



You Can't Do That!

Grades: 10-12
Time: 2-3 Class Periods
Subjects: Career and Technical Programs

Description:

This activity is designed to help students explore conflicts that may arise in the trades when nontraditional employees are part of the workplace. Students will have an opportunity to discuss and find solutions to problems identified through scenarios and role play.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Recognize gender stereotypes in the workplace.
- Analyze personal relationships in terms of gender, power, work skills, etc.
- Understand all aspects of an occupation as applied to today's work environment.
- Work equitably within a group.
- Develop conflict resolution skills.

Materials:

Props for role play (based on scenarios)
Handout: "Role Playing/Improvisational Helpful Hints"

Procedure:

1. Prepare students for this activity through one of the following:
 - Lesson that demonstrates gender issues caused by the presence of non-traditional workers in the trades
 - Guest speakers (one male and one female) who can share experiences where conflicts occurred in the workplace as a result of non-traditional employees and how the conflicts were resolved.
Note: The scenarios in this activity assume that your program has both male and female students. It is possible to create relevant role-playing with one-gender situations; however, conflicts might lose some of their power and relevancy.
2. Form groups and ask students to prepare skits based on one scenario provided in this activity or one identified by you. Have them include as part of their role play a solution to the problem.
3. Have one group present their skit. The other students will act as observers and take notes for discussion purposes.
4. Discuss situation/recommended resolution of gender issues as a group. Observers should share their notes with everyone to help with discussion. Students should reach consensus on proposed resolution.
5. Repeat steps 3 and 4 for each scenario.

6. If you would like to include a written assignment as part of this activity, ask students to write a response to one of the scenarios presented by students. Focus points might include one or more of the following:
- Have you ever been in a non-traditional role at school or in sports?
 - What would you do if a co-worker was harassing someone because of gender?
 - Did the conflicts have anything in common?
 - Did the resolutions in the skits have anything in common?

Evaluation:

Students should be evaluated on their listening and speaking skills, their ability to solve problems, and their ability to work fairly within a group. If the written component was included, assess the student's ability to clearly communicate thoughts and to use proper grammar and punctuation.

Sample Scenarios:

❑ **Automobile Repair Business**

Heather is a new employee at Art's Foreign Car Repair. She is 28 years old with 12 years experience in the trade, including Tech School. Her co-workers include Mike and Jamil who have worked at Art's for more than 10 years. Even though it is obvious that Mary knows her stuff, Jamil can't help but offer suggestions and help, especially when some physical task is involved. She understands his perspective, but it annoys her nonetheless. Mike assumes Heather knows nothing, avoids working with her, and directs comments at her that question her skill level. His behavior angers her. Art, the owner, is sympathetic to Heather, but he doesn't want to alienate Jamil or Mike. How is this situation resolved?

❑ **The Hair Salon**

Trevor has just been hired by a busy urban hair salon, *Lookin' Sharp*. At first he gets along fine with his co-workers, Treenyce, Jill, and Bev. But as weeks pass, Trevor notices that many of their comments are suggesting that he is gay. Treenyce and Jill often point out "cute guys" to Trevor, while Bev seems to be a little nervous around him. Most recently she confronted him about his "dangerous" lifestyle and offered him advice about AIDS testing. On every occasion Trevor has protested, saying that he is straight and their comments are hurtful. They laugh in a knowing way and respond that he is just nervous about coming "out," and why doesn't he trust them. How does the situation get resolved?

❑ **The Building Site**

Chad and Kyle have been partners in a construction business for several years. They are building a house in Stillwater, which is a fairly long drive for both of them, but the house should be profitable and interesting to build. Nalini is a young building inspector for the town of Stillwater. Chad and Kyle decide to backfill the foundation before it has been signed off by the building inspector, feeling that they can plead innocent because of their relative newness to the trade. Plus, to be safe, Chad took photos of the foundation to show its completion. The next day Nalini shows up and Chad is relieved as he feels a woman should be easy to deal with. However, Nalini feels she needs to be strong in a male-dominated profession, so she carries out her duties to the letter. Chad tries to talk her into letting the backfilling go, but she demands that they dig it out again or face daily fines. Kyle tries to intervene between the two to save the job—after all they will be working with her throughout the project. How do they resolve the situation?

The following hints will help both students and adults prepare a skit and role play a particular situation.

- ❑ **Describe the nature of improvisational acting.** A small amount of preparation, perhaps an outline of events, action, and key statements, needs to be developed by the group.
 - Try to listen to each other—play off their words and actions.
 - Think on your feet.
 - Stay in character.
- ❑ **Determine the characters for each skit.** Ask the question of each character, “What do you want?” This helps the actor focus on the character’s actions.
- ❑ **Select a few key props.** Don’t overdo this aspect of the skit, but a well placed prop adds context for the audience and gives the actors added focus.
- ❑ **Keep going no matter what happens.** If someone misses a cue or drops a line, that’s OK, keep going. The audience won’t know, and maybe your next line will be an improvement.
- ❑ **Inject humor.** Humor will engage your audience and make your performance easier.