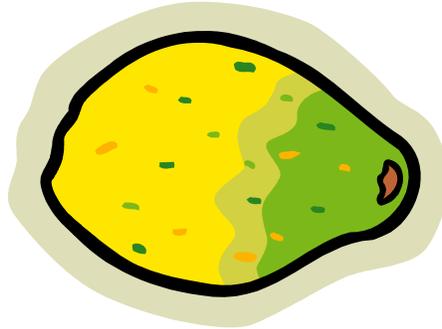


The Lemon Exchange



Learning objective: Students will recognize the importance of individual differences, the need for astute observational skills and develop a greater sensitivity to personal characteristics, including individuals with autism.

Materials required: One lemon (or any other type of fruit) for each student participating in the activity.

Approximate time required: Depending on the grade level of the students, this activity to can last from 20 minutes to an hour.

Instructional Procedure:

1. Begin the activity by asking students to identify qualities that belong to all lemons. For example, " they all are yellow", "they all have seeds", "they all taste sour", etc.
2. Distribute one lemon to each student. Direct students to "get to know their lemons" by rolling it, squeezing it, looking closely at the texture and imperfections of the skin, smelling it, etc. Encourage them to make note in their minds of the "personal characteristics" they observe with their lemon.
3. Collect all the lemons and visibly mix them together in front of the group.

4. Spread out the lemons on a table and ask all students to come forward and select their original lemon. If conflicts develop over their choices, assist students to reconcile their differences or simply note the failure to agree and use that as a basis for a later discussion. (in smaller groups of up to 25 students, the vast majority will successfully identify their own lemon.)
5. Explain to students that most often children with autism or a related disability look just like everyone else on the outside. It's only upon a closer observation and after gaining a deeper understanding of their individual differences their personal qualities and needs. At this point, and depending on the age or grade level of the students, it will be helpful to explain about the differences in communication, social abilities and interests that are often observed in individuals with autism.
6. If there is a student with autism in your class, you can also conduct a discussion of the things about that child that are just like everyone else and the those that warrant a better understanding of their disability.

Discussion Questions:

1. How many students are certain they reclaimed their original lemon? How can you be certain?
2. What conclusions can be drawn about people from this activity?
3. What further questions do you have about autism or your classmate with autism?