

# A Positive Classroom Environment

## *Setting the Stage for Learning about Bullying and Harassment*

### CASEL SEL Competencies

SA Self-Awareness  
RS Relationship Skills

#### ■ Agenda

Gathering: *Stand Up If...*

#### ■ Agenda Review

Activity 1: "A Regular Day" Story

Activity 2: The Positive  
Classroom

Debriefing

Closing: Easy and Hard

#### ■ Materials

2 pieces of construction paper,  
at least 8½ x 11 inches

Chart paper

#### ■ Prep

Place the Agenda on the board  
or on a chart

Cut the construction paper into 2  
"gingerbread men" shapes

### Gathering: *Stand Up If...*

Ask students to stand if the statement you read is true about them.

Stand Up If ...

- You have pets at home
- You have any siblings
- You like to listen to music
- You are good at video games
- You are a good friend
- You have visited another city
- You have a Facebook account

Add any additional items as long as interest is high.

### Agenda Review

Just as our Gathering showed that we have some things in common, we can appreciate the fact that we have now come together as a community of students who are here to learn new things and to work together. Sometimes the groups that we work with work well, and sometimes we don't have a positive experience in a group. Ask students to imagine how they would feel if others had laughed when they stood up during the Gathering. It is often those kinds of experiences that make us hesitant to talk about our ideas and opinions openly.

Explain that, as the Agenda shows, you will be telling them a story about one student's day, and the comments that others will choose to make during that day. The next activity will allow us to make some choices about some Agreements that the class will make in order to provide a supportive environment. We will finish with a Debriefing—a time when we talk about what we've learned together. Then, the Closing will return to some personal things to share about ourselves.

## Activity 1: “A Regular Day” Story

1. Ask for volunteers to explain what a put-down or “diss” is and share a few examples. (Put-downs or disrespectful comments are ways we make someone feel bad about himself, either with words—name-calling or teasing—or with actions like excluding someone.)
2. Questions:
  - How do these comments make people feel?
  - If people in our class say these things to one another, how might it affect our class environment?
3. Hold one of the paper cutouts in front of you, and explain that the class is going to hear a story about a regular day in someone’s life. Give the character the name of someone not in the class. Ask them to listen carefully to the comments that people choose to make to this character.
4. Tell the following story in your own words, or make up a similar story to tell that reflects comments you might hear in your environment. Whenever a character is told a mean comment, tear off a piece of the cutout.

### “A Regular Day”

One morning, Sally didn’t get up right away when her mother called her. Finally, her mother came in shouting, “Get up, you lazy thing, or you’ll be late for school!” (*Rip*) Sally jumped up and threw on her clothes. When she opened her door, her big sister saw her and said, “What’s wrong with you, little baby? Can’t you even dress yourself? Your shirt is on inside out!” (*Rip*)

Sally ran downstairs to eat, and her little brother laughed, “Ha! I got here first and ate all of the cereal. Sooree!” [*said sarcastically*](*Rip*) Sally grabbed a piece of fruit, and hurried to get to the bus. She ran fast and just arrived as the bus door was closing. The driver, opening the door said, “What’s wrong with you? I can’t be waiting around here all day forever!” (*Rip*) Sally stumbled and fell to one knee as she went down the aisle, and lots of kids laughed at her. (*Rip*)

When Sally got to school, she breathed a sigh of relief. She wasn’t tardy, thank goodness. But when the teacher asked for her homework, she groaned, realizing that she’d left it on her desk. When she tried to explain this, the teacher said sarcastically, “Sure, Sally, I’ll bet your dog ate it!” (*Rip*) When it came time to read aloud from the textbook, she was so nervous that she made a lot of mistakes. She could hear laughter every time she stumbled over a word. (*Rip*) One student even said, loud enough for the class to hear, “Wow, is she dumb!” (*Rip*)

Sally looked forward to her break time, when she at least could see her friends. The day had to get better! All of her friends were gathered in the hallway, and as she approached, everyone stopped talking. “Hi all!” Sally said, and got some frosty looks, “What’s up?” Slowly everyone walked away. (*Rip*) Great, she thought. Now, what? She’d heard that her friend Janice had been telling people about a boy she liked, so she said to another friend, Rose, “What’s going on?” Rose turned and said, “You shouldn’t have done it!” and stomped away. (*Rip*)

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*Put-downs or disrespectful comments are ways we make someone feel bad about himself.*

