



# TEACHING TOLERANCE

A PROJECT OF THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER

Published on *Teaching Tolerance* (<http://www.tolerance.org>)

[Home](#) > Happy Faces

## Happy Faces

Everyone has a bad day once in a while. This activity helps students be sensitive to schoolmates who might be having a bad day and gives them a way to cross boundaries and bring cheer to others.

### Objectives

- Students will learn empathy
- Students will look beyond themselves to see the needs of others

### Time and Materials

- One class session to explain the happy faces
- 3 happy faces <sup>(1)</sup> per student

Begin by reading *Alexander and the Horrible No Good Very Bad Day* ([www.SimonSaysKids.com](http://www.SimonSaysKids.com) <sup>(2)</sup>, \$7.99). Like Alexander, everyone has a bad day once in a while. Tell your students, from your personal experience, about a day that went badly for you. Tell them that you really could have used a friendly smile that day — or, perhaps, publicly affirm a student who did give you a smile that day.

Explain to students what a bystander is (i.e. someone who watches from the sidelines). Sometimes we see other classmates being bullied. Perhaps someone has said or done something mean to them, and we aren't sure what to do to make the victim feel better. Sometimes we stand up for that person. Sometimes we do nothing. Tell your students that doing nothing is no longer an option — because they have Happy Faces.

Give each student three happy faces and tell them that whenever they see someone who needs some extra cheer, they can give them a happy face and say something kind to them. Here is the catch: students can only give happy faces to someone outside of their classroom! Tell students they'll have to really look and listen before school, at recess on the playground, at lunch and after school to find people who need an extra smile.

On Friday, give students a chance to reflect on giving out happy faces. Have them silently write or draw a picture to show what they did, how it felt and the response of the person they gave a happy face to. Then share these with the whole class.

### Extension

Without telling your class, invite a colleague to implement this happy face activity too, with

a special emphasis on watching your class. Your students will be shocked and pleased to receive their own happy faces!

Have your students go, in pairs, to give happy faces to adults in school who just need an extra affirmation for the hard work they're doing. This way, students get a chance to cross boundaries of age to affirm adults.

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**Source URL:** <http://www.tolerance.org/activity/happy-faces>

**Links:**

[1] [http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/mix\\_2009\\_organizer\\_guide\\_happyfaces.pdf](http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/mix_2009_organizer_guide_happyfaces.pdf)

[2] <http://www.SimonSaysKids.com>

# Happy Faces Handout





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[Home](#) > What Can We Learn from a Box of Crayons?

## What Can We Learn from a Box of Crayons?

Central elementary, a school in transition with an increasingly diverse student body, decided to focus this school year on diversity.

I wanted to help the 2nd- and 3rd-graders understand the concept of diversity and why they should celebrate it. Inspired by *The Crayon Box that Talked* (Random House, ISBN# 0679886117, \$12.95), a story by Shane Derolf and Michael Letzig, I used a drawing exercise to help students discover the value of diversity.

I provided each student with two sheets of drawing paper, then allowed each student to pick out one crayon from a box I provided. I then asked them to draw a picture with *only* the single crayon. After about five minutes, I asked the students to take out their own boxes of crayons and draw another picture on the second sheet of paper; they could use as many different colors as they wished. When they finished coloring, I asked them the following questions:

Which picture do you like best? Why? Which picture would you like to display in your classroom, the hallway, at home?

Invariably, the students preferred the pictures drawn with the whole box of crayons. I said, "What a boring world it would be if we were all alike — like the picture drawn with only one crayon. The diversity in the world makes it like a wonderful box of crayons with endless colors."

Next, I read them *The Crayon Box that Talked*. To continue the discussion, I asked, "Wasn't it silly for the crayons not to like each other just because of their color? Each crayon had something special to offer to the picture — green for the grass, blue for the sky, yellow for the sun." The children agreed, and I asked them to brainstorm the reasons it is important to accept people who are different from us, recording their responses on the board.

In conclusion, I read a passage from an unknown author: "We could learn a lot from crayons. ... (They) all are different colors, but they all exist very nicely in the same box."

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# TEACHING TOLERANCE

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Published on *Teaching Tolerance* (<http://www.tolerance.org>)

[Home](#) > Many Shapes and Sizes

## Many Shapes and Sizes

This activity helps even the youngest of children celebrate size diversity.

### Overview

In this lesson, students read a story about body diversity and discuss the different shapes and sizes that people come in. They make body tracings that celebrate their unique shape and size, and talk about ways to keep their bodies healthy through good nutrition and activity.

### Objectives

- To promote an appreciation of body diversity among students
- To foster a sense of body-esteem among students
- To increase students' understanding of ways to maintain a healthy body
- To reinforce among students that internal characteristics are the most important measure of a person

### Materials

- Butcher block paper (1 sheet for each student)
- Collage materials (e.g., yarn, buttons, etc.)
- Construction paper
- Masking tape
- Scissors
- Glue
- A copy of *Shapesville* (\$6.36 through [Gurze Books](#) <sup>(1)</sup>), about a small town where five friends of various shapes, sizes, colors, and talents celebrate what makes each of them unique. ISBN: 0936077441.

*NOTE: If it is not possible to obtain a copy of *Shapesville*, introduce the activity by discussing and charting the ways in which our body sizes and shapes are different.*

### Procedure

1. In advance, prepare a sheet of butcher block paper for each student (large enough for each student to do a body tracing). Prepare items that students can use to decorate their body tracings (e.g., yarn, buttons, pipe cleaners, crayons, markers, etc.) and spread the materials out among several table groups or work stations.

