

Tearing Off Your Labels

11. *The Real Me*

Spatial Requirements: Regular classroom setup: little or no space required

Activity Type: Object lesson

Grades: K-12

Group Size: 2 or more

Time: 25-30 minutes

Introduction: This activity allows students to think about their strengths, accomplishments, goals, dreams, and positive qualities. When these are acknowledged, students will be empowered to tear off their negative labels and launch them into a positive future.

Materials:

- 1 empty one-gallon can, including its lid
- 2 sheets of letter-size paper (or one laminated sheet of 6.5x20 paper)
- Clear tape
- 1 permanent marker
- Sticky notes or small slips of paper containing several positive traits, such as “leader,” “happy,” “fun loving,” “responsible,” “kind,” “hard working,” “honest,” etc.

Activity:

Put the sticky notes or small slips of paper inside the can.

Tape the two pieces of paper together (8 ½ inch side) and make a label to go around the can. (You will use it to write negative labels on later.) Put the plastic lid on the can, and tape the new label onto the can with the clear tape.

For the activity, explain that society often labels certain actions or behaviors, many of which are unfair and hurtful. Have the class identify negative labels that are used against students, and write these negative labels on the can using the marker. When the can is full of labels say, “Today we are going to talk about how to tear off negative labels.”

Processing the Experience:

- Have you ever been given a negative label because of your actions?
- Why is it easy to live up to those labels?
- Are these labels ever an excuse for our behaviors? Why?
- How can a negative label be torn off?
- Tell me a strength that each of you have.

Now invite a student to come forward and tear the label off the can. Remove the lid and open the can. Invite students to draw papers to reveal the strengths on the inside.

- How will your strengths help you tear off your negative labels?
- What does the following statement mean: “Believe in the real you, NOT the label.”
- Conclude by explaining, “Your strengths, accomplishments, goals, dreams, and positive qualities will launch you toward your future successes.”