

Dealing with Students' Reaction to The Ebola Virus

Classroom Guidance Lesson

OBJECTIVE

Normalize students' reaction to the Ebola virus and encourage a supportive climate.

MATERIALS

Elementary: Construction paper, markers, crayons

Secondary: White paper, printed scenarios

GRADE LEVEL

PK-12th

ABOUT EBOLA AND COMMON REACTIONS

What is Ebola?

- A virus contracted through *direct* contact with bodily fluids (i.e., vomit, blood, urine, etc.).
- Symptoms include: fever, severe headache, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pain and unexplained bleeding or bruising.
- Symptoms can appear between 2 to 21 days; 8 to 10 days being the average.
- **A person MUST be showing these symptoms in order to spread Ebola.**
- Although Ebola is not easily spread, frequent hand-washing is important in preventing the spread of the illness.

Common Reactions (Share Out):

How did hearing about Ebola make you feel? What did it make you think was going to happen to you, your friends or your family? What did you do when you heard about Ebola?

- You may feel: scared, confused, sad, nervous or uncertain. It is okay to feel this way.
- Sometimes we may respond by doing the following: laughing, making fun of others, purposely staying away from others, saying things that are hurtful, saying things that are untrue, withdrawing or not saying anything at all, acting like the tough "guy" or "gal" even when we feel scared.
- When communities face unfamiliar illnesses that appear to be threatening, there is a tendency to stay away from those who have been in contact with the person who is sick (e.g., family, friends, place of employment). As long as these people are not showing any symptoms, they can't spread the Ebola virus.
- Hard circumstances can also bring out the best in people. It gives us an opportunity to support each other and be a good friend.

Coping:

What is something you can commit to doing to help yourself?

- Things to do to help cope with our feelings: Identify how we feel. Talk about how we feel with adults. Ask questions. Ask for the facts or the truth. Be supportive of our peers. Avoid watching too much television coverage and/or viewing graphic images.

What is something you can commit to doing to help others?

- Things we do not want to do because they are destructive: Spread rumors. Talk about others. Bully. Discriminate.

ACTIVITY

Elementary:

1. Discuss how the class might want to welcome back returning students. Some recommendations might be to make a welcome back poster, decorate a poster or cards with well wishes and positive statements, or decorate their desk with welcome back sentiments.
2. If you do not have a student returning to your campus or if discrimination of African students has become a problem on your campus, initiate a conversation about bullying and discrimination. Discuss how several West African countries help support the United States with goods such as rubber, diamonds, timber, coffee, and cocoa. Have them discuss which of these products they appreciate the most, draw pictures, etc.

Secondary:

Divide students into groups and give each group one of the following scenarios to discuss:

1. A student returns to school after being monitored for 21 days for the Ebola virus. S/he walks into the classroom and sits next to you. What do you do?
2. You're watching television coverage of the Ebola virus and you start feeling scared and worried about being around African people. How do you deal with these fears?
3. As you're switching classes in the hall, you hear some friends making fun of a student by saying they have the Ebola virus. How do you react?


REFLECTION AND CLOSURE

Have students share out what they learned from today's lesson. Share cards or posters they created and/or discuss what they discussed in their groups.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

If you or another student is struggling with worries or discrimination, please go to your school counselor.

Character Education Extension

-  Connect today's lesson with the six pillars of character. For instance, how can we demonstrate TRUSTWORTHINESS, RESPECT, RESPONSIBILITY, FAIRNESS, CARING, CITIZENSHIP every day at school in light of our reactions to the Ebola situation?

Created by DISD Psychological & Social Services Department