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*We agreed that we would be respectful, and that doesn't feel respectful to me.*

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5. Ask the following:
  - How do you think Sally is feeling right now? Why?
  - Does this happen in real life?
  - How does it feel when it happens?
  - What do you think the opposite of a put-down, or being disrespected, is? (a put-up, being positive, being affirming, etc.)
  - Can you give me an example of a positive thing one person can say to another?
6. Retell the story, using the second cutout. This time, pause before the negative remark, and ask for positive comments from volunteers. For each positive comment, add some color, or a star, to the cutout. Allow more than one comment each time, if interest is high. When you get near the end of the story, when Sally approaches her friends, have them turn to her instead of walking away. Ask what someone could say to clarify a misunderstanding about a rumor. Perhaps the friend could ask Sally if she actually said or did something that was offensive.
7. At the conclusion of the second reading of the story, ask:
  - How do you think Sally is feeling now?
  - Why do you think positive statements make us feel better?
  - Is there a connection between positive statements and feeling safe to be who you are?

Some teachers have found alternative ways to do this activity. A heart shape can be used (the original activity is called “The Torn Heart”), while some decide to fold the shape each time a negative comment is heard. If that method is chosen, the shape is unfolded in the retelling. Asking students if the shape looks like new when unfolded, which it does not, of course, illustrates the sometimes permanent effects of negative comments.

## Activity 2: The Positive Classroom

1. Ask: How would it feel if we decided to try to use positive statements with each other? What kind of Class Agreements can we make to prevent the negative comments, and focus on the positive?
2. Brainstorm a list of possible Agreements. To do this, ask the questions: How would you like to be treated in our classroom? What can we do and say, and others do and say, to make our classroom a safe and positive place to be? Place each contribution on chart paper. Add your own to the list, being careful not to appear lecturing.
3. You might pause after suggestions that are broad in scope, and take a moment to be specific (such as “What makes a good listener?” or “How does someone show ‘respect’?”). Many of these items are culturally-linked, and are not universally practiced in the same way. These specifics can be noted on an additional paper, listed on the board as you go, or taught as separate lessons (see Resources Appendix for additional curricula).

4. After everyone has contributed, ask if there are any Agreements that can be combined because they are similar. Make sure that students understand that you are grouping similar ideas, not changing their words.
5. Once each suggestion has been refined into an Agreement, ask students if they can agree to that guideline. Keep in mind that you are working to reach a consensus, so avoid a voting situation.
6. Read each Agreement in its entirety, “We agree to try to be good listeners ...” etc.

## Debriefing

Ask the following:

- How do you think these Agreements will help our class?
- Is there a way we can be gently reminded when we forget to adhere to the Agreements?

Students sometimes come up with harsh punishment because that is what they’ve heard elsewhere. Point out that it is helpful to practice kind ways to remind others about unfavorable behavior and to say things such as, “I don’t like it when you say \_\_\_\_\_. We agreed that we would be respectful, and that doesn’t feel respectful to me.”

## Closing: Easy and Hard

Ask students to respond to these questions, popcorn style (see the Teaching and Learning Strategies Appendix).

- What is something that will be easy for you to adhere to in the Agreements we just created?
- What is something that might be harder?

# Establishing a Safe, Respectful, and Supportive Environment

*Setting the Stage for Learning about Bullying and Harassment*

## CASEL SEL Competencies

SA Self-Awareness  
RS Relationship Skills

### ■ Agenda

Gathering: Back-to-Back Sharing

Agenda Review

Activity 1: Safe, Respectful, and Supportive Beings

Activity 2: Group Agreements

Debriefing

Closing: Easy and Hard

### ■ Materials

Chart paper—one sheet per group of four

Markers—a set per group

### ■ Prep

Place the Agenda on the board or on a chart

## Gathering: Back-to-Back Sharing

Begin by pairing students and asking them to stand back-to-back. (See Teaching and Learning Strategies Appendix for suggestions on random pairing. This is particularly important to do in beginning lessons, as it sets the stage for random pairing each time students participate in a lesson. Once they get used to this method, it becomes easier to get students to speak with others whom they may not know well.) After each question you ask, students will turn to face each other and take turns answering the question. After both students have spoken, they will return to their back-to-back position. After each question, ask for a few volunteers to share their responses with the group.

Before you ask the first question, ask students to think about a time when they felt they were part of a group and felt respected, cared for, and safe being themselves. It may have been a particular class in school, or some other group with whom they worked.

