



## Instructor Guide

### Unit 3: Lesson 2 Understanding Different Targets

#### Objectives:

- The child will be able to understand why people are targeted
- The learner will understand how to respond with empathy to high risk targets by recognizing that people with different appearances, abilities, identities, cultural norms and behaviors do not deserve to be mistreated.

**Fundamental Skill(s) or Competencies:** Social awareness, Empathy; Responsible decision-making, Ethical responsibility, Adaptability, Flexibility in thinking

**Time Needed:** It is flexible. You can choose to do everything in this guide, or you might select just a few parts to do with the kids each day.

#### Materials, depending on which activities you choose:

- 3-2-5 *ESL Short Story Empathy Activity* handouts (1 per student)
- Whiteboard or screen on which to project videos
- Paper, markers, pens, crayons
- For sensory processing activity, provide dried beans.
- For visual art activity, provide various items for making sensory bags:
  - Quart-size Ziploc bags
  - Dried beans, pebbles, rice, shaving cream, water, food coloring, glitter, sand
- A copy of the following picture books to read aloud:
  - [My Mouth Is a Volcano by Julia Cook](#)
  - [Stand Tall, Molly Lou Melon by Patty Lovell](#)
  - [Baxter Turns Down His Buzz: A Story for Little Kids about ADHD](#)
- A copy of 3-2-4 *Sharing Circle Script for Understanding Different Targets*

## Part One: Watch Video on Understanding Different Targets

Start by watching the *Understanding Different Targets Video for Kids*. If kids have trouble focusing, invite them to do 25 jumping jacks or another burst of intense physical activity for one minute before you start the video. After watching the video, you can move into Part Two below.

## Part Two: Understanding Different Targets

**Lesson Essential Question:** How can students respond empathetically to peers whose behaviors, abilities, identity, appearance, cultural norms or social skills are different from the mainstream? Many kids justify bullying others, claiming that the targets deserve what they get for being “weird” or “annoying.” This justification of intentional cruelty is a form of victim blaming.

### Introductory Hook/Question to Engage Students

In many heroic stories, the character that eventually becomes the hero starts off as the target of mockery or bullying. The character is often different from the other people in some way, and the others use that difference to justify being mean.

Ask children, “Can you think of any characters who start off being laughed at and end up becoming a hero?” If they need prompting, here are a few examples:

- Harry Potter, before he learns he is a Wizard
- Peter Parker, before he gets his powers and becomes Spiderman
- Mulan, when she first starts training in the army
- Aladdin, before he meets the Genie

### Discussion of Key Teaching Concepts About Understanding Different Targets:

**Key Concept One:** Some people are higher-risk targets, because they are different from others in the group.

- A high-risk target is someone whose behaviors, identity, cultural norms or appearance may be different from the mainstream. When people respond to these targets with cruelty, they tend to justify their behavior by claiming that the target provoked it.
- For example, in the movie *Hercules*, we see that Hercules has unusual strength (more than regular humans). His extreme strength makes him different from other people. He knocks over ancient buildings on accident simply by bumping into them.
- The people in the village blame Hercules for being clumsy instead of trying to understand that his body works differently than theirs.

**Key Concept Two:** It is not acceptable to be mean on purpose to someone just because you are uncomfortable with their appearance, personality, or beliefs.

- Sometimes people are unkind to others simply because they come from a different culture. Someone who speaks in a different accent than you is not speaking that way to try to upset you. But if you respond to their way of speaking by laughing at them or mocking them, you are being mean on purpose. That isn’t okay.

**Key Concept Three: Sometimes a target with behavioral challenges can be taught pro-social or mainstream behaviors that help them better fit into a group, AND the group must work to be kind, understanding and empathetic.**

- For example, we CAN reasonably expect a student that engages in impulsive or aggressive behaviors to work to change those behaviors.
- However, do not blame the person for their struggles. The way we act is a language. It tells how we are feeling inside. Someone who is acting aggressively, for example, is responding to their emotions and their life circumstances.

**Key Concept Four: Consider the slippery slope between socialization and victim blaming.**

- Deeper thought: when should we expect someone to conform to typical or mainstream social behaviors? Who gets to say what behaviors are “normal” or “acceptable”?
- How can we use empathy and respect in working with someone who differs from us?

## **Part Three: Activity Options**

\*For a one-page brief summary of quick activity options, please see *3-2-3 Quick Guide to Breakout Activity Options for Understanding Different Targets*.

