

Introductory Class

Special Education: Secondary, Lesson #1

Student Learning Objectives:

To be able to...

1. Say the name of the class/unit
2. Identify ground rules for the class
3. Identify one thing they like about themselves
4. Identify one thing they might like to learn
5. Identify a trusted adult

Material Needed:

- Folders – one for each student (these should be able to accommodate three-hole punched materials neatly)
- “Polaroid” camera and film (optional)
- Magazine pictures, glue, colored pens
- One copy of the *Worksheet* and the *Trusted Adult* letter for each student
- *Classroom, Rules & Trusted Adult Transparencies*

Agenda:

1. Introduce and describe the unit
2. Identify ground rules for class
3. Create folders
4. Group exercise – sharing folders
5. Introduce “Trusted Adult” concept
6. Present the *Worksheet* and the *Trusted Adult* letter

The purpose of the introductory lesson is to create a classroom climate with a structure where discussion of heavily value-laden topics feels safe and comfortable. Student generated "Rules" will facilitate this climate and are part of the lesson plan.

It is also important to "hook" your students at this point, to help them see that the unit will be useful for them, not too "scary", and maybe even fun! The first class includes both a "safe" individual exercise and a "safe" group exercise, so that they can experience both types of learning.

Activities

“This class is about getting along with other people and how our bodies work.”

Project the class transparency and discuss the alternate case study.

“Once there was a class like this that really flopped. There were a couple of kids in the class who made other kids feel pretty bad. They didn’t mean to, it just happened.

“One kid (I’ll call him ‘Rob’) laughed and made rude comments whenever someone asked a question. Soon the rest of the class stopped asking questions – they didn’t want to be laughed at!

“Another kid I’ll call her ‘Joanne’) was constantly interrupting the other kids. It was hard to finish a sentence!

“Still another kid (‘Bill’) used really rude words in the class, words that made the other students feel pretty uncomfortable. Things got to be really bad in the class, no one felt

- 1. Introduce and Describe the Unit.** Begin by describing the unit as you plan to structure it.

Teacher Note: The sequencing of the next two activities (2. class rules and 3. folder creation) may be reversed if that better meets the needs of your students.

- 2. Identify Ground Rules for the Class.**

- A. Case Study.** Explain that you are going to start by reading a case study:

“A couple of years ago there was a class like this that really flopped. On the very first day, the kids in the class were talking about flirting and ‘come-ons’. A student I’ll call ‘Rob’ announced that he already knew how to handle a ‘come-on’.

“He said ‘Girls don’t come-on to guys unless they’re sluts, so they deserve what they get. And if a guy ever tried anything, I’d punch the faggot out.’

“After class, two people came up to the teacher and asked to be excused from the class. They each sat down in private and had long talks with the teacher.

“It turned out that one student (I’ll call her ‘Jenny’) had been raped by her boss the week before. She felt as if Rob was blaming her...saying it’s your own fault if you get raped. Of course it isn’t; but it’s easy to feel that way when it’s you. She couldn’t stand to be in class with Rob.

“The second student (I’ll call him ‘Michael’) was furious at Rob’s name-calling. Michael’s father was homosexual (gay) and he wasn’t going to stick around while people called his father names. ‘Faggot’ of course is a put-down, just like racial or religious put-downs.

comfortable and no one was learning anything. The teacher decided to try to change the situation. She asked the students to think of some class rules that would make people feel more comfortable being in class and asking questions.

Ask: “What rules might have helped?”

Copy the transparency, laminate and post as a cueing system for students on an on-going basis.

Present two or three simple rules in a very clear form.

Be nice

Listen

All questions are OK to ask

Take turns

“In fairness, you have to understand that Rob had no idea that Jenny had recently been raped or that Michael’s father was gay. It never occurred to him that anyone would be hurt or offended by his remarks. He needed a little education. He needed to learn that there are ways to express your opinion without hurting other people’s feelings.

“... and he needed to learn that you never know the life experiences of the people around you.

“Of course Jenny and Michael have every right to excuse themselves if they must...but the incident should never have happened in the first place.”

Explain that the teacher in the class felt responsible for the crisis...and that you told the story to the class in hopes that you could talk about it and prevent this kind of thing from happening “in our class”.

(This case study was adapted from 9/10 F.L.A.S.H.)

B. Project the transparency of the classroom experience. Discuss the positive behaviors of the students pictured as examples of classroom rules that might help students feel comfortable and safe.

Note the positive elements:

- student asking a question by raising hand (all questions are good questions, taking turns, getting teacher’s attention)
- students listening to other student talking (using grown-up language, being polite, listening to other people)
- students sitting and paying attention

Discuss changes that might have occurred in the case study if **these** rules had been in place in that classroom.