Questions:

- ⦿ What was it about that experience that made you feel respected, cared for, and safe being yourself?
- ⦿ How did members of the group treat each other?
- ⦿ How did people in the group show that they respected each other?

## Agenda Review

Explain that, just as they began to explore in the Gathering, today's lesson will give them an opportunity to talk more about being respected, safe, and supported. Say, "As the Agenda shows, we'll be doing an activity called Safe, Respectful, and Supportive Beings. This will help us to create some Agreements about how we'd like to be treated in this classroom, particularly as we begin to talk about the sensitive issues of harassment and bullying.

"The Debriefing will help us to look at our Agreements and think about how to keep them. We'll close with some thoughts about making the Agreements real."

## Activity 1: Safe, Respectful, and Supportive Beings

1. Divide students into groups of four (you might randomly assign the pairs used in the Gathering with each other). Each group will create a Safe, Respectful, and Supportive Being on their large sheet of paper.
2. Illustrate a gingerbread person on the board as an example of a shape they might choose to make. Explain that the shape is theirs to decide. They may also choose to name their Being.
3. Ask students to think about what actions, ways of treating each other, and attitudes would make the classroom a place where everyone would feel included and respected.
4. Ask students to write the positive things they brainstorm *inside* the outline of their Being. Some possible things to include might be listening, disagreeing respectfully, etc.
5. *Outside* the outline of the Being, students will place the actions, ways of interacting, and attitudes that they do *not* want as part of the classroom environment, such as name-calling, etc.
6. Allow about 15 minutes for the groups to complete their Beings. It's helpful to notify them when time is half up.
7. Ask each group to share its Being, and post them near each other.

## Activity 2: Group Agreements

1. Explain: With the Safe, Supportive, and Respectful Beings that you've created in mind, we're going to build some Agreements that will help us to participate in a positive environment in this classroom.  
Ask:
  - What words do you notice that we all thought were important and placed in our Beings?
  - What kinds of Agreements can we make to ensure that these actions and behaviors become a part of our classroom?
2. As students brainstorm suggestions, write them on the board or on chart paper. After everyone has contributed, ask if there are any Agreements that can be combined because they are similar. Make sure that students understand that you are grouping similar ideas, not changing their words.
3. Once each suggestion has been refined into an Agreement, ask students if they can agree to that guideline. Keep in mind that you are working to reach a consensus, so avoid a voting situation.
4. Read each Agreement in its entirety, "We agree to try to be good listeners..." etc. You may also choose to create a classroom Being, writing the guidelines agreed upon inside the Being.

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*"In recognizing the humanity of our fellow beings, we pay ourselves the highest tribute."*

—THURGOOD MARSHALL

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## Debriefing

Ask the following:

- How do you think these Agreements will help our class?
- Is there a way we can be gently reminded when we forget to adhere to the Agreements?

Students sometimes come up with harsh punishment because that is what they've heard elsewhere. Point out that it is helpful to practice kind ways to remind others about unfavorable behavior and to say things such as, "I don't like it when you say \_\_\_\_\_. We agreed that we would be respectful, and that doesn't feel respectful to me."

## Closing: Easy and Hard

Ask students to respond to these questions, popcorn-style (see the Teaching and Learning Strategies).

- What is something that will be easy for you to adhere to in the Agreements we just created?
- What is something that might be harder?

# Establishing a Safe, Respectful, and Supportive Environment

*Setting the Stage for Learning about Bullying and Harassment*

## CASEL SEL Competencies

**SA** Self-Awareness  
**RS** Relationship Skills

### ■ Agenda

Gathering: Concentric Circles

Agenda Review

Activity 1: Safe, Respectful, and Supportive Beings

Activity 2: Class Agreements

Debriefing

Closing: Easy and Hard

### ■ Materials

Chart paper—one sheet per group of four

Markers—a set per group

### ■ Prep

Place the Agenda on the board or on a chart

## Gathering: Concentric Circles

1. This activity gives group members a chance to share with a variety of partners. Divide the class into two equal groups (if you don't have an equal number, you may join one). One group forms a circle, and then faces outward. The second group forms a second circle around the first one, facing in. Each person in the inner circle faces a partner in the outer circle. (If you don't have enough room to make circles, parallel rows will work. See the Teaching and Learning Strategies Appendix for more explicit directions for Concentric Circles.)

