

Sample Chapter:
RELATIONSHIPS

From the soon to be released book

How to Stop
Bullying & Social Aggression
Activities and Lesson Plans
to Teach
Respect, Empathy and Friendship

By Steve Breakstone, Michael Dreiblatt, Karen Dreiblatt
Publisher: Corwin Press

© 2006 Balance Educational Services, LLC

The following excerpt from *How to Stop Bullying Now! Activities and Lesson Plans to Teach Respect, Empathy and Friendship* may not be reproduced without permission from the authors. For such permission, please contact:

Balance Educational Services, LLC
136 Clover Lane
Manchester Center, VT 05255
866-768-4803
info@BalanceEducation.net

Relationships

In the minds of most children, bully situations are a clear-cut issue; a bully is someone they don't like at all. In this section **students will explore whether or not friends can be bullies and what to do if they have a "mean friend."**

A good, healthy, fun relationship is difficult to create and even more difficult to maintain. Creating and maintaining positive relationships needs constant review and vigilance. The following activity helps students decide for themselves what qualities they value and want in their relationships.

Goal:

Students will decide what qualities they want in a friend and what qualities they will not tolerate in their relationships.

Likes and Yikes

This lesson begins with a discussion about the importance of relationships in our lives. During the bully topics, we discussed how to deal with people who treat us badly. But **what do you do if you have a "mean friend?"**



Materials:

Paper and Pen(cil)
Black/white board



Time: 45-60 minutes

Activity

1

On the board write, "**I HAVE A MEAN FRIEND.**" Ask, "What exactly does that mean?" You will get a variety of responses. The bottom line is that friends should not be mean. If someone is consistently mean, they should not be considered a friend. However, friends do make mistakes, express unpleasant moods, and disagree with us. But even at those times, friends still treat each other with respect.





Friends are not mean. If they do something mean, it should be the exception, not the rule.

2 “LIKES!”

Say to the class, "Since friends are so important, we are going to spend some time thinking about what qualities people want in a friend. What are the qualities that are important to you?" Garner a few answers, such as "nice," "caring," and "fun to play with." Put these responses on the board.

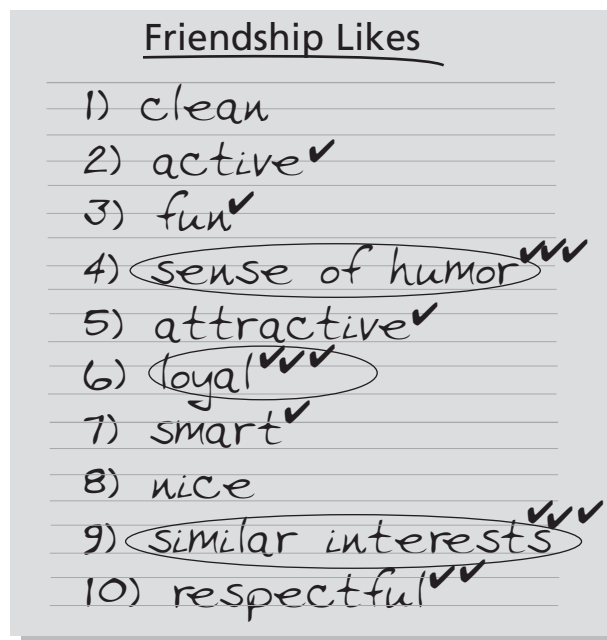
3 Create groups of 4-6 students.

Give each group a pen and piece of paper. Each group will brainstorm and write a list of 8-12 qualities they want in a friend. This list will be a longer version of what you already have begun on the board. *If a group or an individual has a difficult time coming up with qualities, ask them what qualities they have that make them a good friend.*