C. Brainstorm a list of possible ground rules (stated in positive terms) for this class and write responses on the board or on butcher paper with big pens. Ask “*Can anyone think of some ground rules for our class that might make people feel safe about speaking up during class?*”

Some possibilities:

- Be grown up
- Take turns
- Everyone has a right to be heard - wait for other people to finish talking
- Any question is a good question
- Everyone has the right to pass or not talk
- Listen to other people
- Use grown-up language (“medical words if you know them, instead of baby talk or slang”)

As rules are generated, ask for specific examples of each rule that would illustrate the rule clearly for all students.

Model an appropriate behavior first, then roleplay the inappropriate opposite behavior with a teaching assistant. Ask students to identify what's wrong; what needs to change. Finally, ask students to model the correct behavior.

D. Teacher Rules. The following statements may prevent problems in the classroom:

“We'll try to use medical language in this class. But if you don't know the medical word for something, ask the question using the word you do know and when I answer I'll use the correct word.”

For non-writers, copy the rules onto the worksheet and duplicate for students. Discuss rules at the start of each class.

E. Once the rules have been generated, ask for student's opinions about which are the most important. Choose three or four rules and write them on the board or a piece of paper that can be posted and used for continued reference.

F. Handout the rules worksheet. Ask students to copy the rules onto their worksheet to be included in their workbooks.

G. Post and review the rules at the start of each class session. Re-teach using examples if necessary. Add new rules if necessary.

3. Create Folders. This exercise is done on an individual basis with support provided as needed.

A. Each student will create a folder (use some type of

Some students may require more support with this project. Work one-to-one and have them point to magazine pictures of things they like. Cut out the pictures and help them attach to the folders.

binder that will accommodate three-hole punched paper in a functional way) for worksheets and handouts from FLASH class.

- B.** Decorate the cover with:
- a "Polaroid" picture of the student
 - student's drawing of him or herself
 - student's drawing of something he or she likes, or
 - a cut out magazine picture of something he or she likes.

Ask students to hold up their folder and say their name. APPLAUSE!

For non-verbal students, go around the room and tell students one thing that is likeable about them.

Ask students to point to something they like about themselves; something they like about another person.

Use a photocopy of the transparency to illustrate the case study working one-to-one.

Modify the case study as needed to make it more relevant for some students. For instance, you might describe a lunchroom scene where someone is laughing at another person, and feelings are hurt. Who could that person talk to?

4. Group Exercise: Sharing Folders

- A.** Ask students to stand up in front of the group and hold their folder up for the other students to see. They can explain their art or their choice of picture. Applause.
- B.** Ask students to say one nice thing about the person sitting next to them. Model giving a compliment appropriately and also receiving it with a simple "Thank you".
- C.** Ask students to say one thing they like about themselves.

Teacher Note: This exercise may be hard for some students who are used to thinking in terms of deficits and not strengths. You may need to do some prompting. Passing around a hand mirror and asking "What do you like about the person in the mirror" may also help students to say one thing they like about themselves.

5. Introduce "Trusted Adult" Concept.

- A.** Post the trusted adult transparency and read students the following case study:

"A student in a different school (I'll call her 'Joan') was very confused.

"It seems some of the kids from an older class had been bugging her at lunchtime in the cafeteria. They were asking about the school dance that was coming up and one big guy, who Joan really was kind of afraid of, said, 'Hey baby, wanna boogie with me on Friday?' He was with a big group of friends and they all laughed when he said it to Joan.

"Joan couldn't tell if the guy was serious or not. Something didn't feel quite right and she thought he

Or perhaps a student has a question about something important to them. Who could that person ask?

might have been making fun of her. She felt awful and left the cafeteria.

“Joan was very confused by her feelings. She really needed to talk to someone about how she felt, but she wasn't sure who she should ask.

“Another student, ‘Ray’ was also upset. His parents had a big fight the night before, and his father hit his mother on the arm. She didn't really seem to be that hurt, but she sure was crying a lot. Ray went over to her and tried to help. Then Ray's father yelled at him, too, and told him to ‘get out of the house if he was going to interfere.’ Ray started crying and went to his room.

“Ray felt embarrassed and upset by what had happened - and it wasn't the first time either. He didn't know who to talk to about how he felt, what he had seen.”

If a student is unable to come up with a "Trusted Adult", consider other options within the school system (another teacher, an assistant, counselor or volunteer).

- B. Ask the students if they can think of someone, a "trusted adult" that Joan and Ray could talk to. Help them identify generic options first (parents, clergy, teachers, counselors, neighbors, aunts or uncles) and then on an individual basis, name one person they would feel comfortable talking to about their feelings.

Teacher Note: Work individually with students if the second part of this activity becomes awkward or uncomfortable for them.

For some students, you may want to go through the worksheet during class, verbally instead of sending it home with them.

