

Tearing Off Your Label

Introduction

Key Concept:

Negative labels can hurt your future, but positive labels can help you achieve your goals and attain better opportunities. Ultimately, the label you wear depends on you: you can change your negative labels by changing your actions and showing others your strengths and positive traits.

Vocabulary

- Label
- Stereotype
- Individuality
- “Real me”
- Strengths
- Accomplishments
- Judgmental
- Common ground

Tearing Off Your Label

4

Four steps to tearing off your label:

1. Identify: How is your label working for you?

- What labels do you have that are getting in the way of your opportunities?

2. Do something different.

- What behavior needs to change?
- What do you need to stop doing? (not working for you)
- What do you need to start doing? (something new)
- Remember: Same thing = Same results

3. Focus on your strengths.

- Project the label that you want.

4. Repeat what you are doing right.

- Remember: It takes time for others to see the change.

Every night, ask yourself:

- What did I do today to tear off the label?
- How can I do more of this tomorrow?



Secondary Concepts:

- It is human nature for people to assign labels to each other.
- Sometimes these labels are incorrect or unfair.
- If you keep doing the same thing you've always done, you'll always get the same result.
- It is important to focus on what you're doing right, not what you're doing wrong.

Personalize your Lesson:

- How have labels impacted you in your life?
- What are some of the most difficult labels your students have to deal with?
- What will happen to them if they never lose those labels?
- Why do people use labels as an excuse?

Activity:

To introduce this lesson, complete the attention activity “Stereotypes.” (See the “Learning Activities” section under “Tearing Off Your Label.”)

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Lesson Plan: Introducing Labels

Explain to students that it is normal for us to label people. Sometimes labels are unfair, sometimes they are inaccurate,

and sometimes they are based on our behaviors. It's important to realize that our labels can affect our opportunities in life,

but that we have control over them and have the power to change them.

Tearing Off Your Label

Lesson Plan: Visual Analogy Walkthrough

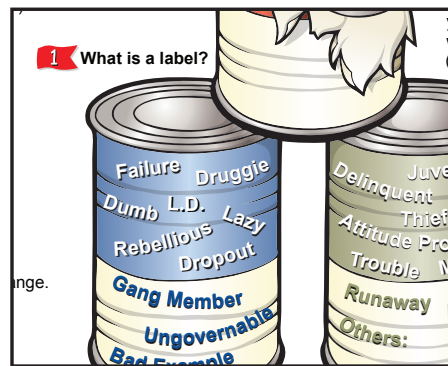
Discussion Point 1: Discuss Labels.

Question:

What is a label? Have you ever been given a negative label because of your actions?

Discussion:

When you first meet someone, you usually form an impression about them. You may be asking yourself, "Who is this person? What are they like?" Maybe you associate them with someone you know or a certain group or stereotype, so you cat-



egorize them. This is labeling. Have you ever gotten to know someone after forming a first impression and realized that they were different than the label you first gave them?

In society, we assign labels as a way to define certain groups of people. Sometimes these are directly tied to our behaviors, but sometimes they are unfair.

Look at the labels on the visual analogy and discuss them briefly. Point out that most of these labels are labels that adults give kids. Ask, "Have you ever had any of these labels?"

Challenge:

Have students circle the labels that they may have been given, or add some of their own.

NOTE:

Let the students determine for themselves whether their personal labels are negative or positive. What we see as negative may be positive for them, and vice versa. The purpose of this lesson is simply to give them the necessary steps for when they decide to change.

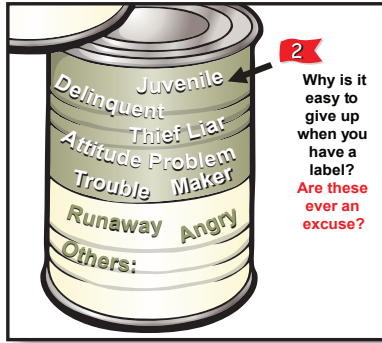
Point 2:

Question:

Why is it easy to give up when you have been labeled? Why is it easy to live up to a label? Are these labels ever an excuse for our behaviors?

Discussion:

When we believe in a negative label, it can be easy to quit trying and simply live up to that label. But with strength, effort, and a belief that we can



change, we can tear the label off. This gives us self-respect.

Question:

What does self-respect mean to you?

Challenge:

Have the students ask themselves, "Is my label giving me self-respect? Is it creating more or less opportunity for me to reach my goals?"

Encourage students to identify and focus on their strengths, telling them that they are great now, and will become greater in the future when they have torn off their negative labels.

Point 3:

Question:

What do you like about yourself? Turn to the person next to you and tell them your top three qualities.

Discussion:

Bring out a labeled can. Ask the students what is inside and how they know. Ask the students what a label shows us. Responses may include where it was made, its nutritional value, and so forth.

When we first meet a person, we often want to give them a label to fit a certain stereotype. Sometimes, though, we discover that we were way off



Labels can be unfair or inaccurate, and they can keep a person from achieving his/her goals or dreams.

Challenge:

Have students fill up the top can on the visual analogy with the following:

- The things they like about themselves
- The things that others like

about them

- Their accomplishments (You may need to offer help here, such as, "You passed your last test," or "You passed the eighth grade." Ask if they have received any awards or point out something you have observed.)
- Their strengths, goals and dreams
- A positive label they want to give themselves

If you do "The Can" activity at this point, have students fill out the can with their responses to these questions, then challenge them to take it home and put it in a place where they will see it every day. This can be a powerful reminder to them to focus on their strengths.

Point 4: How to Tear Off Your Label

Step 1: *Identify: How is my label working for me?*

Now that you have identified your goals and dreams, ask yourself if your labels will get in the way of your ability to achieve them. Most importantly, you must ask yourself, "How has my label impacted me in the past? How does it impact my present? And how will it affect my future?"

Step 2: *Do something different.*

You cannot repeat the same behavior and expect different results. (Point out to students that that's the definition of insanity.) In order to get rid of your negative label, you must do something different. Think of the behaviors that are causing others to give you this label and stop doing them. Then think of a positive activity you

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can start doing to replace the negative. Take small risks and get out of your comfort zone!

Note: This step can be easily tied back to the loop on the Reality Ride.

Step 3: *Focus on your strengths.*

If you woke up tomorrow and your label was gone, how

would your life be different? The answer to this question is the solution to the problem. You can remove your label by focusing on your strengths and good traits. These positive qualities comprise "The Real Me": the person beneath the label.

Step 4: *Repeat what you are doing right.*

Remember, it takes time for others to see the change. Some people may never see it. Don't worry about them. Be patient. Keep showing what is positive about yourself to everyone around you. As you continue focusing on your strengths, you will leave the loop and find yourself on the track that leads to opportunity, freedom, and self-respect. At the end of each day, proudly list off all you did that day to tear off your label. Think about how you can do even more the next day to tear off the label and let the "Real Me" shine.