4

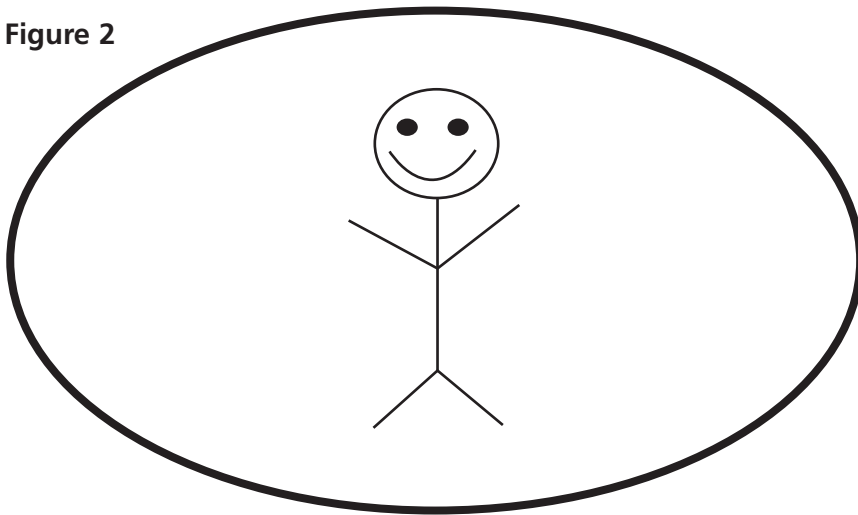
After creating a list of desirable qualities, have each individual in the group decide for him or herself the top three qualities from the list that are most important to him or her. Have them put a check mark on the list next to the three qualities they value the most. After each person in the group has made their check marks, have one of the group members **circle the three qualities that received the most votes**. Figure 1 shows an example of a student generated list with check marks and the most popular qualities circled.

Figure 1



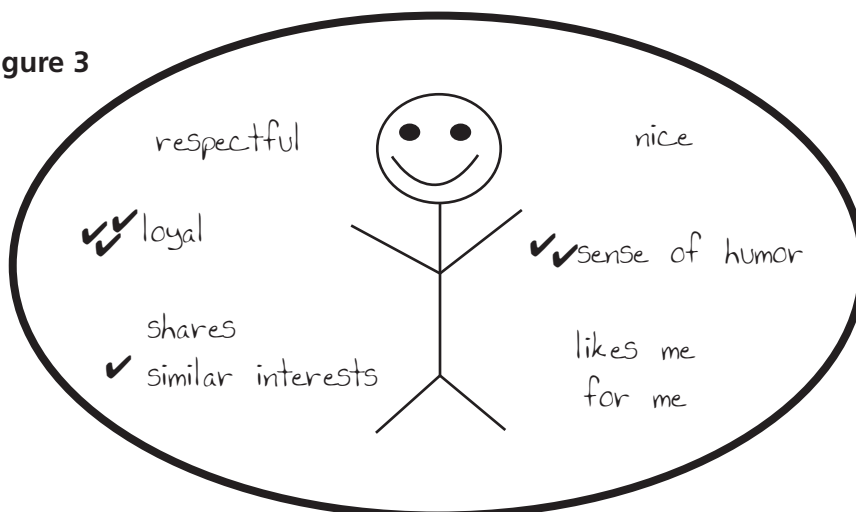
- 5** As the students are doing this work, draw a big circle on the board like the one shown in Figure 2 below. Inside the circle, draw a person with a happy face. This does not have to be a masterpiece. A stick figure with a big head featuring a happy face will do just fine. Remind the students that the reason there is a happy face is because your **friends should make you happy most of the time**. Let them know the circle around the figure is called a personal boundary.

Figure 2



- 6** When the students have completed their assignment, ask each group what they chose as **the top 3 qualities of a friend**. Write these responses down within the boundaries of the circle you drew on the board, as shown in Figure 3. If a quality is repeated among different groups, make extra check marks next to that quality indicating that this quality came up more than once.

Figure 3



The responses within the circle are within the personal boundary and are called "Likes."

7

Discuss the responses. Some qualities, such as truthful, clean, and honest don't need more clarification. However, when more subjective qualities, such as respectful, nice, or friendly come up, ask for more specific information. What does "friendly" look like? What makes a person friendly? Or how do you decide if a person is respectful? What specific actions does a person do that shows you he is friendly or respectful? This is similar to work we did during the lesson on respect.



Remember that the "Likes" qualities being discussed are from the students' point of view. Although you may not think "cute" or "rich" are important qualities for a friendship, your students are just learning. If these kinds of qualities show up in the "Likes" section, add them to the inner circle. Then, in a non-judgmental way, ask the students to explain why these qualities are important to them and discuss their answers.