- 6. **Present the Worksheet.** The self-esteem worksheet is intended to be completed either independently or with a "trusted adult". Explain to students that this worksheet is optional, that they do not have to complete it. Make yourself available as a resource for students who want to do it but haven't yet identified a "trusted adult."

Dear Trusted Adult,

We are starting a unit called **F.L.A.S.H.** (Family Life and Sexual Health). We will be learning about social skills and sexuality - survival skills for all students. Understanding how to get along with others and how our bodies work is critical learning, learning that will help young people in all settings throughout life.

In class we talked about the concept of the "trusted adult". Each student identified someone they trusted that they could talk to privately and honestly if they had questions, concerns, or problems about growing up; someone he/she feels comfortable talking to.

Congratulations!

You have been identified by _____ as a "trusted adult".

Students were given an optional worksheet to work on with you. It is the first of a series of "trusted adult" exercises. These exercises are completely optional, and strictly confidential. They will not be turned in to me or discussed in class. This is simply a way for you to:

- reinforce classroom learning
- share information
- find out what your young adult is thinking about, or worrying about, regarding growing up.

You can expect to receive other "trusted adult" exercises. These sheets will describe the lesson taught in class and supply some suggestions for further discussion and activities that support classroom learning.

In the introductory class, we talked about and developed ground rules, so that people will feel safe talking in class. We also discussed some things we might like to learn about in this class. We made special folders for this class and decorated them by ourselves. Then we shared them with the rest of the class.

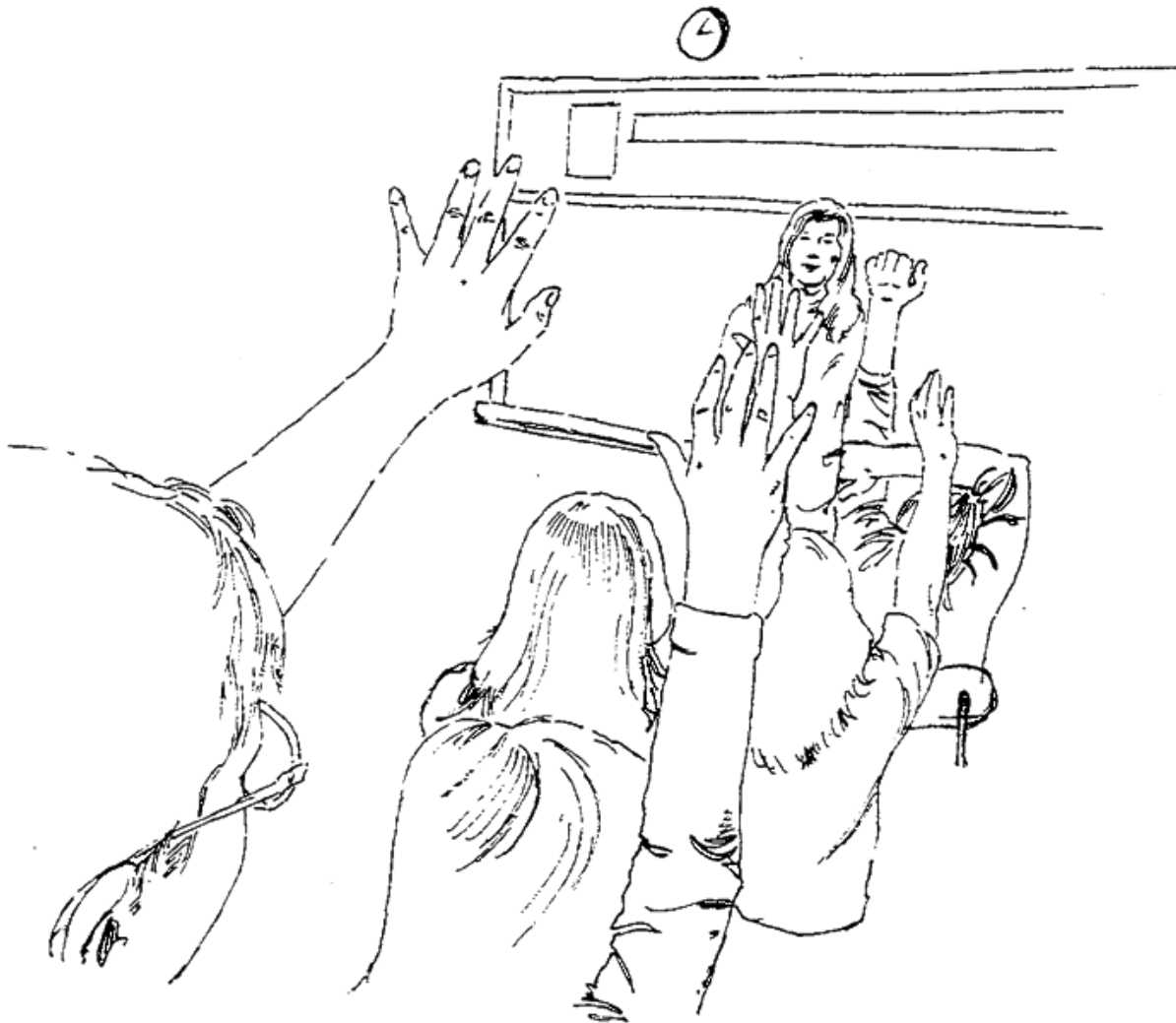
If you have any questions or comments, please call me.

