficial for members of the community to act as allies to a particular individual or group. Students should identify what level of alliance would be appropriate to the situation as well as some possible actions that could be taken. Have students also share how these actions could ultimately strengthen the community. [NOTE: Students can also discuss situations in their school community where alliances would be beneficial.]
10. Have students meet in small groups to share the homework assignment.

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