

IDEA #31**What Is Tact?**

OVERVIEW: Students learn through different scenarios that sometimes honesty can be brutal, so tact is necessary.

PREPARATION / MATERIALS:

- copy of tact handout for each student or pair of students

PROCEDURE:

As a general rule, honesty is the best policy. However, the truth is not always pretty, and sometimes blunt honesty can be hurtful. Introduce *tact* as a new vocabulary word, meaning honesty that could be viewed as criticism but which is carefully worded in consideration of the other person's feelings. In other words, if you are saying something that could upset a person, use tact. Tact, though truthful, is not insulting or rude. The art of tact involves phrasing things to avoid hurt feelings and provide constructive criticism.

Give students examples of tact:

Situation	Rude Response	Tactful Response
Your friend asks you, "Do you like my new coat?"	"No, it's ugly."	"It is not my style but it looks good on you."
Your friend asks if you want to go to the park together.	"I don't really like playing with you."	"I don't really feel like it, but thank you for the invitation."
Your teacher asks if you enjoyed reading your book	"No, it was dumb and boring."	"Not really but I know reading is good for me."

Advise students that in each situation, there is the potential for hurt feelings or anger. But by emphasizing the positive, and offering solutions for the negative, you can provide tactfully honest answers that do not offend anyone.

Distribute the tact handout and have students complete it individually or in pairs. They are to come up with possible responses to each scenario, dealing with the situations honestly, but considerately.

We live in a world which is full of misery and ignorance, and the plain duty of each and all of us is to try to make the little corner he can influence somewhat less miserable and somewhat less ignorant than it was before he entered it.

— Thomas Henry Huxley
English biologist
(1825-1895)

Tact

Think of a tactful way to respond in each situation. Remember, using tact means you are still honest, but you use your words carefully to avoid hurting someone's feelings.

1. For Christmas, your grandmother gives you a sweatshirt which you think is ugly. She asks how you like it. What should you say?

2. You are watching TV and the phone rings. Your mom answers it and tells you it's Jane. You don't like Jane and don't want to talk to her. What should you say?

3. Your friend gets a new baby sister and you think it is the ugliest baby you've ever seen. Your friend asks you, "Isn't she the cutest?" What should you say?

4. Your teacher is walking down the hallway with a piece of trash stuck to her shoe heel. What should you say?

5. Your friend has been talking for 10 minutes with a big piece of broccoli stuck between his teeth. What should you say?

6. You are visiting your friend's house and your friend's mom serves liver and onions for dinner, which you think is disgusting. What should you say?