### **Activity Option 1: ABC Song to Appreciate Different Brains**

To help kids appreciate neurodivergent brains, you will do a fun singing activity that challenges their way of thinking.

- First, lead the group through singing the alphabet song as they usually do. “A, B, C, D...”
- Second, invite kids to try singing the alphabet song backwards. “Z, Y, X, V...”
- Give kids opportunities to work through trying to sing the alphabet backwards on their own before offering ideas or strategies.
- If kids need assistance, ask them what supports they need to be successful? Do they need to write out the letters as they go, so that they can remember them? Do they need to look at the alphabet written out and start from the last letter work backwards as they sing?
- After they have tried for 5 minutes, provide paper and markers for kids to create a written record of the alphabet to help them.
- Ask kids, “What was this exercise like for you?” “How does this exercise help you appreciate people whose brains process information differently than you?”
- “How would you feel if everyone around you could quickly, easily, and accurately sing the alphabet backwards, and you were the only one who needed to slow down and get assistance?”
- Can anyone sing the whole alphabet backwards fluently?

## Activity Option 2: Sensory Processing Appreciation

Many people with sensory processing issues feel very uncomfortable in their clothes and shoes, yet they need to learn to tolerate the sensations. The goal is for children to gain empathy for those who dress differently than others in order to feel more comfortable.

- Have each child remove their shoes. Give each child a handful of dried beans to place inside their shoes, and also invite them to switch their shoes to the opposite feet.
- With the beans in place, and the shoes on the wrong feet, ask the children to stand and walk around in a circle. Invite them to jump or run and to try balancing on one foot.
- Have children remove the beans and replace their shoes on the correct feet.

### Discussion after Sensory Processing Activity:

- One of the most common reasons people make fun of other people is for the clothing they wear. Imagine if you were uncomfortable in the clothing you were expected to wear. Kids with sensory issues may choose to wear clothing and shoes that feel better to them.
- Ask kids, “How did it feel to have to walk around in uncomfortable shoes? How would you feel if everyone made fun of you for choosing to wear your shoes the way that feels best for you?”
- **Gender identity:** Kids whose gender identity is different than the one they were assigned at birth also choose to wear clothes and shoes that feel better to them. This is a great opportunity to discuss genderfluid clothing and hairstyles with a focus on empathy and understanding.

## Activity Option 3: How to Respond to People that Are Different

Ask children how they tend to respond if someone is behaving in a way that annoys them.

- For example, do you avoid the person? Confront the person? Talk with the person? Do they ever respond by excluding the person or being mean to the person?
- Tell kids, “Imagine that a new child has joined our group, and this child only knows how to yell; they don’t know how to talk with an indoor voice. How can we include this child in our group and help them fit in and make friends?”
- Divide kids into groups and ask each group to come up with a few ideas for how to include the kid that yells. Time permitting, each smaller group can present their ideas to the whole group. They can act out their ideas as a skit or simply discuss them.

## Activity Option 4: Hold a full group Sharing Circle to discuss Understanding Different Targets

Please use the complete guided script for facilitators labeled *3-2-4 Sharing Circle Script on Understanding Different Targets*. Allow 20-35 minutes for this activity, depending on how many rounds you complete and how large the circle is.

**Activity Option 5: Reading aloud activity:** We recommend the following books that embody the themes of this lesson plan. After reading each book aloud, ask the children how it relates to the importance of understanding different targets. Children may draw pictures of the story as they listen.

- [My Mouth Is a Volcano by Julia Cook](#)
- [Stand Tall, Molly Lou Melon by Patty Lovell](#)
- [Baxter Turns Down His Buzz: A Story for Little Kids about ADHD](#)

**Activity Option 6: Physical activity:** Children will play active games that incorporate appreciation of differences.

1. *Three-legged race:* Pair children together. Use a bandana, a soft rope, or a stretchy band to tie the inner legs of each pair of kids together. Set out cones and have them race to the cones and back, working together to find harmony. Time the pairs to find the fastest ones.
2. *Spin and Run:* Set a finish line across the gym or field. Divide kids into two teams. Hand the first person in each line a cone or baseball bat. Keeping their eyes on the top, have them spin in a circle 10 times, drop the cone, and (try to) run to the finish line. Everyone gets a turn. Build empathy for those who struggle with balance and vestibular motion (sense of spatial orientation).
3. *Sticky Popcorn:* The children begin by “popping” around the gym as individual pieces of sticky popcorn, searching for other pieces of popcorn. When two pieces of popcorn meet, they stick together and have to find a way to hop in unison. Once stuck together, they continue to pop around together, sticking to even more pieces, until all the children end up in a big popcorn ball.

