

# INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

## MATERIALS |

paper and writing utensils

**OBJECTIVES |** The objective of this activity is for participants to identify language that may be harmful to themselves and others so that they can avoid using it.

## FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Introduce the concept of discriminatory language & slurs

- Often we use language that is harmful to others because of histories of discrimination, stereotypes, and biases. Sometimes we don't even realize the words we use are harmful. Today we are going to talk about the language we use and how to make sure we are not being discriminatory when we talk to each other.
- Give example: The term "that's so gay" has become very popular but this is a very problematic term because it takes someone's identity, being gay, and makes it a put down. But we don't often think about what we are really saying when we say "that's so gay."
- As a large group brainstorm: what do we really mean when we say "that's so gay?" What more accurate words could we use? Some examples might be ludicrous, naïve, bogus, awkward, etc.

Invite participants to share words or terms that have been directed at them that have been mean, discriminatory, or made them feel bad. Keep track of the list on the board. Keep in mind you should consider in advance if students are allowed to say these words during this activity and make this clear. You may also decide as a class if this will be acceptable. It may be necessary for people who are not targeted to share words as well in order to get a robust list that reflects the reality of the climate of your building or classroom. If so, proceed with caution. Possible examples: the N-word, lame, no homo, terrorist, "like a girl," tone deaf, oriental, etc.

Divide students into groups of 3-4. Assign each group a word. Ask them to reflect on how and when they hear this word used and by whom, then brainstorm a list of "alternative" or preferred words they could use instead of this word. Invite each group present their alternatives.

## DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What commitment are you willing to make to ensure that you are not using offensive language?
- How can we hold each other accountable?

## NOTES |

**EXTENSIONS:** Ask participants to explain *why* these words are harmful.

Create a class list of inclusive terms and display them on the wall for the year. Keep these lists in mind when you are reading books or doing other school related activities. For example, students should not read the N-word out loud in English or Social Studies classes.



## SUPPORTING MEDIA |

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