

Friends
come with
all types of



TOPIC: Hidden Strengths Save the Day!

Using interactive storytelling, you will help your students discover that strengths and challenges can be used in helpful ways...to save the day! They will understand that students with disabilities deal with challenges every day, but that they have strengths that make them valuable members of a group.

GRADE: 3

TIME: 30 minutes

OBJECTIVES:

Students will:

- Understand that all people have strength and weaknesses.
- Understand that disabilities are often viewed as weaknesses when in fact people with disabilities can contribute their talents just as non-disabled people can.

MATERIALS:

Three sets of the seven character cards

PREPARATION:

- Print and cut out three sets of the character cards
- Divide cards into three piles. Each pile should have a full set of the seven cards.

ACTIVITY:

1. Review the Cromwell Center's "Our Families" activity that the students participated in previously. Remind students that they told each other about family members who had different types of disabilities and were really good at something - sometimes the best in their family at that activity.

Explain that they will do an activity that will help them think about strengths and weaknesses and how both can be helpful depending on the situation.

2. Divide students into three groups of 6-7 students each.

3. Within each group, give each student a description card. If you have fewer than seven students in a group, give some children two cards. All description cards (numbered 1-7) should be handed out for each group.

4. Ask each group to sit down in a circle and read their cards aloud to the group.

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5. Tell the students: "You each have a character card that states both a strength and a weakness that you have. I am going to read a story aloud and then you can discuss who in your group, based on the strength or weakness listed on the card, would be best to solve the problem. Remember, these decisions are based on the cards, not your real-life strengths and weaknesses."

Read Aloud

Once upon a time, a group of third grade students were assigned a project by their teacher, Ms. Smarty. These students are YOU! Your class has been studying rocks and minerals in Maine, and your assignment for the weekend is to go into the woods or along the rocky coast and find examples of different types of rocks that you can classify in class next week.

Seven of your friends decide to get together on Saturday morning and hike to the summit of Bear Mountain at Sleeping Bear State Park. The hiking paths are rocky and provide many opportunities to scour the ground for rock samples. Also, the view from the top of the mountain is beautiful and overlooks the ocean and many islands in the bay.

Saturday dawns clear and bright, and your group gathers at the 9:00 in the parking lot of Bear Mountain State Park. Jonas's father is supposed to be the leader of the group, but after all the kids gather, you realize that Jonas and his father have not arrived. The group waits for 20 minutes, but still there is no sign of them. One of the girls states loudly, "Let's just head out anyway. I've hiked here plenty of times and we won't get lost." The other kids nod and decide to set off.

As you hike through the tall trees and over roots and sticks, you soon come to a fork in the path. A sign with directions is written in both English and French and is nailed to a tree, but you quickly realize that the English directions have worn away, leaving only the French directions for which trail to take. Who in your group is able to help figure out which trail to take? [Pause and let each group discuss among themselves. Once all groups have picked a person, continue reading. Do not share who it was at this time. Most children will pick the French-speaking child.]

Once you figure out what the sign says, you take the path toward the mountain summit. As you continue down the trail, you come to a dark tunnel. The trail goes through the tunnel, but the tunnel curves so you cannot see straight through. The tunnel is dark and smells musty. One student exclaims, "I'm not going through there! I'll bet it's a bear cave since this place is called Sleeping Bear State Park!" Another student agrees, but points out that with the steep rocks, it would be too difficult to go around the tunnel. Finally, a volunteer raises their hand and offers to go in and check whether a bear is in there because they are not afraid of the dark. Who in your group do you think volunteers? [Pause and let the groups discuss. Most will select the blind child with excellent hearing.]

The student comes out safely and reports that there is a problem. There are no bears in the cave, but there is an animal that sounds like a skunk. This student is too afraid of getting sprayed so instead of scaring the skunk or chasing it out, the student came out to find someone braver and more willing. Who should go in to scare away the skunk? [Pause and let the group discuss. Most groups will select the child with no sense of smell.]

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Good job! Your group successfully scared the skunk out and now the cave is empty of animals. The group walks through the cave, but when they exit, they discover that they have stumbled into a group of pirates who had walked up from the shore and were looking for some treasure to steal. Upon seeing your school group, they leap up, surround the students, and quickly tie you all up around your waists. They tell you that if anyone speaks, you will be brought back to the ship to walk the gangplank. You quickly realize that your group needs to create an escape plan, but you have no way of communicating without talking... so how can you communicate with one another to create a plan? Which two students might be able to help? [Pause and let the groups discuss. Make sure they picked more than one student to solve this. Most groups will select the two students who know sign language.]

Thanks to the students who created the plan of using sharp rocks to cut the ropes and then all throwing your gathered rocks to scare off the pirates, your group is able to escape and hurry down the path. As you rapidly walk up to the summit, Trisha spots some delicious looking berries and realizes how hungry she is. As she goes to eat the berries, her friend hollers, "Stop, don't eat those! They are poisonous!" Who do you think is the friend who saves her? [Pause and let the groups discuss. Most groups will select the student with excellent memory who loves studying nature.]

The group finally reaches the summit of the mountain and spends some time enjoying the beautiful view of the islands off the coast and gathering many samples of rocks. As you start your descent back to the parking lot, you decide to take a different trail than the one the pirates were on. This trail is steeper but takes less time to get down. However, half-way down, you realize that your group is confused. One girl thinks your group should take a trail that leads to the left, but a boy argues against it, saying you need to take the trail on the right in order to get back to the parking lot. Finally a student speaks up confidently, saying, "I know where to go. We definitely need to turn right. I'm positive." Who do you think is so confident about which path to take? [Pause and let the group discuss. Most groups will select the student with the excellent sense of direction.]

The student is correct. The trail to the right leads you all down a hill, over a small bridge, and back to the parking lot successfully. The students give each other high-fives and let out whoops of joy. Jonas and his father are in the parking lot, waiting to take them home. They apologize for arriving late and tell you that their mini-van got a flat tire on the way to the park. Your group chats eagerly about what an exciting day it has been. You have gathered bags of rocks as well as many stories to share with the class on Monday.

6. Tell the students: "Each of you had some type of weakness or challenge on your character card. For some of you, people might even call it a disability, like being deaf or blind or having lots of difficulty paying attention.

- Were you all still able to go on this trip?
- Can anyone share how their weakness actually allowed them to be a helper or solve a problem in this story?
- Did some of you use your strengths? Who can share some examples?
- Do we all have strengths and weaknesses, like on our cards? Who would like to share both a strength and weakness that you have?

AN IMPORTANT NOTE FROM THE CROMWELL CENTER

Dear Teacher or Guidance Counselor:

Your brief feedback on this or on any of our other lesson plans is very important. It will enable us to share results with our grant funders and help obtain future funding, and any suggestions for improvements will help us fine tune the activities to best meet your needs.

To provide this valuable feedback, please go to the form on the bottom of this page on our website: <http://cromwellcenter.org/teacher-resources/>.

Or, if you prefer, you can e-mail your comments to sgreenwood@cromwellcenter.org.

Thank you!