**Activity Option 7: Drama/Theater activity:** The children will create skits about this week’s theme, which is *Understanding Different Targets*. They will need some silly hats for the one of the skits.

- “A couple new kids have joined your class. They come from a culture where children are expected to wear hats at all times until they reach age 18. Some of the kids in your class start to make fun of the new kids, and the new kids are afraid to join activities. What can you do to help them?”
- “You are part of a rescue operation to help save two kids lost in a cave. One member of your team is ordering everyone else around and isn’t listening to anyone else’s ideas. How do you find a way to communicate and find the missing kids?”

**Activity Option 8: Visual Art activity:**

- **Make a sensory bag:** Start by filling a sealable plastic bag (like a Ziploc bag) with a base like water or shaving cream. Then add in smaller, more tactile objects like marbles or Legos. Add drops of food coloring. Let the child sit and explore the different sensory experiences with the various materials, appearances, and feelings.
- **Draw Same Picture as Partner without Looking:** Hand out a pen and paper to one member of each team and ask them to draw something without showing their partner. Once they are done, they have to hide it and give instructions to their partner to make the same drawing, without saying out any clues, only shapes and lines. For example, if they have drawn a face, they can say things like ‘draw a big circle, then draw two more circles inside the big circle’ and so on. Once done, the partners have to compare the drawings and talk about the differences in the two pictures. Switch so that each child gets a turn to be the one giving the instructions the one following instructions.

**Accommodations/Modifications** for diverse learners in your classroom:

Special-needs students in your classroom may recognize aspects of themselves in high-risk targets, particularly students with sensory processing disorder, autism spectrum disorders, ADHD, and those with any other behavioral differences.

These students should be given an opportunity to talk privately with each other or the teacher, and the teacher should be aware that these students may become emotional.

## Part Four: Assessment

If you want to do a formal assessment at the end, first ask children the following question:

True or False: It's okay to mistreat people when they don't fit into the community. - a) True b) False

Then ask the children to tell you the reasoning behind their answer. (The correct answer is **b) false**). They can also write or draw their reasons for why it is not okay to mistreat people who don't fit in.

### Additional Pop Culture Story Analogies

1.) Star Wars: The Force Awakens analogy: Finn behaves differently from the other members of general Leia's Resistance. Being a former Stormtrooper, Finn fears the First Order, and is even more afraid of his friends finding out the truth about his past. As a result, Finn is uncertain of how to be a hero, and would much rather run away, which leads some of Finn's allies such as Han Solo, to view Finn as awkward, and incapable. How do Rey and Poe respond to Finn with empathy instead of ridicule?

2). Supergirl analogy: When Kara Zor-El lands on Planet Earth, she is 13 years old. Kara is adopted by the Danvers family, and her new older sister, Alex, is in charge of helping Kara adjust to middle school. Alex is embarrassed by Kara's strange behaviors, and she urges her alien sister to "act like everyone else." Kara suppresses her super powers and wears glasses to filter out her X-ray vision, in order to appear more human. Kara pays a cost for hiding who she is, and she becomes much happier a decade later when she reveals her superpowers to the world. In Supergirl, we see many aliens who need to disguise their true identities on Earth, so as not to be targeted. Should they have to change their appearance and behaviors to fit in? How is this the same or different from people in the real world who are targeted because they dress differently from others or wear their hair differently? Is the solution to make people conform or teach empathy to their peers?

3). Harry Potter analogy: Hagrid behaves differently from the other teachers and students at Hogwarts. Being half-giant, he is big and hairy. He speaks with less clear articulation than others, and he prefers the company of creatures that most people fear. As a result, some students are quick to label him as "dim-witted" and "oaf" and "slow." Even after Hagrid becomes a teacher at Hogwarts, the balance of power is not in his favor, because students such as Draco Malfoy use their family's power to mock him and try to imprison him in Azkaban. How do Harry, Ron, and Hermione respond to Hagrid with empathy instead of fear?

### Common Core Standards

#### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

#### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.10

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

#### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on ... topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.