2. Tell students that you are going to read a book together about a place called *Shapesville*, where everyone is a different size, shape and color, and each member of the town is special. Read *Shapesville* to the class and use the following discussion questions to process the story.

- Which character did you like best? Why?
- Which character is most like you? How?
- Are your friends and family members different shapes, sizes and colors? How are they different?
- What can you do to take care of your body, and keep it strong and healthy?
- What can you do with your body that you are proud of?
- What special talents do you have that make you a star?
- In the story it says, "It's not the size of your shape or the shape of your size, but the size of your heart that deserves first prize." What makes you a special person on the inside?

3. Tell students that they will spend some time exploring all the special shapes and sizes of the students in their class. Divide the students into small groups and assign an adult to work with each group. Have the adults help each student create a body tracing of their unique shape and size on a sheet of butcher paper.

*OPTION: If there is not enough adult supervision to create a body tracing for each student, have students create a collage instead. Cut out multicolored paper shapes of different sizes in advance, and direct students to glue them on to a sheet of construction paper in a configuration that reflects their unique body shape and size.*

4. After all of the tracings are complete, invite students to decorate their bodies using the materials prepared in step #1. If possible, take a photo of each student's face—or have students bring one in from home—and affix it to the appropriate spot on his or her tracing. Hang the completed body tracings around the classroom and take the class on a tour of all the bodies. As you tour around, allow each student a few moments to describe what is special about his or her body.

5. Conclude the activity by reminding students that our different shapes and sizes make us each unique and special. Reinforce that it is important to take care of our bodies by eating healthy foods and being active, and that what counts most is not what our bodies look like on the outside, but what kind of person we are on the inside.

### **Extension Activities**

1. If teasing or bullying based on body size has occurred among your students, use the body drawings created in the lesson above to remind students that each of us is special, and that making fun of our differences is wrong (but don't make teasing an issue if does not come up naturally). Have students draw pictures of or role play ways to respond constructively to teasing that they might experience, as well as ways to be a good friend to others who are the targets of teasing and bullying.

2. Talk with students about loving their bodies through healthy eating. Introduce the basic food groups and help students to make a distinction between "growing" foods (foods that help your body to grow in a healthy way) and "sometimes" foods (foods that we eat less often because they are not as healthy). Have students bring in magazine pictures or actual food wrappers/containers that reflect the various categories above, and create collages that can be displayed to reinforce "taking care of our special bodies."

3. Talk with students about loving their bodies through healthy activity. Ask students to identify an activity that they like to do and have them draw a picture or write a story that features them engaged in this activity. Have students provide a demonstration of their activity for their classmates and arrange for them to teach others how to do the activity.

### **Related activities:**

- [Understanding Size Bias](#) [2]
- [Size Bias As A Social Construction](#) [3]

[Pre K to K](#) [Grades 1 to 2](#) [Social Studies](#) [Science and Health](#) [ELL / ESL](#)  
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#### **Links:**

- [1] <http://www.gurze.com/productdetails.cfm?PC=1356>  
[2] <http://www.tolerance.org/activity/understanding-size-bias>  
[3] <http://www.tolerance.org/activity/size-bias-social-construction>



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[Home](#) > The Only Boy in the Ballet Class

## The Only Boy in the Ballet Class

To teach about the importance of kindness, I first choose a story in which children are putting down others—for example, *The Only Boy in the Ballet Class*, by Denise Gruska, or *Oliver Button is a Sissy*, by Tomie dePaola.

Before reading the story, the students talk about some of their differences. They might discuss some activities they enjoy and others that they don't. I then give a student a large drawing that symbolizes the boy in the story (this is hand-drawn by me). While we read the story, the student rips a tear into the paper child every time the class hears something in the story that would be upsetting or hurtful. I usually need to help them think through how they would feel (focusing on the various situations in the book).

After reading the story, I ask the students how they think the child in the story feels with all of his tears and rips. The students usually say "bad" or "yucky." I ask the students how they would help the little boy who has been ripped. They usually say they would hug him, talk to him, try to provide support, tell a teacher, etc. Then I hand out some little bandages for the students to put on the ripped child and they begin to bandage him. Now I ask them to observe how the little boy looks. They acknowledge that he looks a little better, but still not great. They say things like "he has lots of boo-boos."

I explain that no matter how much "fixing up" you do, you never can completely heal the hurt and damage that has been done to someone's self-esteem. I usually give them an example from my childhood in which somebody teased me or left me out of a game. I explain how I can still remember the hurt others caused me. I wrap up by reminding students that we need to stop and think before we say something because our comments could hurt another person for life. This is so moving to the students! I leave the little poster of the bandaged child in the room so that the kids can be reminded all year.

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*Teaching Tolerance magazine gets Activity Exchange articles like this one ([Spring 2011, Issue 39](#)) from classroom teachers. Do you have your own ideas to share? Contribute now to [Activity Exchange](#). Visit [Do You Teach About Social Justice?](#) for details about sending in your submission.*

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**Source URL:** <http://www.tolerance.org/activity/only-boy-ballet-class>

**Links:**

[1] <http://www.tolerance.org/magazine/number-39-spring-2011>

[2] <http://www.tolerance.org/blog/do-you-teach-about-social-justice-share-us>