

Many Kinds of Families

A Lesson Plan from Rights, Respect, Responsibility: A K-12 Curriculum

Fostering respect and responsibility through age-appropriate sexuality education.

NSES ALIGNMENT:

By the end of 8th grade, students will be able to:

HR.2.CC.1 – Identify different kinds of family structures.

HR.2.IC.1 – Demonstrate ways to show respect for different types of families.

TIME: 40 Minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED:

We Are Family book
(Patricia Hegarty)

My Family portrait sheet
for each student

ADVANCE PREPARATION FOR LESSON:

It would also be helpful to be aware, to the extent possible, of the different family configurations that may be represented in the classroom so that different family structures are discussed. These may include adopted families, extended family (cousins, grandparents, aunts and uncles, etc.), foster families, one parent families, blended families (two adults, each with their own children who come together to form a new family), two separate families sharing custody of a child, families with same sex parents, generations of immigrant families, multiracial families and others. It is important to be prepared to discuss these family configurations with children.

Starting each 3Rs lesson with some quiet reflection time can help students focus. Because some 3Rs topics may bring up a lot of feelings and energy, building a routine for each lesson can help students with self-management. One option is to create a "3Rs Journal" and start each lesson by give a drawing or writing prompt and putting on some relaxing music. During one song students work silently by themselves, and during a second song they continue working, with the option of sharing their work with a neighbor. If time allows, the activity could end with large group sharing.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Name, as a group, at least three types of family structures. [Knowledge]
2. Identify a way they can value and show respect for differences among families. [Knowledge]

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PROCEDURE:

Writing/drawing prompt: Something I really love to do is...

STEP 1: Explain to students that today's topic is family. Ask if anyone can explain what a family is and why we need families. (Some sample definitions are: People who live together and take care of each other, or people who love each other and take care of each other, or people going through life and taking care of each other. What does it feel like to be loved? (Responses could include: being taken care of and kept safe, when people are kind, feels warm.) Families are often made up of adults and the children they care for. After a brief discussion, introduce the book by saying, "This book is about families and ways that families are alike and different. As you listen, see if there are things that describe your family." (3 minutes)

STEP 2: Read *We Are Family* aloud to the class. You may wish to stop at different pages and ask:

- Does this remind any of you of your own family or a family that you know?

After finishing the book, lead a discussion about families by asking:

Who can remember one type of family that we just learned about from the book?

Note to the Teacher: Family structures described in the book include family size, color, families who live together or apart or live in their own house or a shared house, looking alike or different from one another, step parents and step siblings, families with foster or adopted children, same sex parents, single parent families, different food preferences, quiet and noisy families, clean and messy families. If students cannot remember some of these ask prompting questions such as: "Do all families have two parents?" "Do all families have two parents living at home?" "Does everyone have a mother and a father in their family?" "Is everyone biologically related to their family?" etc.

Are there ways that families can be that are not in the book? Who can think of other ways families might be the same or different from other families? (There are endless possible answers to this question. Some may include: multi-racial families, parents have different jobs, some families may have only girl children, some only boy children, trans or non-binary children, or no children; some families have a loved one in prison; some families may have different last names; some families are separated by immigration laws; some families may include divorced parents; some children may live in two different houses with different parents or with grandparents; families have people with different physical abilities; some families have religious beliefs that are important to them).

- What makes a family healthy? (Possible answers: Families love each other; families take care of each other; families respect one another's differences, families celebrate special events together.) (15 minutes)

STEP 3: Ask students: "Who would like to tell us about who is in their family?" Have students take out the homework assignments they completed to help them to describe their families. Tell them they don't have to use only the information on their sheet when describing their families. Ask for volunteers. If a student gets stuck prompt by asking

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some questions such as: "How many people are in your family?" "Do all of the people in your family have the same last name?" "What kind of food does your family like to eat?" "What does your family like to do together?" Pay attention to who shares, and whether the families described are mostly 'mainstream'- if so, make sure to ask for volunteers or mention types of families that are less common. After students have the opportunity to describe their families, say: "We heard a lot of ways that families in our class are the same and a lot of ways that our families are different." Ask:

- If someone's family is very different from yours is that okay? (Yes)
- What if your friend's family likes to eat food that is different from your family. Is that okay? (Yes)
- Is it okay if some families have a lot of children and some have a few? (Yes)
- Is it okay if some children have two families that live in different houses? (Yes)
- Is it okay if some children have two mothers or two fathers? (Yes)
- Is it ok if some children live with grandparents? An aunt or uncle? (yes)

Note to the Teacher: This is where knowing what different family structures may be represented in the room can help the teacher to ask specific questions that may pertain to different children so that they can hear their families represented. If this is not possible, the teacher can still ask a variety of questions that touch upon different family structures, values and customs. It is also important for the teacher to be aware that some students may have sad circumstances, such as divorce, illness, abuse, incarceration, abandonment, or death in their families. It is important to acknowledge that sometimes families can be sad or not loving or they may change if someone dies or if someone moves away, and that can be hard. Also, it is normal for some students to react to hearing about family structures with which they are unfamiliar by saying "that's weird" or "that isn't a family." In such a situation, it is important to remind the class of the definition of a family they discussed (e.g. people who love each other and take care of each other) and that everyone has their own families that they care about very much. Also remind students that all families are unique and special in their own way, that no two families are exactly alike, and these differences are a positive thing. (12 minutes)

STEP 4: Say, "Families are very important to us. Their job is to love us and take care of us." If it has not already come up in the previous discussion, remind students that all families are special in their own way and that no two families are exactly alike. Ask, "What are some ways that our class can show that we respect all different types of families, including those that are like our own and those that are different from our own?"

Some responses might include:

- Making a sign that says "Each Family Is Unique"
- Having each student bring in something special from their families and talking about it
- Asking our classmates to tell us about their families – what they like to do, what they like to eat, if/how they celebrate holidays
- Remembering that all people want and deserve a loving family
- Everyone can draw a picture of their family and the class can hang them around the classroom

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Note to the Teacher: Some of the suggestions are things that students can do every day with their friends and classmates, others are suggestions for class projects. Both of these types are good suggestions. As an extension activity, the class can participate in a group project that is suggested.

STEP 5: End the discussion by saying "Everyone has people who are their family. Some people even include their pets! It is healthy to feel good about your family and to figure out who is part of your family. It is also important to respect all families no matter what kind of family you have.. (1 minute)

RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES AT CONCLUSION OF LESSON:

Questions in step two will assess objective one and questions in step four will assess objective two.

Have students, either at home or in class as an extension project, draw a picture of all the people in their families and label each person (and pet if they like). Students may need adult help labeling the pictures. After they complete them, hang them on a wall display with the title "Celebrating all of our Families."

My Family Portrait

Draw and label each member of your family

