

Friends
come with
all types of



TOPIC: Empowerment, not pity!

Help your students discover and understand that everyone, including people with disabilities, want to be empowered and not pitied.

GRADE: 4

TIME: 30-45 minutes

OBJECTIVES:

Students will:

- Gain awareness that people with disabilities want and deserve to be empowered, not pitied.
- Understand that people with disabilities are valuable, contributing members of our communities.

MATERIALS:

- Poster or chart paper for teacher or whiteboard or interactive whiteboard
- Poster or chart paper for student groups of four
- Markers
- Pencils
- Magazines for cutting if desired, glue sticks, scissors

ACTIVITY:

1. Put large sheet of paper on the board (or use whiteboard or interactive whiteboard) and write the words PITY and EMPOWERMENT to make two columns.
2. Ask students if they can define each word. Write their definitions in each column. You may have to prompt students and help them understand what these words mean and give some examples.
3. Discussion questions:
 - a. Have you ever felt pity for someone? Why?
 - b. Does it make people feel less able to do something or be successful if they are pitied?
 - c. If we don't focus on people's strengths and gifts, does pity limit them?
 - d. Do people like to do things for themselves as much as possible?
 - e. Do people like to fit in, even if an activity or game is harder for them than others? Why?
 - f. Have you ever had a time when someone felt pity for you? Can you tell us what that was like and how you felt?
 - g. How do people feel when they are empowered? Give examples
 - h. How do you feel when are empowered?

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4. Read this statement and ask the accompanying questions: *"A disability is not something that someone wants sympathy for. A person with a disability does not, in any way, want the sympathetic looks on our faces. He/she does not want people to feel sorry for him or her. A person with a disability just wants to live their life. They are members of society and part of a community just like others and they want to make contributions."*
- What is "normal"?
 - Can you give some examples of things a person may want to do so they feel equal to others?
 - What do *you* like to do? Do you think some people with disabilities may want to do those things as well?
 - Let's go back to the empowerment column. Can you think of other ways people want to feel empowered? (Write their answers)
 - Is it true that we all have different abilities, talents, interests and personalities? Can you list them?
 - Isn't it true that people with disabilities go to school, get married, work, have families, play, do laundry, go shopping, eat out, travel, volunteer, vote, pay taxes, laugh, cry, plan and dream — just like everyone else?
 - Many people without disabilities see people with disabilities as having flaws, and they want to help, to sympathize, and to show pity. Do you think this is true? How do you think that makes someone with a disability feel?
5. Break students into groups of four and give each a sheet of poster or flipchart paper along with pens (and magazines to cut up if desired.) Ask each group to create a *"We Empower People"* poster that has words of empowerment and drawings (or magazine pictures) of people being empowered, etc. Each student should write his or her name somewhere on the poster surrounded by words of empowerment. Students can share posters and they can be hung up in room if desired.
6. Closing Discussion:
- a. Do people often assume that someone with a disability has a problem, a flaw, or something to be ashamed of or embarrassed about?
 - b. Is this true? Is it fair to think that?
 - c. Sometimes people assume that those with disabilities are unhappy and/or unfulfilled. Is this true? Why not?
 - d. What message does pity send? (Below are some prompts)
 - Instead of focusing on what a person can do by embracing all their strengths and gifts, does pity limit a person?
 - Can pity promote the view of charity rather than the view of inclusion?
 - Can pity lower an individual's self-esteem?
 - Does pity towards people with disabilities give society the false impression that disability and happiness can't coexist?
 - How can we change attitudes so people stop pitying and treat everyone equally so all can be empowered?

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AN IMPORTANT NOTE FROM THE CROMWELL CENTER

Dear Teacher or Guidance Counselor:

Your brief feedback on this or on any of our other lesson plans is very important. It will enable us to share results with our grant funders and help obtain future funding, and any suggestions for improvements will help us fine tune the activities to best meet your needs.

To provide this valuable feedback, please go to the form on the bottom of this page on our website: <http://cromwellcenter.org/teacher-resources/>.

Or, if you prefer, you can e-mail your comments to sgreenwood@cromwellcenter.org.

Thank you!