Explain that you will be posing a question and then each person will have about 45 seconds to share with their partner; all pairs will speak simultaneously. Identify whether the inside or outside person will speak first. After 45 seconds, you will signal that the other partner needs to begin to speak. When both partners have answered the first question, ask one of the circles to move two or three spaces to their right. Then pose the second question, and repeat the process. After that question, have the other circle move two places to their right.

Questions:

- Ask students to think about a time when they were part of a group and felt respected, cared for, and safe being themselves. It may have been a particular class in school, or some other group with whom they worked. What was it about that experience that made them feel respected, cared for, and safe to be who they are?
  - Thinking again back to that positive group experience, try to be specific about how the members of the group treated each other. What were specific things people did or did not do?
  - Last question about that productive environment you've been describing: How did people in the group show that they respected each other? Were there certain actions or words that showed respect? How does one show respect for another person?
2. Thank the students for participating in the Gathering and ask them to take their seats. Ask if anyone would like to tell the group anything that came up during the Gathering that surprised them.



## Agenda Review

Explain that, just as they began to explore in the Gathering, today's lesson will give them an opportunity to talk more about being respected, safe and supported. As the Agenda shows, we'll be doing an activity called Safe, Respectful, and Supportive Beings. This will help us create some Agreements about how we'd like to be treated in this classroom, particularly as we begin to talk about the sensitive issues of harassment and bullying.

The Debriefing will help us to look at our Agreements and think about how to keep them. We'll close with some thoughts about making the Agreements real.

## Activity 1: Safe, Respectful, and Supportive Beings

1. Draw a gingerbread person shape on the board, or any shape that will provide a "Being." Perhaps your school has a mascot, or you may have a local sports team, etc.
2. Ask students to reflect back on the Gathering and ask what actions, ways of treating each other, and attitudes would make the classroom a place where everyone would feel included and respected.
3. Write the positive things they brainstorm *inside* the outline of the Being. Some possible things to include might be listening, disagreeing respectfully, etc.
4. If negative items begin to come up, begin to place these things *outside* the outline of the Being. This will reflect the actions, ways of interacting, and attitudes that they do *not* want as part of the classroom environment, such as name-calling, etc.
5. Feel comfortable in adding your own ideas within the Being, as you are a member of the group as well. Strive to avoid a lecturing tone, however.

## Activity 2: Class Agreements

1. Explain: Now that we've had a chance to explore this topic, we'll use this information to create some Class Agreements to ensure that these actions and behaviors become a part of our classroom.
2. Label a piece of chart paper "Class Agreements."
3. Ask students to think about what was placed in the Being and brainstorm Agreements, such as "practice good listening." You might pause after suggestions that are broad in scope, and take a moment to be specific (for example, "What makes a good listener?" or "How does someone show 'respect'?" Many of these items are culturally linked, and are not universally practiced in the same way. These specifics can be noted on an additional paper, listed on the board as you go, or taught as separate lessons (see the Resources Appendix for additional curricula).

4. After everyone has contributed, ask if there are any Agreements that can be combined because they are similar. Make sure that students understand that you are grouping similar ideas, not changing their words.
5. Once each suggestion has been refined into an Agreement, ask students if they can agree to that guideline. Keep in mind that you are working to a consensus, so avoid a voting situation.

## Debriefing

Read over the list of Agreements the class has created.

Ask:

- How do you think these Agreements will help our class be supportive and encouraging?
- Is there a way we can be gently reminded when we forget to adhere to the Agreements?

Students sometimes come up with harsh punishment because that is what they've heard elsewhere. Point out that it is helpful to practice kind ways to remind others about unfavorable behavior and to say things such as, "I don't like it when you say \_\_\_\_\_. We agreed that we would be respectful, and that doesn't feel respectful to me."

## Closing: Easy and Hard

Ask students to respond to these questions, popcorn-style (see the Teaching and Learning Strategies Appendix).

- What is something that will be easy for you to adhere to in the Agreements we just created?
- What is something that might be harder?

