

## **Lesson: Cross the Line**

**ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:** How are we similar? How are we different?

**OBJECTIVES/PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS:** Students build empathy by learning about other's life experiences; students feel less alone in their life experiences.

**SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE:** This exercise is a visually powerful way for participants to see they are not alone and that others may share their life experiences. Knowing they have an ally amongst their peers may save someone's life as feeling isolated or outcast is a common cause for gang and drug involvement and suicide.

### **MATERIALS:**

- "Cross the line if..." questions
- Tape or string to make a line on the floor

**LENGTH OF LESSON:** 60-90 minutes

### **PROCEDURE:**

1. Create a line on the floor.
2. Have all participants stand on one side of "the line."
3. Explain that you will read a question starting with, "Cross the line if..." and that if it applies to them, they should step to the other side of the line. Remind the students to be as honest as they are comfortable with and that the space is non-judgmental and safe. Explain there should be no talking during the game, except for the person asking the question and that there will be a discussion afterwards. Ask if there are any questions.
4. Begin the game. Read a question beginning with, "Cross the line if...(you have brown hair; you have blue eyes; you have a brother)." Participants step across the line if it applies to them and remain on the starting side of the line if it does not. Pause and ask the students to silently look around to see who is standing with them. Then ask them to go back to the starting side of the line.
5. The following is a list of sample questions. The questions should be tailored to the needs of the age and populations you are working with.

### **"Cross the line if..."**

- You have brown hair.
- Your favorite color is purple
- You have a sister.
- You have a brother.
- You have a lot of chores to do at home.
- You are African American.
- Your parents speak another language.
- You speak another language.
- Your parents do not speak English.
- You are Mexican-American.
- You are Asian.
- You are Jewish.
- You are Muslim.
- You have ever been discriminated against/put down because of your race or ethnicity.

- You have ever been told that you were ugly.
- You have ever been teased.
- You have ever made fun of someone because of how they look.
- You have ever been bullied.
- You have ever been put down by another girl.
- You have ever travelled outside of California.
- You have to help raise your younger siblings.
- You live with your grandparents.
- You live with your aunt or uncle.
- One parent does not live with you.
- You live with both of your parents.
- You are in foster care.
- You wish you could change something about your body.
- You have ever been told you couldn't do something because you are a girl.
- You are expected to succeed at everything you do.
- You have ever been told that you were not going to make it in life.
- You know anyone who has been to jail.
- You have ever seen a fight.
- You ever heard gunshots.
- You never got to be a kid.
- You made a bad decision because of peer pressure or fear.
- You have any regrets.
- You have ever had someone you did not know help you.
- You have ever helped someone you did not know.
- You have ever been mean to someone you care about.
- Someone you care about has been mean to you.
- You don't get the attention you need.

**6.** Continue asking questions. Pause briefly before saying "next question." After each question the students return to the starting side of the line.

**7.** After asking several questions, ask if anyone else has a question they would like to ask. Have volunteers ask their questions.

**8.** After several rounds of questions and crossing the line, have participants sit comfortably. Debrief/discuss. Ask the participants to share: How did it feel to cross the line? How did it feel when you didn't cross the line? What surprised you the most during this game? What did you learn? What lessons can you take away from this game?

**JOURNAL PROMPT:** How did it feel to cross the line? How did it feel when you didn't cross the line? What surprised you the most during this game? What lessons can you take away from this game?

**EVALUATION:** Did students participate by crossing the line? Did the debriefing confirm that students made connections amongst each other? Did students take the game seriously? Are there any students you need to follow up with regarding their response to the game?

**RELATED ACTIVITIES:** Have participants write or tell a story based on one of the "cross the line" prompts.