

PERSONAL LABELS

Teacher's Notes

Considerable attention is attached to the subject of labels in this program. The very first appeared in Kindergarten when we asked the teacher to hold up an object and ask, "What do we call this?" rather than "What is this?" Labels will be stressed in mathematics and statistics. Nowhere, however, does the subject of labels have a more direct affect on your students' lives than with personal labels.

Let's start with "Sticks and stones can break my bones, but names upset my psyche." If you have any doubt about that, then read the following *Dear Abby** column. You may not wish to share it with an entire class, but if you believe it might be helpful to a certain student use it with caution.

Labels, positive and negative, come from many sources. Family, neighbors, peers, teachers, and the individuals themselves, all contribute their input. That is why the graphic asks "Are you you, or are you your labels?" Scheduling these lessons over a protracted period maintains an awareness on the part of the student. Students may also have differing times of self awareness and at that time understand that the situations described may well apply to them.

The label "victim" seems quite common any more. Judging by the number of lawsuits filed, one commentator described the United States as a nation of victims. Another outspoken psychiatrist referred to the present plethora of counselors convincing persons that they are victims as a cottage industry, a rather derogatory assessment. Once the static term *victim* disappears, the need for intense counseling diminishes, or disappears.. Although the above assessment may appear harsh, individuals who do seek counseling, and have an understanding of labels, map making, etc., will generally respond more favorably to the counseling, and have the ability to judge their counselor.

Another potential, and rather frequent source of personal labels, occurs when someone overhears something and misconstrues it. Example: The prettiest girl in the class passes two classmates talking when one says, "She is really beautiful, if only she did not have such a big nose." For some reason, the young lady thinks they might be speaking about her, but she does not have a big nose. Now she knows that couldn't possibly be her nose they are discussing. However, follow her around for a day or two and see what happens every time she passes a mirror. You might share this incident with your class. It does not take much for us to take on a label, even when we have our doubts about its authenticity. It takes a certain amount of courage to check out labels by asking, "Were you speaking about me?" or, "Why do you feel that way about me?" If one can't do that, there is always the mirror.

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