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*It is helpful to practice kind ways to remind others about unfavorable behavior.*

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# Establishing a Safe, Respectful, and Supportive Classroom

## *Setting the Stage for Learning about Bullying and Harassment*

### CASEL SEL Competencies

- SA** Self-Awareness  
**RS** Relationship Skills

#### ■ Agenda

Gathering: Classroom Scavenger Hunt

Agenda Review

Activity: Class Guidelines

Debriefing

Closing: Easy and Hard

#### ■ Materials

Handout—Classroom Scavenger Hunt

One piece of chart paper, if desired, for Activity

#### ■ Prep

Place the Agenda on the board or on a chart

One copy of Classroom Scavenger Hunt handout for each student

### Gathering: Classroom Scavenger Hunt

1. Give each student a copy of the Classroom Scavenger Hunt. Students have 10 minutes to interview other participants in search of individuals who fit the 24 categories listed. After they find a match for a particular category, they should write that person's name in the square. The goal of this activity is to interview as many people as possible; a name can appear only once on the sheet.
2. After 10 minutes, ask students to return to their seats. Choose several categories to discuss and ask students to raise their hands if they fit into that category. Ask them to do a demonstration in front of the group if appropriate.

### Agenda Review

Discuss with students the positive aspects of having a classroom with such a diversity of experiences and opinions, and how that makes a classroom so much more interesting and stimulating. However, unless a classroom environment values differences and welcomes many opinions, this diversity can sometimes be challenging. One way to harness the energy of a group of people, and make it positive energy is to create some guidelines for working together.

Explain: As the Agenda shows, the Activity today will be to create a set of guidelines together, guidelines that will help us work well together, and will be particularly helpful as we begin to talk about the sensitive issues of harassment and bullying. The Debriefing will help us to look at our guidelines and think about how to keep them. We'll close with some thoughts about making the guidelines real.

### Activity: Class Guidelines

1. Ask questions to help the group begin to think in term of guidelines. Chart their responses on chart paper, or on the board.  
Ask:
  - How do we need to treat each other and speak to each other so that we can all feel valued and supported?
  - How can we show respect for each other?
  - What behavior will the group not accept?

Offer examples if the group is having trouble coming up with ideas. Class Agreements usually include things like respect, talk one at a time, no side talking, okay to have different opinions, positive attitude, be supportive of others, etc. Feel comfortable restating the suggestions in positive terms, for example, “no side talking” might be changed to “one person speaks at time.”

2. You might pause after suggestions that are broad in scope, and take a moment to be specific (for example, “What makes a good listener?” or “How does someone show ‘respect’?” Many of these items are culturally linked and are not universally practiced in the same way). These specifics can be noted on an additional paper, listed on the board as you go, or taught as separate lessons (see the Recommended Resources Appendix for additional curricula).
3. After everyone has contributed, ask if there are any guidelines that can be combined because they are similar. Make sure that students understand that you are grouping similar ideas, not changing their words.
4. Once each suggestion has been refined into a guideline, ask students if they can agree to that guideline. Keep in mind that you are working to a consensus, so avoid a voting situation.

## Debriefing

Read over the list of guidelines the class has created.

Ask:

- **How do you think these guidelines will help our class be supportive and encouraging, and one in which we are safe to be who we are?**
- **Is there a way we can be gently reminded when we forget to adhere to the agreements?**

Students sometimes come up with harsh punishments because that is what they’ve heard elsewhere. Point out that it is helpful to practice kind ways to remind others about unfavorable behavior and to say things such as, “I don’t like it when you say \_\_\_\_\_. We agreed that we would be respectful, and that doesn’t feel respectful to me.”

## Closing: Easy and Hard

Ask students to respond to these questions, popcorn style (see the Teaching and Learning Strategies Appendix):

- What is something that will be easy for you to adhere to in the guidelines we just created?
- What is something that might be harder?

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*“The best way  
to understand  
people is to  
listen to them.”*

—RALPH NICHOLS

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## Classroom Scavenger Hunt

Find Someone Who ...

# HANDBOUT

Has the same eye color as you do:	Can speak two languages:	Can cross their eyes: (requires a demo!)
Likes to sing in the bathroom:	Is the oldest of their siblings:	Can bench-press their own weight:
Has six or more people in their family:	Has a pet other than a dog or cat:	Had pizza for dinner this week:
Is the youngest in their family:	Can roll their tongue: (requires a demo!)	Plays a sport:
Plays an instrument or sings:	Is wearing red:	Can touch their head to their toes: (requires a demo!)
Likes to read:	Likes to play videogames:	Volunteers their time to help others:
Has traveled outside the United States:	Likes to babysit:	Likes to draw or paint:
Was born in the same month as you were:	Has braces:	Was born in a state other than the one we're in:

