

ACTIVITY 3

Mean Looks

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

One of the most common ways kids can be unkind is by sending a “mean look” to a classmate. Students typically do this instead of saying what they are actually thinking or feeling. Mean looks such as rolling eyes, looking at someone like they are weird, using glaring eyes can be very hurtful. Boys and girls both use mean looks. Students who struggle to cope when they have hurt feelings seem to use these facial expressions in hurtful ways. Using these “mean looks” could be seen as bullying. However, the looks are usually related to the fact that a student may be feeling left out, jealous, scared, or hurt, and doesn’t have a proactive way to express those feelings. This strategy will show students how to respond to mean looks by simply asking the person if something is wrong or inquiring if you did something that upset them. It is a different, yet effective communication tool to help students move beyond giving a “mean look” back.

Elementary Ask several students to give you a “mean look.” Then model not giving a mean look back, but react to the mean look with one of the following responses:

- Use talking eyes and say, “Yes?” Use a tone of voice that asks the person to communicate with you in words instead of giving a mean look.
- Ask, “Did I do something?” or “Are you mad at me?” Use a caring tone of voice. Remind students that we always need to listen to why someone might be reacting. Maybe something happened that caused hurt feelings.

Wrap up this activity in two steps. First, name or show a Kimochis™ character. Based on the character’s personality, ask students what facial expression the character would need to monitor when feeling upset. For example, Cat might roll her eyes when irritated. Cloud might use a fighting face when mad. Next, ask students what facial expressions they need to be careful not to make when they are upset. You can take the first turn by sharing a nonverbal behavior you need to be careful of showing when upset.

Second, gather the upset feeling pillows, such as Jealous, Frustrated, Left Out, Hurt. Ask students to identify which feeling(s) might provoke them to make an unkind face. Ask what their goal is for managing their facial expression and body language the next time they have this feeling.

Related Literature *Personal Space Camp* by Julia Cook (see page 268).

ACTIVITY 4

Talking Hand to Request Objects

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

The talking hand is an extremely effective communication strategy to use when one classmate grabs something, has something that belongs to another student, or wants a turn with a desired object. Your classroom will be calmer and kinder when students learn positive ways to solve these common problems.

Early Childhood/Elementary Have your class stand in a circle facing one another. Explain that when you want an object from someone, it helps to put your hand out with your palm up in a way that politely says, “Please put it here in my hand.” Demonstrate this talking hand gesture. Now show your students what a fighting hand gesture looks like. (Your hand goes out fast and aggressively to ask for an object. Your hand says, “Give it to me or else.”) Tell your class that you are going to put your hand out different ways and they are to name if you are using a talking hand or a fighting hand. Once your class shows they can distinguish the difference between these two gestures, ask students to share which way would make them want to cooperate in the situation.

Then, have students imitate the talking and fighting hand gestures. Go back and forth between the two gestures. This helps increase the self-awareness and control needed to use the talking hand.

Wrap up this activity by asking students to name situations when a talking hand might help them. Ask, “What feeling do you have during these situations? How will you get yourself to use a talking hand and not a fighting hand?”

ACTIVITY 5

Stop!

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

This communication skill is extremely helpful for students who need to learn how to set clear boundaries. When used effectively, this strategy can tell others that there are words and behaviors that are not acceptable in a communication interaction.

Early Childhood/Elementary The teacher models the following for students: Step back, use wide eyes and a serious face, put your hands up like a stop sign close to your body with fingers spread, looking serious. Say “Stop” slowly and with a serious-sounding voice. The step back makes all the difference in this technique. It calms emotions and puts some physical distance between students who are feeling upset.

Ask your class to practice the above technique as a group several times together. This consolidates the motor memory for the action and is a safe way for reluctant or shy students to practice the skill. It also allows the teacher to look at which students need additional coaching on how to use their body language in a strong, clear way.

Wrap up this activity by asking for volunteers to demonstrate their stop gesture. Have students identify situations where they could benefit from using this communication tool in real life. What should they do if it does not work? Remind students that it is okay to seek adult help when they feel mistreated. Tell students they can say, “Am I going to have to get a teacher?” sounding like you’d rather they cooperate than have to get a grown-up.

ACTIVITY 6

Walk Away and Ignore Teasing, Rudeness, and Hurtful Interactions

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Many students are told to ignore hurtful words or teasing and walk away. However, students need to learn how to use this nonverbal strategy with people who treat them unkindly. Some girls and boys who communicate with a gentler style will need to be coached on how to use this strategy effectively. If they are given the opportunity to practice how to use appropriate volume, serious tone, face and hands, it should be easier for them to cope with unkind words and behaviors. This strategy provides students with an assertive way to stand up for themselves.

Early Childhood/Elementary The teacher takes the first turn. Stand tall, widen your eyes, put your hands up in a stop gesture to nonverbally say, “I don’t let people treat me this way.” Then turn and walk away slowly and deliberately. Call out to a student who looks accepting, “Hey, Mia, that looks fun. Can I join you?” Explain to your students that when you walk away, it’s helpful to move toward people and situations that will create happier feelings for them.

Ask your students to practice this same sequence (stand tall; widen eyes; place hands in stop sign; walk away) in unison. Prompt younger students who need help remembering all the steps. Invite individual volunteers to demonstrate the steps. Ask students to name a situation where they might use this tool. Discuss with students that it is the way they move their bodies that effectively communicates “Stop!” Show your students “wimpy” ways to use the body so they can see the difference. Explain that when we don’t use the body in a serious “I mean it” way, people are less likely to respect and cooperate with our requests.