Sincerely,

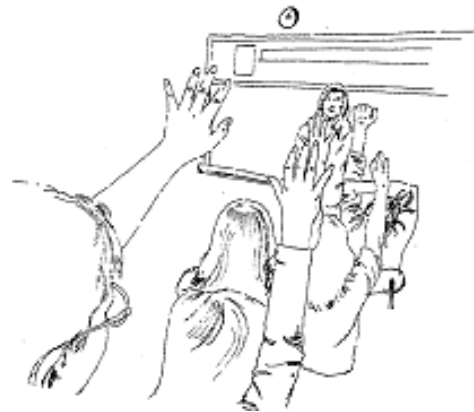
Teacher, Principal or Nurse

NOTE: All Trusted Adult Exercises are Optional.

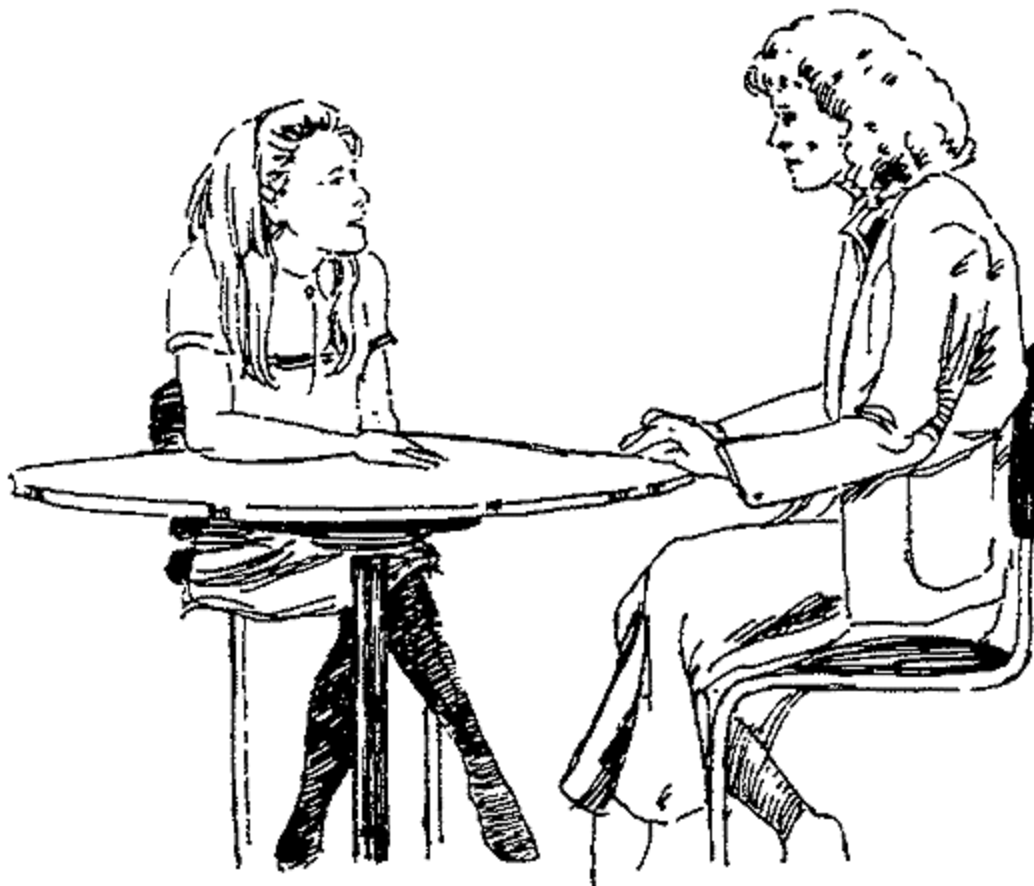
Classroom Transparency



Rules Transparency



Trusted Adult Transparency



Worksheet

1. Complete the sentences and discuss:

- A. My favorite food is...
- B. My favorite TV show is...
- C. My favorite color is...
- D. One thing I like about my home is...
- E. One thing I like about my class is...
- F. One thing I like about my face is...
- G. One thing I like about my body is...
- H. One thing I am really good at in school is...
- I. One thing I do very well at home is...

2. One thing I want to learn in *F.L.A.S.H.* Class is ...

3. One person I can talk to, a "Trusted Adult," if I have questions or problems, is ...