

Feeling Different Brainstorm

Goals

- To explore the emotions that can arise as a result of feeling different from those around us.
- To reinforce positive aspects of feeling different.
- To encourage empathy.

Senior 1-4 Education Curriculum Connections

This activity contributes to the following Student Specific Learning Outcomes:

Guidance Education GLOs under Personal/Social Component.

Physical and Health Education

- **K.4.S1.B.2b** Identify appropriate social behaviours (e.g., use inclusive language, treat others with respect...) for developing meaningful interpersonal relationships.
- **K.4.S2.C.1a** Describe the behaviours necessary for providing others with support and promoting emotional health and well-being.
- **K.4.S1.B.3b** Examine effects of conflicts and the importance of seeing diverse sides of issues in developing meaningful personal and/or team relationships.

Social Studies

- **9 & 10-S-105** Recognize and take a stand against discriminatory practices and behaviours.
- **9-S-301** Analyze the context of events, accounts, ideas, and interpretations.
- **10 S-303** Reconsider personal assumptions based on new information and ideas.

Have Ready

- Flipchart paper with “How does it feel to be different?” at the top
- Markers

Instructions

- As a large group, ask youth to brainstorm a time that they felt different from those around them. Remind them that we are not going to share the experiences but rather we are trying to brainstorm emotions/feelings they had at that time.
- Flipchart the responses. It is recommended that the positive and negative emotions, be written in two separate columns. If only

“negative” feelings are shared, acknowledge that we often are not valued for our differences, and probe for positive ones. “Can feeling different ever feel good?”

Sample Flipchart

How does it feel to be different?

alone/lonely	unique
scared	strong
embarrassed	happy
depressed	proud
weird	special
sad	confident
hopeless	honoured
angry (inward and outward)	leader
frustrated	teacher
anxious	excited
humiliated	

Debrief

- Remind youth, **“Although our individual experiences may have been different, the feelings that come up tend to be the similar.”** We call these our common feelings because we all can experience these feelings and connect to each other.
- Ask youth, **“What determines whether we will feel positive or negative?”** How others treat us, how often we experience this, how society treats these differences. Choosing to treat people poorly because of their differences causes the feelings we see on the left (hard feelings). **On the other hand, if we appreciate differences, and support people, they are more likely to feel the emotions on the right (positive feelings).**
- **It is not your fault if someone is choosing to treat you badly. It is very important to talk to an adult you trust and get the support you deserve if you are feeling any of the hard feelings in the left.**
- **Tell a trusted adult if you see this happening to someone. Support the person who is being hurt and do not participate by**

laughing or being the audience. If someone experiences discrimination, they may also feel strong or powerful for having overcome difficult experiences.

- **We do not have to like everyone but we need to be respectful because everyone has a right to live safely and free of harassment.**

Note to Facilitators

- In our society 2STLGBQ+ and Indigenous youth are many times more likely to attempt suicide than youth who do not identify as such.¹ Dealing with issues of isolation, whether due to homophobia, transphobia, and/or racism can be very difficult and it is important for service providers to provide extra support to 2STLGBQ+ and Indigenous youth.
- Debrief thoughts of suicide if brought up by youth but do not write it on the flipchart. If youth bring up thoughts of suicide, it is important to respond appropriately. Acknowledge that sometimes when people have been feeling sad, depressed, or hopeless for a while, or intensely, they may start to think about suicide. Reinforce suicide prevention messages: if someone is thinking about suicide it is important to talk to an adult they trust and not keep it a secret. For more information, please refer to the Suicide Prevention section of the Mental Health chapter in the Teen Talk Service Provider Manual.

Ideally, this activity should be followed by:

- Taking Action Brainstorm
- Body Image Boosters

¹ Study showed that Canada had one of the highest suicide rates in the world with 2STLGBQ+ youth accounting for about one- third (Kroll and Warneke, 1995). A study out of Calgary showed that gay or bisexual men were “almost fourteen times more likely to have made a serious suicide attempt at some point in their lives than their [heterosexual] counterparts.” (Bagley and Tremblay, 1996) Adapted from “Some Facts on being gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, transgendered, & transsexual,” by Teens Educating and Confronting Homophobia.