# Establishing a Safe, Respectful, and Supportive Environment

## *Setting the Stage for Learning about Bullying and Harassment*

### CASEL SEL Competencies

**SA** Self-Awareness  
**RS** Relationship Skills

#### ■ Agenda

Gathering: Respect

Agenda Review

Activity 1: Getting to the Heart of It

Activity 2: Group Agreements

Debriefing

Closing: Easy and Hard

#### ■ Materials

2 heart-shaped pieces of construction paper

Handout—Line Cards

#### ■ Prep

Place the Agenda on the board or on a chart

Cut out two identical heart shapes from the construction paper

Make one copy of the Line Cards handout, cut into lines

Chart paper labeled Group Agreements

### Gathering: Respect

In a go-round (see the Teaching and Learning Strategies Appendix) ask students to share one thing that someone can do or say that shows respect.

### Agenda Review

Explain that a classroom is an environment just like any other—one's home, or workplace, or a place where people congregate for social or physical activities. The intention of the lesson today is to explore ways that people interact in their environments, and recognize that a supportive and positive environment is usually more productive. In order to communicate openly and honestly, and to share opinions respectfully, it's helpful to establish guidelines for the classroom.

In the first Activity, we'll be telling a group story about a day in the life of a student. We'll be discussing the effect that the words people choose to say to him can have on this person. Our discussion will lead to our establishment of some guidelines—ones we can agree to in order to create a supportive and respectful environment in our classroom.

The Debriefing will be an opportunity to say how you might put these Guidelines into practice, and then the Closing will be a time for some personal sharing.

### Activity 1: Getting to the Heart of It

1. Distribute the Line Cards #1 to #14 to various students. Make sure to pass them out in numerical order so that it is easy for students to read their cards in sequence. At certain points in the story, students will read their cards aloud.
2. Begin by holding up one of the hearts and explaining that every person starts out in life thinking that he or she is important—someone who thinks important thoughts, who has important feelings, someone who matters. This is called our self-concept. Ask students what is meant by self-concept and explore with them where we might get messages about our self-concept.
3. Begin telling the story below. When it is time for a student to read from his or her card, pause and look in that student's direction. After you hear each comment, tear off a piece of the heart. By the end of the story, there will be only a shred of heart left.

Jamal's alarm clock rings. He turns it off and sleeps another half hour. He gets up, gets into the shower, and hears his sister banging on the door.

She says, *Line Card #1*. ("Don't you know how to tell time? It's my turn in the bathroom!")

Jamal finishes in a rush and faces his sister at the door, who says, *Line Card #2*. ("You're such a slug. You were supposed to be out of here 15 minutes ago.")

He gets dressed, and heads for the kitchen. He sees his mother and says, "Hi, what's for breakfast?" His mother says, *Line Card #3*. ("Don't you know what time it is? I can't get your breakfast now. I have to leave in 10 minutes. There might be some cereal left, but good luck with that!")

Jamal's mother then looks at his wrinkled shirt and says, *Line Card #4*. ("That shirt looks awful. You're not going to wear that to school, are you?")

Jamal grabs his backpack and a banana and runs to get the bus. As he sits down, he remembers the English essay that he left on his desk. He worked on it late last night so that he could hand it in on time.

When he gets to school, Jamal tries to find his English teacher. He sees her in the copy room preoccupied with a stack of papers she's running through the copy machine. He starts to speak, but she cuts him off, saying, *Line Card #5*. ("Not now! Can't you see I'm busy?")

The bell rings, and he's now late for homeroom. He scrambles for his seat and accidentally knocks the books off the desk next to him. The student at the desk says, *Line Card #6*. ("Is it so hard to walk and watch where you're going at the same time? You're a jerk!")

His homeroom teacher looks up and says, *Line Card #7*. ("What is it this time? You're late again, you know.")

And so the day goes. In geometry class students are working in groups on proofs—not Jamal's favorite thing. He sits staring silently at the problem and one of his partners says, *Line Card #8*. ("So are you in this group or not? Don't you have anything to say?")

Between classes, Jamal sees his girlfriend. He calls out to her in the hall. He was so busy finishing his essay last night that he didn't text or call her, even though he said he would. She sees him and says, *Line Card #9*. ("Don't even think about an excuse! Leave me alone!")

When he gets to his English class, there's no time to talk with his teacher privately. At the end of class, when it's time to turn in his essay, his teacher notices he isn't turning it in and says, *Line Card #10*. ("So where's your essay, Jamal? Did the dog eat it again?")

