

Putting Down Put-Downs

School Wide Expectation:	Act Respectfully
Setting:	Classroom/Non-Classroom; Outside and Community
Lesson Focus:	Understanding that we are more alike than different

Purpose of the Lesson

1. Recognize that as humans, we are bound to have differences with others
2. Explain why we have those differences
3. Identify ways that we can overcome our differences to achieve a common goal

SEL standard(s) met: 1A3a, 1A3b; 3C3a; 3C3b

Discussion Points

These discussion questions can be used for discussion purposes, role-plays, for writing prompts, or for topics of debate to teach appropriate ways to argue a point.

1. ***“I know a put-down when I hear it. If they’re going to put me down, then...”***

Wait! Don’t say you’ll put them down right back. What we want to do is get rid of those deliberately harmful words and actions completely. We’re people; we all have different values, different appearances, and different issues and problems. We see put-downs on TV, in the movies, and in relationships, so we start to think they’re okay. Sometimes, we mask the put-down as a “just joking, just playing” comment. We put others down because we don’t feel good about ourselves. Sometimes we accept it when others put us down because we think they might be right and that we deserve the put-down. We put ourselves down with negative self-talk. No matter what form they take, put-downs are toxic.

2. ***“Yeah, put-downs are nasty. Why do we do that to each other and ourselves?”***

Some people say it’s just human nature, or that put-downs are a part of growing up. Nothing could be further from the truth. Put-downs are learned behavior that become habits. We learn the put-downs from family, from friends, from enemies, from adults, from kids, from the media, from books, even from the clothes we wear (the offensive and vulgar T-shirts)...life is full of put-downs. How much more powerful and positive would the world be if we used put ups only?

3. ***“Okay, how can I break the habit of put-downs?”***

First, become aware of put-downs. Spend a day or two tracking put-downs you hear. (See reinforcement activities). Train yourself to see, hear, and feel those put-downs...and to see how a put-down might hurt the other person. Don’t say, “It wouldn’t hurt me.” Think about it...really...wouldn’t the same things you say about other hurt you if they were said about you? Be truthful...in your heart of hearts, the answer has to be yes.

Second, stop when you realize you’ve just used a put-down. Expect it to feel odd. Try the trick of lacing your fingers together. Which thumb is on top? Separate them and replace them the other way. Feels weird, right? Deliberately noticing and not using put-downs will feel weird, too, especially if you use sarcasm constantly.

Third, realize that humans are not perfect, and that you and others will still use put-downs. It takes longer to break a bad habit than it does to establish a good habit; that’s because we don’t even think about what we are doing when something is a habit. When we are learning something, we focus on it. It’s easier to slip back; so don’t expect serious changes for at least 21 days. You’ll see small changes; maybe go an hour without a put-down. Then it’s half the day. Then a full day. Then half a day. It takes time; don’t be hard on yourself.

Fourth, see the use of put-downs in the context of your entire life; school, home, church, hanging out, sports. If you have friends that constantly use put-downs and won’t change, spend some time with them and with other people. Notice the difference. Which group is more positive?

Finally: remember, you are worth the effort! Don’t let the put-downs of others rule your world. Don’t dominate others by using put-downs. You are special, you are different...and even though we are all different, we can get along to achieve the common goal of making Lukancic a positive place for learning.

Reinforcement Activities

1. When you see a change in a student, mention it! Verbal recognition and PRAISE NOTES can help reinforce positive behavior.
2. Teachers, model the desired behavior.