One time, in a 5th grade class, "rich" was one of the qualities that one group determined as important. I asked them, "What if a friend of yours had all these other qualities, such as caring, shares, loyal, and fun, but you found out the family was actually very poor?" One of the students quickly stated, "Well, I mean rich in humor, rich in intelligence and rich in generosity." I thought it was more quick thinking than what was originally meant, but I said, "Oh. I see. In fact, I agree with you." I believe the whole class got the point, the group saved face, and I didn't come off as preachy or judgmental.

8

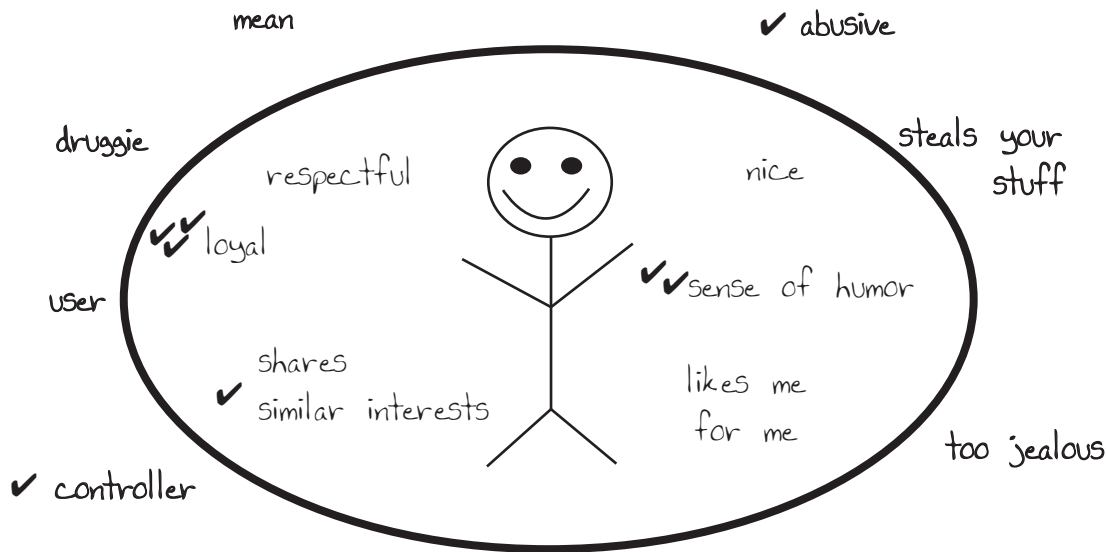
“YIKES!”

The next part of the activity is similar to the first, except this time you will be asking for qualities that the students will not accept in a friendship. Explain that you are not talking about one-time mistakes. For instance, if someone calls you a bad name and you tell him that it bothers you and he stops, then he can continue to be your friend. But if he keeps calling you a name you don't like, or substitutes one bad name for another, then you should reconsider the friendship.

You might find that **some people struggle with brainstorming** in this part of the activity. If this is the case, ask them to consider the opposite of what they wrote for "Likes." After the groups finish selecting their top three unacceptable qualities in a friend, write their responses on the *outside* of the circle that you had drawn on the board as in Figure 4. As you did with the "Likes," flesh out those words that need more specific discussion such as, "What do you mean by 'abusive'?" and, "What does 'too jealous' mean?"

Dangerous and unacceptable qualities are outside of the personal boundary and are called, "Yikes."

Figure 4



9 Wrap up the lesson by asking the students, "If you want friends with the qualities you have listed inside the circle, what kind of qualities do *you* have to have?"

"You have to have the "likes" qualities," is the answer we always get.

Finish the lesson by reminding the students that the Likes and Yikes qualities listed inside and outside the circle weren't created by teachers or parents. The qualities listed are the values of this class. That's powerful information that will be valued and appreciated by all.

Final Thoughts

When an adult considers making a large purchase, such as a car or house, they offer something of great value in return; their hard earned money. Before purchasing, many adults research and consider the pros and cons of such an investment. Some of your students may already engage in similar behavior when they consider buying something important to them such as a computer, video-game console, bicycle, or a dirt bike.

Remind your students that there is also an investment being made when developing and maintaining friendships. It is a tremendous investment; not of cash, but of trust and of oneself. In close friendships, individuals share secrets, feelings, fantasies, dreams and desires. With that in mind, considering the qualities of your friends and what you expect in return is even more important than the pros and cons taken into consideration when making an investment of money.