

Non-allness, Exercise 2

In earlier classes we talked about how we cannot know it all. We also talked about using words like 'always' and 'never'. These words make it sound like we know it all, and we know that cannot happen. Ask your students, "What human being knows it all?" Hopefully they will answer, "Nobody."

We do have another way of speaking which sounds like we somehow 'know it all.' Let me give you some examples I am sure you have heard, or heard something like it.

"You know how they are." Who is 'they'? And are 'they' all alike?

"The boys/girls in our school get special privileges." All the boys/girls? Are all of them all alike?

"But mother, ALL the kids are wearing their hair like this!" Really? All of them?

"The bus kids come from the rich neighborhood." All of them? How do you know?

"Indians lived in teepees." What about the ones that lived in Mesa Verde?

When we make statements about a group of people, or some other object, we need to take care not to make it sound like they are all alike. We call this an allness statement, which we know usually cannot exist in the real world. Why not think about what you say and make your statements more accurate by changing to:

"Some of the kids..."

"Many of the bus kids...."

"Lots of the boys...."

"Most Plains Indians lived..."