

Teaching Tolerance

Demonstrated by *Getting to Know Rubin Plotnick*

Getting to Know Each Other

as featured in Teaching Tolerance Magazine, Fall 2006

Tolerance lesson for K-3.

The book *Getting to Know Ruben Plotnick* by Roz Rosenbluth, is a gem that can help teach tolerance and respect. I use it as a springboard for talking about differences. After I read it aloud to my 1st-, 2nd- and 3rd-graders, we play a game that works with or without the book.

The game centers on a question: "Could you be friends with someone who. . . ?"

Options include: Could you be friends with someone who is older than you? Could you be friends with someone who lies? Could you be friends with someone who is in jail? Could you be friends with someone who has different colored hair? Could you be friends with a bully? Could you be friends with...?

After hearing each question, students go to a designated spot in the room. If they answer "no," for example, they go to the left. If they answer "yes," they go to the right. If they aren't sure, they stay in the middle of the room. I make it clear from the outset that there are no right or wrong answers and that they can move to a new spot if the discussion prompts them to change their mind.

The 3rd-graders answered the jail question in a particularly intriguing way because they wanted to know why the person was in jail; in their minds, a tax-evader was a better option for a friend than someone who committed a violent crime. Since they judged violence so harshly, this activity served as a beautiful illustration of the Golden Rule, which challenges us to treat others the way we want to be treated.

After the discussion, we recite a poem together, often with special hand motions:

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

You gotta give it, to get it,

Yeah, that's the key!

We live by the Golden Rule, you see,

At Westwood Elementary.

Last of all, I give each student a gold-colored bracelet embossed with the word "Respect" to remind them to respect differences and live by the Golden Rule. After the lesson, one 1st-grader made it a point to tell me he was "wearing the Golden Rule."

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