

33. Is it good to be different?

INTRODUCTION

Ask the children to stand in a big circle (in a hall, outside in a big space or in a classroom with all the furniture pushed out of the way). Play a warm up game such as [pass the squeeze](#). Now ask children to swap places with someone else in the circle if they both enjoy... [then give a range of hobbies such as]: `...playing with Lego`; `...playing football`; `...reading`; `...going to after-school clubs`; etc. You can modify the activities according to the age of the children. Point out that these are all things that certain children have in common.

ACTIVITY

Give children the sheet with six squares [[see Resource below](#)] and encourage them to fill in the blanks according to their likes, wishes etc. [This sheet could be adapted to include more complex ideas relevant to the age group.]

Ask them to go around the group trying to find one person who likes the same things they like and one person who does not. They can then put that person's name in the relevant box with a tick or cross next to their name.

Once children have had time to fill in all the boxes, ask them to make any comments about what they have noticed. For example:

- Did you note one person in particular who agreed with you on all counts?
- Did you realise that a friend does not agree with everything you like or dislike?
- Did you note someone you don't know well actually has a lot in common with you?
- Can you draw any conclusions?

Hopefully even young children can see that you can be friends with someone even if you don't have *everything* in common and that sometimes people you like have very different likes and dislikes from you. This is also a good opportunity to help children to understand that being friendly and being friends are different. Even if you don't share any common ground with someone, you can still be *friendly*, kind and respectful of their views.

DIAMOND NINE

[Children can work individually, in pairs or small teams for this

activity.] Ask the children to:

- make a list of NINE things that make us individuals and to write them on separate cards. [Try to ensure that children do NOT only list physical differences. If they are stuck, they could be prompted to think about language, faith, culture, as well as talents, likes and dislikes.]
- decide which differences are most important and which are least important. [For example, does it matter if people have different favourite foods? Does it matter if they speak different languages?]
- organise the diamonds into a diamond formation – one at the top, two in the next level, three in the next followed by two and one again. [The statement at the top of the diamond is seen as the most important and the one at the bottom as the least important. However, this does not mean that the least important has no value.]

Share ideas about which are the most important statements and why. Language may be seen as important as it may be a barrier between people. Faith should not stop us being able to share other things that we have in common. It may be important to stress that the things that are different between us are not necessarily better or worse – much depends on the context in which people meet.

ACTIVITY

Ask children to say what the world would be like if we were all the same. Point out that even children in school uniform look different. In what ways are people the same and in what ways might they be different?

CONCLUSIONS

Difference is like many things. Do the children agree that, for example, 'You can't just say difference is good or difference is bad. Each difference needs to be viewed for what it is, in different contexts.' Some differences, such as hair colour, might be seen as unimportant in most contexts, but important in others; some differences, like different spoken languages, might be a barrier between people, or an opportunity to make friendships through sign language and learning each other's language. People of different religions or beliefs might be suspicious of each other, or be prepared to learn and respect each other.

Before the next session, can the children think up a slogan to share with younger children about difference?

I like...	I like...
I am good at...	I am good at...
I would like to get better at...	I would like to get better at...