

Playing Card Hierarchy

Intended age group: Upper elementary to Adult

Time Needed: 10 minutes

Learning objectives: Participants will be reminded of what it feels like to be left out and treated as inferior.

Materials needed: One deck of playing cards, four wall signs -- one indicating each of the hierarchy groups (J/Q/K/A, 8/9/10, 5/6/7, 2/3/4), tape

Overview:

Take enough cards from the deck so that you have one for each of the participants. Make sure you have roughly even numbers from each hierarchy group.

Tape one sign to each wall in the room.

Preface this activity by explaining that it is designed to heighten the awareness of what it feels like to be excluded and unwanted. It is not intended for anyone's feelings to be hurt by the activity — we are just trying to remind everyone what it's like to be left out.

Say, "Being left out is a miserable feeling. It can happen in the lunchroom, in the hallway, on the bus, in class, or anywhere students are gathered. In society, people are sometimes subjected to hierarchies based on their race, religion, or another element of their identity."

Say, "Everyone will get a card. DO NOT LOOK AT IT! You will put the card on your forehead so others can see it. Depending on what card you have, people may or may not want to be with you. If you have a jack, queen, king or ace, you definitely have lots of friends and people want to be with you. If you have an 8, 9 or 10, most people want to be with you. If you have a 5, 6 or 7, not many want to be with you. If you have a 2, 3 or 4, most people do not want to be with you. You will find this out by asking your classmates questions, such as:

- Would you go to the game with me tonight?
- Want to sit by me at lunch?
- Want to be in my science group?
- Would you like to come to my house?

Those who are asked the questions will respond according to the group in which the asker belongs, using both verbal and non-verbal communication. If you are in a hierarchy group equal to or higher than theirs, they will give positive signals. If lower than theirs, they will give you negative signals. As soon as you think you know your group, go stand by that sign."

Pass out cards (reminding everyone not to look at theirs before putting it on their forehead) and instruct participants to start mingling to ask questions and find their group.

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Suggested discussion questions:

- How many questions did you have to ask before you knew which group you were in?
- What kinds of responses did you get from people when you asked to hang with them?
- If you were in the 2/3/4 group – how did it feel? How would it feel if it wasn't a game?
- How does it feel to be in the J/Q/K/A group?
- What does it mean to be left out?
- What does respect mean?
- What would have been a more respectful way to answer someone who was a 2/3/4 when they asked you to hang with them?
- If you really don't feel like hanging with someone, how can you tell them that respectfully?

Classroom application:

Be sure not to distribute lower cards to kids who are suffering from low esteem, or are experiencing difficulties. Likewise, make sure high-achieving or popular students have the opportunity to experience what it feels like to be on the low end of the social ladder.