

Are you YOU or are you your labels?

I'm THE invisible man!

Solving a problem with the scientific approach.*

Not only were Sam's grades dropping, but his teacher noticed he had adopted an indifferent attitude to just about everything. He did not even associate with his classmates anymore. His teacher referred him to a school counselor.

“Why should I bother with anybody? When I tried to talk to the group, I might as well have been invisible. They interrupted me all the time. And when I don't talk, they just ignore me. Who cares?”

The counselor checked Sam's classmates. While Sam was not a spellbinding speaker, but they did not think that he was interrupted much more than the other students.

For the next two weeks, the counselor had Sam observe groups of students talking together, and count the number of times people were interrupted. It surprised him how often people were interrupted. Next, Sam was to question 25 students about how they felt when they were ignored during conversations. Their answers fell mostly into three categories:

1. Being ignored in conversation doesn't bother me at all.
2. I can't stand being ignored.
3. Since you can't control other people's reactions and bad manners, it doesn't pay to get overly upset about being ignored.

Sam decided that he could live with answer three. After all, he wasn't the only one who seemed invisible. He had lots of company.

*Scientific approach. Gather data, evaluate it, draw conclusion, test conclusion, gather more data, etc. Thanks to Dr. Martin H. Levinson for this story line.

Invisible Man Teachers Guide

Prior to handing out student sheet, ask “Can anyone describe the ‘scientific approach’ for me?” Hopefully, the students will have experienced this concept prior to this class. If not, explain it consists of gathering data, evaluating the data, drawing some conclusions, testing the conclusions, gathering more data, etc. The scientific approach can function both with scientific and personal questions. In the personal realm, it can assist us with problems, concerns, troubles, beliefs, etc.

What I am handing out to you consists of one student’s attempt to gain release from a self inflicted label using the ‘scientific approach’. I would like you to take it home and read it so we can discuss it tomorrow.

Discussion

What was happening to Sam that caused his teachers to recommend counseling?

Who put the ‘invisible man’ label onto Sam?

Do you think Sam’s reaction to this label had anything to do with Sam’s behavior.

What do you think of the counselor’s approach?

What did Sam find out through his investigation?

Couldn’t his counselor just have told him the same thing? Would he have believed it?

Do you think this exercise solved all of Sam’s problems? Did it help?

Now, I want you all to think of something that bothers you, concerns you, troubles you, or gets in your way, whether it is a label or something else. Take out a clean sheet of paper and write it down. Think about how you might apply the ‘scientific approach’ to your own problem. Without divulging your own problem, how could you proceed? Wait for answers.)

Where can you get data?

Can you test you conclusions?

Can you gather more data?

Take the sheet with your problem written upon home with you. Look at how you might approach it utilizing the scientific approach. Next week, let’s find out if anyone has made progress, or has some new ideas.