At lunch Jamal sees his girlfriend in the cafeteria. She's with a bunch of her friends, and he asks if she has a minute to talk. She replies, *Line Card #11*. ("So now you want to talk! Wait until you read what I posted on Facebook when you didn't text last night!")

He walks away. A couple of his friends notice what's happened and give him a hard time. One of them says, *Line Card #12*. ("Guess you're not the big man anymore.")

Finally it's time for basketball practice. He's practicing free throws, and nothing is going in. The coach notices and says, *Line Card #13*. ("You've lost your touch. Take a walk and let someone else shoot.")

Jamal gets home. It's his turn to cook dinner, but all he wants to do is sprawl on the couch, turn on some music, and turn off the day. He hears the door close as he opens his eyes. His mother walks into the living room and says, *Line Card #14*. ("Is this your idea of making dinner? I can't leave you in charge of anything.")

4. Discuss how negative comments make people feel. Ask what the opposite of a put-down is (affirmative statements, positive or encouraging words). Explain that supportive comments show respect, acceptance, and encouragement.
5. Hold up the other heart. Tell the same story again, but this time, ask students to suggest supportive, encouraging comments that could be said in place of the put-downs or negative ones we heard in the first story. This time the heart stays intact.

## Activity 2: Group Agreements

1. Explain: Now that we've had a chance to explore this topic, we'll use this information to create some Group Agreements to ensure that positive and supportive comments and behaviors become a part of our classroom.
2. Label a piece of chart paper "Group Agreements." Ask questions like these to help the group begin to think in terms of guidelines: How do we need to treat each other and speak to each other so that we can all feel valued and supported? How can we show respect for each other? What behavior would not be acceptable to our group? Have the group contribute specific agreements they would like to see adopted in the class so you can chart them on the paper. Offer examples if the group is having trouble coming up with ideas. Group agreements usually include things like respect, talk one at a time, no side talking, okay to have different opinions, positive attitude, be supportive of others, etc. Feel comfortable restating the suggestions in positive terms, for example, "no side talking" might be changed to "one person speaks at time."
3. You might pause after suggestions that are broad in scope, and take a moment to be specific (such as "What makes a good listener?" or "How does someone show respect?"). Many of these items are culturally linked, and are not universally practiced in the same way).
4. After everyone has contributed, ask if there are any Agreements that can be combined because they are similar. Make sure that students understand that you are grouping similar ideas, not changing their words.
5. Once each suggestion has been refined into an Agreement, ask students if they can agree to that guideline. Keep in mind that you are working to a consensus, so avoid a voting situation.

## Debriefing

Read over the list of Agreements the class has created.

Ask:

- How do you think these Agreements will help our class be supportive and encouraging?
- Is there a way we can be gently reminded when we forget to adhere to the Agreements?



Students sometimes come up with harsh punishment because that is what they've heard elsewhere. Point out that it is helpful to practice kind ways to remind others about unfavorable behavior and to say things such as, "I don't like it when you say \_\_\_\_\_. We agreed that we would be respectful, and that doesn't feel respectful to me."

### Closing: Easy and Hard

Ask students to respond to these questions, popcorn style (see the Teaching and Learning Strategies Appendix):

- What is something that will be easy for you to adhere to in the Agreements we just created?
- What is something that might be harder?

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*A supportive  
and positive  
environment is  
usually more  
productive.*

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# HANDBOOK

## Line Cards

1. “Don’t you know how to tell time? It’s my turn in the bathroom!”
2. “You’re such a slug. You were supposed to be out of here 15 minutes ago.”
3. “Don’t you know what time it is? I can’t get your breakfast now. I have to leave in 10 minutes. There might be some cereal left, but good luck with that!”
4. “That shirt looks awful. You’re not going to wear that to school, are you?”
5. “Not now! Can’t you see I’m busy?”
6. “Is it so hard to walk and watch where you’re going at the same time? You’re a jerk!”
7. “What is it this time? You’re late again, you know.”
8. “So are you in this group or not? Don’t you have anything to say?”
9. “Don’t even think about an excuse! Leave me alone!”
10. “So where’s your essay, Jamal? Did the dog eat it again?”
11. “So now you want to talk! Wait until you read what I posted on Facebook when you didn’t text last night!”
12. “Guess you’re not the big man anymore.”
13. “You’ve lost your touch. Take a walk and let someone else shoot.”
14. “Is this your idea of making dinner? I can’t leave you in charge of anything.”