

**LESSON E-U11-L1**

# Responding to Hurtful Words

**Unit II:** Violence, Aggression, and Terrorism

**Grade Levels:** K-5

**Time:** 30+ minutes



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## Interdisciplinary Connections

Character education, literacy

## Objectives

- Recognize how hateful words make you feel and how they impact others.
- Identify strategies to use to respond to hurtful words.

## Key Terms

- feeling good
- hateful
- hurtful
- strategy
- upstander

## Lesson Materials

- drawing of a sad face and a happy face
- poster paper (to make class rules)
- note-taking paper for students

## Lesson Background

- Show a picture of a sad face. Ask the students: “What words make you feel sad?” (Optional: Present the students with a circle and have them draw a sad face.)
- Draw a happy face in another circle. Ask: “What words make you feel happy?”

## Lesson Plan

- Ask students to think of words that make them sad or angry. Have the students write the words on a slip of paper anonymously and then collect the slips of paper.
- Select words from the slips of paper (avoiding those not appropriate for the grade level) and write them underneath the picture of the sad face on the board, chart paper, or an overhead projection. After selecting words, fold each slip of paper in half and staple it shut as the students are working in groups.
- Have the students form pairs or small groups and discuss the following questions:
  - How do these words make you feel?
  - What would you do if you were called one of these words?
  - How could you let the person know how the word(s) make you feel?
- Have the groups share their responses with the whole class.
- Guide the class to collectively decide on the most helpful ways for responding to hurtful words. Redirect responses that focus on aggression or violence. Reframe the students’ responses by asking: “What else could we do instead?” Together create class rules to display in the front of the classroom. Consider limiting the number of “rules “ to five or six. Some examples might be:
  - Begin your response with the word “I”, not “you.” This allows us to express our thoughts and

feelings and not say something mean or unpleasant about the other person.

I am uncomfortable (or confused) when you say those words.

Not “You’re a jerk.”

- Focus on the words, not the people. People say unpleasant things because they don’t know how to effectively communicate their feelings to others.

From your words, I see that you are angry . . . tell me what that is about.

- When another person raises his or her voice, lower your voice and make it softer. This breaks the cycle of escalating arguments and fights.

- Don’t use hurtful words in response to others’ hurtful words.

- Next, discuss words that make the students feel good or happy.
- To conclude the lesson on hurtful words, randomly call students to come up and take the top paper from the pile of notes on hurtful words, crumple it up, and throw it in the trash.

## Evidence of Understanding

- The class collectively decides on the best ways to respond to hurtful words.
- Together the students create class rules to display in the front of the classroom.

## Additional Activities and Resources

Read the book *Words Are Not for Hurting* by Elizabeth Verdick.

## Taking Action and Giving Service

Ask the students to discuss this question: “What would you do if you heard someone else being called one of these words?” Talk about being an upstander. Discuss the difficulties of being an upstander as well as the reasons why we need people—and ourselves—to be upstanders.