

Say “No” to Racial Jokes

An activity of “Just joking? But not all jokes are fun for all”

Some people love to crack mean jokes that put down those who are different from them. Read “**Just joking? But not all jokes are fun for all**” (*What’s Up* April 2019, page 19) to learn more.

How would you feel if someone were to joke about you? You may enjoy the humour when it is both funny and harmless. What if the joke embarrasses or humiliates you? Many kids hate it when that happens. It hurts. Yet, they might keep silent or even laugh along because they don’t know what else to do. It is better to tell the mean kid to stop.

There is no magic formula for what to say. With some practice, you would be able to figure out what works best for you. For example, you could look directly at the joker and say, “Your jokes are not funny, so please stop.” How you say the words is more important than what you say. Be firm, calm and confident. Practise responding effectively by carrying out the following role-play activity.

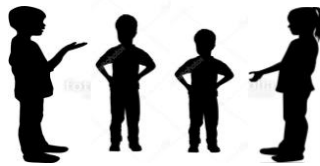
Role Play with Friends

1. Form small groups of at least four members each. One of you pretends to be the mean joker. A second person is the butt — the victim or target — of the jokes. The rest are observers.

Act out a scene where the joker cracks a mean joke about the second person. The victim responds by saying why such jokes must stop. The observers jot down their observations. Note the words used as well as nonverbals such as tone of voice, facial expressions, and even posture.

In real life, when the victim responds, the mean joker may then become even meaner. If this happens during the role play, then the victim should respond again. Remember that a response can be silent; walking away is a response. To give the other students enough time for their turns, stop after two rounds.

2. Repeat Step 1 with another two students being the joker and the victim. Go on until every student in your group has had a chance to play the roles of joker, victim, and observer.



3. Reflect on what you felt when you were in each of the three roles. Share your insights with your group members. Remember to use kind and caring words when you make your comments. Use the following questions to guide you.

- In what ways were the victim’s words effective? How could the response have been even better?
- In what ways were the victim’s nonverbals effective? How could the nonverbals have been even better?
- How does acting out the scenes help you to deal with mean jokes in real life?

When mean jokes make fun of how people look, speak, or behave because of their ethnic backgrounds, then they are a form of racial discrimination. To be one united people in multiracial Singapore, each of us must help to get rid of racist jokes. We should also remember that any kind of mean joke is unhealthy for human relationships. Let’s try to stop all of them.