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# The Five Skills

Through the five skills of *No Putdowns*, students start looking at their own behavior and the behavior of others. The skills emphasize responsibility for one's own actions and choices, self-control, empathy, community building and effective listening and speaking skills.

The lessons are presented through a wide variety of formats, including dyad, small group and classroom discussion, writing, art and music, literature, independent projects, games and celebration, and media education. They are designed to meet the many styles through which students learn. Many lessons fit within existing social studies, language arts, physical education or fine arts curricula (and some will even lend themselves to math and science).

Through five skills, children become aware of their own power. They learn that power is the ability to manage one's feelings, to stop and think before responding rather than automatically lashing out. Power is the ability to make good choices, not the ability to hurt or control another. Students learn new powerful behaviors, such as helping others, apologizing when wrong, walking away from a fight, using constructive words instead of fists and putdowns, sharing, and including rather than excluding others.

It is not critical to have been involved with *No Putdowns* in early grades in order for it to be successful in later ones. However, it is helpful to be aware of the activities and concepts covered in other grades.

## Outcomes

Upon completion of the ten-week instructional period, students (at an understanding appropriate to their grade) and

staff will be able to:

- Recognize and understand the effects of putdowns on themselves and others
- Recognize that putdowns are used for a variety of reasons
- Develop strategies to reduce their own use of putdowns
- Recognize and use alternative communication skills
- Develop peaceful, non-abusive strategies to deal with putdowns and other conflict situations
- Demonstrate strategies for calming down
- List attributes, achievements, abilities of which they are proud
- Recognize that they have choices about how to respond in any situation
- Recognize and express appreciation, encouragement or compliments
- Demonstrate increased levels of respect in child-child, adult-child, and adult-adult interactions

## Defining Putdowns

*No Putdowns* defines putdowns as negative or belittling words or actions that show disrespect toward a person or groups of persons. Putdowns are used both directly (to another person's face) and indirectly (to a third person about someone else.) They may be used because of fear, anger, ignorance, jealousy, need for power, frustration, lack of alternative communication skills, insecurity, habit, modeled behavior or humor. (Often, putdowns are disguised as humor — as seen in television sitcoms.)

## Putdowns Are Poison



**Time Needed:** 10-15 minutes



**Purpose:** Students will observe a graphic demonstration of the power of putdowns.



**Main Ideas:** Putdowns often lead to more putdowns. Putdowns have a profound effect on the community.



**Materials:** Green marker, flip chart paper (or overhead projector and transparency)

### Using This Activity

1. Review putdowns if necessary: What are they? Why do people use them?
2. Draw five separate circles on the chart paper. Post the paper and tell the following story:

One day, Michael was having a lot of trouble with his schoolwork. He was beginning to feel frustrated and started putting himself down. "I'm so dumb, I can't do anything right," he said to himself. He was so upset, it was as if he was filled with poison. *(Color in one circle with the green marker.)*

Antoine walked by and accidentally bumped into Michael's desk. "You are such a clod," Michael yelled at Antoine. "Can't you see I'm trying to work? You're messing me up." Antoine felt as if Michael had shot a poison dart and filled him with poison. *(Color in another circle.)*

Tamika came up to Antoine. "May I borrow your spelling list?" she asked. "Why, did your dog eat yours?" Antoine snarled. "Well excuse me for living," Tamika said in an angry voice that almost cracked. "You are so selfish, you never help anyone." Tamika was filled with poison too. *(Color in another circle.)*

Tamika sat down. When Stephen and Tim started talking to each other, Tamika glared at them, clicked her tongue, and rolled her eyes. That made them angry, and they were filled with poison. *(Color in the last two circles.)* In turn, they were mean to other kids at free time, and soon the whole class was filled with green poison and was shooting darts at each other.

continued on next page

As an alternative activity, ask five students to come to the front of the classroom. Use their names in the story. Have each of those children color in one of the circles with green "poison."

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## KEEP IT IN PERSPECTIVE!

Instructions: For each situation below, circle the letter of the thought that keeps the situation in perspective so you stay cool.

**1. Situation: You were just blamed for something your brother did.**

- a. They always blame me for everything, they hate me, they love him more, I wish I could go live somewhere else.
- b. I'm not going to let this bother me. I'll explain it to them when they calm down.

**2. Situation: You missed the school bus, and you have to wait for your mother to finish getting ready for work and then drive you to school.**

- a. I won't oversleep again tomorrow. I better remind Mom to write me an excuse note before she drops me off.
- b. If she cared about me she'd hurry up, she's making me late and the principal will yell at me and probably make me stay after school and scrub floors or something.

**3. Situation: Your best friend did better than you on a test.**

- a. I'm so stupid, everyone does better than I do.
- b. Jarrod did better than I did this time.

**4. Situation: Another kid just called you a 'loser' because you dropped your lunch tray.**

- a. Things like this are always happening to me. Maybe I am a loser, but I'll show him how it feels to be embarrassed.
- b. I'm no loser. I just dropped my tray because it was slippery.

**5. You forgot to bring your money for a field trip.**

- a. I'll ask my teacher what I can do make this work out.
- b. My whole year is ruined. I'll never get to do what the other kids do.



## ACTIVITY 2

# Mirror, Mirror



**Time Needed:** 20 minutes



**Purpose:** Students will list adjectives describing how they see themselves and how they think others see them.



**Main Idea:** Sometimes the way we think others see us affects how we see ourselves.



**Materials:** Mirror worksheet

### Using This Activity

1. Distribute worksheets to students, and instruct them to fill them in. For example, a student might describe herself as a hard worker, but she thinks her parents see her as lazy. Or she may consider herself fun-loving, but she has noticed her classmates consider her a “book-worm.”
2. After completing the worksheet, instruct students to look at the words they wrote in each mirror space. Are there major differences among them? What are the similarities?

Students’ sense of how others see them may be based on intuition, remarks other people have made, the way they are treated, and in part, their own projections.

Stress that students should be honest about how they think others see them and how they see themselves. This is for their eyes only and is an opportunity for reflection! If you know that some children tend to be too hard on themselves, help them understand that they may be judging themselves too harshly.

You may want to point out that there is probably at least a grain of truth in each of the adjectives in the mirrors. It is important to know and accept the many aspects of ourselves.

As an optional step, have students ask friends, parents and teacher if their descriptions of how these people see them are accurate. This is an act of trust, and students may choose to take this step if they feel safe with the people involved.