

SHIRTS OF EMPOWERMENT



OVERVIEW

This lesson provides students an opportunity to experience what it's like to be labeled and as a result, develop empathy for those who others label.



OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to explain the magnitude of the problem of name-calling and the impact it has on students.

Students will be able to express empathy for those who are called names.



AGE/EXPERIENCE LEVEL

Grades 6-12.



THINGS TO PREP & TOOLS NEEDED

Shirts, (may be torn, stained or in any condition) markers, paint, tape.



TIME

2 class periods.

Note: This lesson works best when students are familiar celebrating No Name-Calling Week and having respectful conversations around name-calling and bullying. With the potential to bring anti-LGBTQ or other harmful words into the classroom, it's important that this activity and the discussions afterwards be handled carefully, and as part of a larger effort to address LGBTQ identity in a positive way. See [GLSEN's Curriculum Guide](#) for more information.

PROCEDURE

Invite students to decorate the back of the shirts with a name that they have been called, or have heard other students being called. Ask them to be conscious of the effects the words they choose and how they may affect other students. Alternatively, students may tape signs on their shirts so they may be reused or donated to a local charity after NNCW.

* Be sure to support students and make sure they are using these words to express their dislike for being called names, and not to further bully other students.



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Once the shirts have been decorated, you can display them in a public setting such as the school library or cafeteria. Optionally, students who feel comfortable and want to experience the power of harmful words and stereotypes can wear the shirts for the class or for the day. Let students know that although you may not always see it students, others may make them wear these labels daily when they are name-called or bullied.

After students have worn or displayed the shirts, lead them in a discussion using the following questions:

- What did you learn about name-calling and bullying from this activity?
- How did it feel to wear the shirts (or to see them displayed)?
- Do you think it's easy for students to get rid of labels after they have been name-called?

Conclusion: After the discussion, invite students to cross out the offensive names that they had written on the back of the shirt, and write the names they want to be called on the front. Have students share these names, identities, and adjectives with the class. Ask students to share how it feels to wear these shirts and to decide for themselves what they should be called.

Opportunities for Differentiation: For younger students or students that need extra assistance you can have a list of names that people might be called. For older students or students that need a challenge you can have them plan out an artistic display of the t-shirts for the rest of the school to see the impact of the lesson.

Follow-Up/Extensions: Students can write about their experiences and share it in the school newspaper, at the No Name-Calling Week Assembly, or in the morning announcements. They can submit pictures of them to GLSEN's [Creative Expression Exhibit](#).

Other Lessons to Explore: Learning Empowerment and Self-Identification, Bullying Op-Ed Piece, Creating an Anti-Slur Policy, Blow the Whistle on Name-Calling.

Tags: No Name-Calling Week, identity, anti-bullying.

DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN THIS ACTIVITY? TELL US HOW IT WENT AND WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN BETTER! EMAIL US AT EDUCATORS@GLSEN.ORG.