

## Lesson Two — My Birth Family and My Friends

**Objective:** Students will consider their relationships with family and friends and their judgments about others.

### Materials Required

Paper

Markers or other drawing tools

Pictures from a magazine of people who might fit the following criteria: popular, cool, not so popular, not so cool, old, young, good looking, not so good looking, well dressed, not so well dressed

**Important note:** This lesson calls for students to write two summaries: one about their family relationships and their feelings about these relationships, and one about their relationships with their friends and their feelings about these relationships. They should not finalize these summaries until after they have completed all three activities in this lesson.

Explain to students that the purpose of this lesson is to provide them with an opportunity to explore their feelings about their families and their friends and about their judgments of others, in general. **They are only expected to share information in class or with the teacher that they are comfortable sharing. They are not required to turn in their written summaries to the teacher or tell the class what they wrote or what they think.**

### Activity One — Caring for Family

Ask each student to draw a family tree, showing drawings of people, or stick figures, or even just the people's names. This tree will be part of their Caring for Family Project.

At the top of the page, ask them to put their grandparents' names and drawings of them if they are including drawings. Lines going downward and branching out from the grandparents should show the names of their parents, uncles, and aunts.

Lines branching out from their parents' names should show their children's names (the student and his or her brothers and sisters, if they have any).

If their siblings have children, lines branching out from their siblings' names should show them.

If students don't know a person's name, they can just write the family relationship (for example, "my aunt").

### Family Overview

We feel closer to some family members than others. Ask students the questions below, and after they have answered them, ask them to write a summary of their family

relationships, including who they feel close to and less close to. In each case, ask them to write why they feel the way they do. This summary will be part of their Caring for Family Project.

Questions for students:

- What is your definition of “family”? Is it your parents and siblings, or does it include your aunts, uncles, grandparents, and others? Is it people to whom you are related or people to whom you are not related but who feel like family to you, including adoptive parents if you are adopted, people who live with you, neighbors, a religious leader, a teacher, any nonhuman animals who live with you, such as a dog, cat, or bird, for example, or anyone else you think of as family?
- Families make large and small decisions that affect all members of the family — everything from what to eat for dinner to where to live. How do human families decide who is in charge of making family decisions?

(The culture, religion, or history of the family may be determining factors. Some families conform to the culture in which they live or to the culture of the country in which their ancestors lived, while others operate independently. In some cultures, men and women are equal decision makers, while in others, one or the other is the primary decision maker.)

- How does your particular family make decisions? Who decides where the family will live? What they will eat for dinner? What time they will eat dinner? Who tells younger family members what they can and cannot do?

(Students can either answer based on their own observations and experience, or they can answer this question as homework, first interviewing their family members.)

- If you are not one of the decision makers in your family, how do you feel about that? Do you wish you could make more decisions about your own life? If you are not one of the decision makers, do you understand why not?

(Often decisions are made by the adults in the family, who are responsible for younger family members. Ideally, this means that everyone is safe and cared for, but it is not always the case.)

- Who are you closest with in your family and why?

## **Activity Two — Caring for Friends**

### Friends Overview

We feel close to some people and consider them to be friends, and not as close with others. Ask students the questions below. Then ask them to write a summary of their relationships with friends, including stating who they feel close to, who they feel less close to, and why.

- Who is in your closest circle of friends?
- How do you choose your friends (what are your criteria)?
- Who would you count on if you needed someone dependable and caring? (This may or may not be someone in your closest circle of friends.)

Ask students to keep a journal for a week. Explain to them that the journal is private and will not be turned in to the teacher. In the journal, they are to write down each instance in which they make a positive or negative judgment about another person, and why.

At the end of the week, ask them to write answers to the following questions in their journal:

- Who are you kindest to and why?
- Who is kindest to you?
- Who is not kind to you?
- Why do you think the people you mentioned are kind or unkind to you?

Students can choose whether to include some of the information from their journal in their Caring for Friends Project (the summary of their relationships with friends).

### **Activity Three — What Can We Tell from a Snapshot?**

Hold up the magazine photos one at a time. Ask students to discuss and decide, based on appearances alone, if the person in each photo is:

Cool (why or why not)  
 Kind (why or why not)  
 Dependable (why or why not)  
 Intelligent (why or why not)  
 Someone you would want as a friend (why or why not)

Ask students how many of our judgments about a person and whether we care about them are based on our superficial impressions (aspects such as their hair, clothing, stature, weight, color of skin, posture, and so on), rather than on evidence of the person's character or personality.

Why is it almost impossible to know whether a person from another culture, who speaks a different language from us, is intelligent?

On what criteria do we base our decisions about who we like and who we care about?

Is it harder to care about someone who is different from us? Why or why not?

### **Activity Four**

In their Caring for Family and Caring for Friends Projects (Activities One and Two), students can include answers to the following questions:

- Did anything in the activities in this lesson or in your journal writing surprise you?

- Will the way you think about your relationships with family and friends and your judgments of these people change as a result of participating in the activities in this lesson?
- How do you feel when you judge others positively?
- How do you feel when you judge others negatively?
- How do you feel when you are judged negatively by others?
- How do you feel when you are judged positively by others?
- How does it feel to care about others?
- How does it feel to be cared about by others?
- Who would you like to be kinder to and why?
- Who would you like to feel more kindness from and why?

The goal of the two projects (Caring for Family and Caring for Friends) is for students to explore and write about their feelings about their family and friends, and to think and write about what they learned in the process of exploring these relationships. If they wish, they can share what they learned in class and/or with the teacher, but it is not required.