

Animating Matters

Who Am I?: 'Break it Down'

GRADES
K-7



It is important to have an understanding of 'who you are' to be able to appreciate the things that you have in common with others and things that make you unique. In this lesson, students will explore some of the characteristics that make up their identity and explore how 'society' labels people and deems certain characteristics as favourable or unfavourable. It will also highlight how labels affect our perception of self and others.

Lesson Developed by Brenda Lepine



Estimated Time: 90 minutes (3 class periods)



Goals

- ✓ To list the characteristics that create one's identity and demonstrate respect for their own and others' identities
- ✓ To express feelings honestly and appropriately using 'I' statements
- ✓ To distinguish between labels that 'lift us up' and those that 'put us down' and understand how they affect how we see ourselves and others
- ✓ To recognize some forms of stereotyping and name-calling and describe their hurtful and negative effects.



Prep/Materials

- DVD player, Youth MADE Animation: *Break It Down*
- I AM worksheet (see end of document)
- Pencils
- Chart paper with a large reproduction of I AM worksheet on it
- Felt pens
- Scissors
- Garbage can
- Journals or Writing Books



Energizer: I Am.....

Students and teacher form a circle. Teacher says a statement beginning with “I am.....”
If the statement is true for the student, he/she steps into the circle. Before the next statement is said, the circle is reformed. Some examples of statements:

I am....

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| ☆ Canadian | ☆ brown-skinned |
| ☆ skinny | ☆ good at math |
| ☆ a video game player | ☆ a sister |
| ☆ a son | ☆ a good friend |
| ☆ shy | ☆ a good listener |
| ☆ smart | ☆ silly |
| ☆ lovable | |

Part 1 (20-25 minutes)

1. Play 'Break It Down' (Under the “Animating Matters” section of the YouthMADE DVD)

For younger and non-reading viewers pause at the bricks and have a student or yourself read the labels on the bricks.



Debrief Questions:

- When you hear words like those on the bricks, how do you feel? What do they make you think of?
- Do these words have anything in common?
- How are these words different?
- Have you ever been called any of these words?

Ask the students to share the words they've been called. Make a list of them on the board or chart paper and ask students to briefly share why and when they were called these words and how it made them feel.



NOTE: You may make comments about the hurtful and unfair nature of name-calling after each student example to emphasize the impact that casual use of labels can have (e.g. Everyone started calling me clumsy because I tripped during gym class—highlight that this is an unfair generalization etc.; I was called stupid or dumb on the playground for no reason—highlight that these types of terms may be used out of context for the sake of hurting someone and that they don't necessarily characterize the person etc.).

2. Play the rest of the DVD.



Debrief Questions:

- What might the bricks represent?
- What might the wall represent? Why is the child building the wall?
- How do these walls get built? Who builds the walls?
- Where might the walls come from?
- Why did the wall break down?
- What did you learn from this animation?

Part 2 (25 minutes)



NOTE: If you are continuing this lesson from a previous day, you might consider re-screening the animation *Break it Down* and reviewing the brainstormed list of hurtful words before proceeding to Part 2.

1. Show students the worksheet with 'I AM' written at the top. Model how to fill in the worksheet using a large reproduction on chart paper. Describe how students are to write down anything that describes themselves using 'I am...' as a beginning statement. Non-writers can draw pictures.

2. Students fill in worksheets. Early finishers can share with peers or can draw a picture of some of their ideas on the back.



Gather in a circle and reflect on the activity.



Debrief Questions:

- How did this activity make you feel?
- What did you learn about who you are?
- What is something about yourself that you are proud of?



Game variation (for classes with high levels of safety and maturity):

- ☆ Replay the game 'I Am' asking students to give the examples from their worksheets about what they would like to be better at or would like to change about themselves.



Facilitator Tip:

It is extremely important to review the Classroom Community Agreements before the students take the risk of speaking their truths and showing their vulnerability in the game variation.



NOTE: This exercise can help address the effects of 'societal' and peer pressure on students' identities. You may want to revisit this activity later when debriefing what are considered positive and negative characteristics and how this affects our perceptions of self and others.

Part 3 (25 minutes)



1. Have students label their statements on their "I AM" worksheet as positive or negative using a + and - symbol. Discuss that a negative symbol would represent something that makes them feel bad, sad or not as good as someone else. A positive symbol would represent something that makes them feel happy, good and proud about themselves. Model this using your chart paper of I am statements. Discuss that some people may not have negative labels and that sometimes a statement or label might seem positive to others but it can actually feel like a negative label to you.
2. Ask students to cut up their sheets of I am Statements and sort them into a positive and negative pile (This could also be done in partners). Early finishers can help their peers.
3. Students re-gather sitting down in the circle bringing one statement from their negative pile.
4. In the centre of the circle is a garbage can. Taking turns, each person has the option to 'share or shred'. Another variation is to use a recycling bin and tell students that they may 'recycle' their negative statements into the new, positive statements that their classmates will be using to counter the negative ones

If they shred, they throw the label into the garbage can.

If they share, have students share their negative statement and after each student shares, the teacher invites a couple students to counter the statement with something that they think is positive about the student. And then ask them to shred and throw these negative statements—which are "garbage thoughts" into the trash.

5. Place students in workable pairs or triads. Students sit knee to knee and share their positive statements to their peer(s). Peers who are listening are invited to share more positive ideas about their classmate.
6. Regroup in the circle.

Wrap Up: (15 - 20 minutes)



Debrief Questions:

- What did you learn about who you are?
- What did you learn about your classmates?
- What types of things do you have in common with others?
- What are some things that make you different from your friends?
- How did you feel shredding up some of those negative ideas and throwing them in the garbage?
- Where do you think we get some of these negative ideas from?
- Have you ever negatively labelled someone? What did that sound, look and feel like?
- How did you feel when your classmates said positive things about you?
- What have you learned from this activity?

7. Encourage students to reflect on what they have learned from this activity in their reflection journals.



Assessment & Evaluation

- ✓ Assess that students have honoured the Classroom Community Agreements during the lesson discussions and activities
- ✓ Look for evidence of their willingness to share their feelings honestly using 'I statements'
- ✓ Look for evidence of active listening and their willingness to give positive and respectful statements to their classmates
- ✓ Observe student engagement and assess how cooperatively students are working together in pairs.

Look for evidence in students' journals and in the classroom discussions that students can:

- ✓ describe and list some of their characteristics
- ✓ identify positive and negative labels
- ✓ identify how negative labels affect them and others
- ✓ compare and contrast their characteristics with another



* You may also invite students to do self and/or peer assessments for the above assessments.

* You may use the following rubric scale to evaluate the above assessments: Powerful=5; Confident=4; Developing=3; Beginning=2; and Not yet meeting expectations=1.



Follow Up:

- ☆ Students make 'I Am' posters. Students draw posters of themselves illustrating ideas from their 'I Am' worksheet.
- ☆ Students make an identity mobile representing themselves. Have students draw pictures or write their ideas on 4x6" papers. Attach papers at varying lengths to a stick, dowel or hanger. Hang in the hallway or classroom.
- ☆ Students compare and contrast their characteristics using a Venn diagram or a T-chart.
- ☆ Students make 'You Are' posters, highlighting positive characters about a classmate, friend or family member.

Name _____

I Am.....

Date _____
