

LESSON: EDUCATING YOURSELF ABOUT DISABILITIES

This lesson plan and accompanying activity are designed to be taught after showing the jsk stories students with disabilities presentation. Feel free to change, adjust, and customize these plans according to your classroom or circumstance. The lesson and activity go well together, but can be split into two days.

DISCUSS: WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF DISABILITIES?

> There are many types of disabilities that affect each person differently. There are physical/mobility disabilities, mental health disabilities, developmental disabilities, and even learning disabilities.

> Even if two people have the same type of disability, it does not mean that their experiences in life are the same, nor are the ways that their disabilities affect their day-to-day activities are the same.

> No matter what a person's disability may be, we should strive to exercise patience, courtesy, and kindness in all that we do and say!

CONCEPT 1
EVERY DISABILITY
IS DIFFERENT.

DISCUSS: HOW DO YOU OVERCOME OBSTACLES DUE TO THE CONDITIONS OF A PERSON'S DISABILITY WHEN WORKING ON A PROJECT, IN THE CLASSROOM, OR ON THE STAGE?

> If an artist with a disability is involved in a project for theatre or film- whether they be an actor, tech crew, designer, or director- never say that you "can't" do a project due to the nature of their disability. Instead, say "How Can?". For example, "How can we make this film/play more accessible for people with disabilities?" "How can we program the music and lighting in this film to be sensory friendly?" "How can we choreograph this number to incorporate the use of a wheelchair?"

> Generally speaking, we should avoid "labeling" or identifying other people exclusively by their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, or by their disability. Sure, these things can play a profound role in someone's life and can greatly impact their activities of daily living. However, we do not know how "labeling" or always referring to a person by one of these terms would make them feel. There are plenty of other ways to refer to someone aside from what may set them apart from others. For instance- you can never go wrong with referring to someone by their preferred name. If you don't know their name, ask them!

> We should never assume the physical or mental capabilities of another person. Nor should we ever tell others what they do or do not have the potential to accomplish. We should always treat others with respect and do our best to be inclusive of people with disabilities.

CONCEPT 2
A DISABILITY DOES NOT
DEFINE A PERSON OR LIMIT
THEIR CAPABILITIES.

DISCUSS: WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO HAVE A BASIC KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF DISABILITIES? HOW DO YOU THINK LEARNING TERMINOLOGY SURROUNDING DISABILITIES WOULD BENEFIT YOU AND THOSE AROUND YOU?

> While researching and learning about different types of disabilities will never give you a complete and whole understanding of someone else's disability, it will help you develop empathy and compassion. Learning and ultimately using correct terminology will help others feel safe and included whenever they interact with you.

> Don't be mistaken- educating yourself about disabilities is a wonderful thing to do. However, please remember that unsolicited advice should be avoided. Having done research and gaining knowledge about a subject does not necessarily make one an expert on the topic. Avoid giving advice to someone else about their disability, how they should seek medical treatment, or which type of therapy to use- particularly if they did not ask for any advice. Remember, the individual with the disability is the top expert for their personal disability.

CONCEPT 3
LEARNING ABOUT DIFFERENT
DISABILITIES CAN HELP YOU
BECOME AN ALLY!

ACTIVITY: INFOMERCIAL

Separate the students into pairs. Groups of 3 will also work for this activity. Teachers may adjust the time limits in this activity according to their needs. Once the students have been assigned their groups, give them the following instructions:

Materials needed:

- > Laptops or accessibility to a computer lab
- > Notebook/paper
- > Pen/Pencil

You and your partner(s) will be conducting some research about a disability, creating a 60 second "infomercial" about that disability, and then each partnership will share with the class.

1. First, pick a disability that both you and your partner would like to learn more about. Once you have decided on a disability, you'll have 20 minutes to do some research. Your research about the disability can come from dictionaries or other websites online. Try to stick with websites that end in .org, .gov, or .edu. As you conduct your research, jot down notes and your findings.
2. Here are some questions to think about as you conduct your research: What is it? What can having that disability affect? How is it caused? How many people in the U.S., your state, or in your local community have this disability?
3. After you are done with your research, you will have 10 minutes to develop a 60-second infomercial with your partner. An infomercial is just like a commercial. However, the purpose is not to promote or sell a product in a short amount of time. The purpose is to give the viewers some information about a topic in a short amount of time. Include the details that you and your partner find most important to include in your infomercial.

Friendly reminder: Please do not include any "make-believe" or fictitious medicines or therapies in your infomercial. Your infomercials should be driven by facts. Remember that there are many people who have the disability you have chosen to research. Those disabilities affect the people who have them, their families, and their friends in a variety of ways. So, please be respectful as you make your infomercials. The purpose of this activity is to gain new knowledge about different kinds of disabilities that we may not have known before!

After the students have conducted their research and have planned out their infomercials, invite each partnership/group to perform their infomercials for the class. At the end of each infomercial, each partner is welcome to share their favorite fact or piece of knowledge that they gained from their research with the class. After each group has had a chance to share their infomercial, this has opened up a safe environment for students to ask questions and share their reflections about what they learned. Teachers may choose to lead this type of a reflection/discussion if time and circumstance permit.

