

Nothing But the Truth

Purpose

Print out and cut out glasses for your own use.

So many disciplinary conversations circle around getting students to admit to their wrong-doing. What I have come to find is that many students get stopped here too, because sometimes, their "truth" may be pretty far from the truth of the other student (or even supervising adult). For a student who feels targeted often, they may see the world through a lens of injustice regardless of their own poor decisions in the process. So, then you are stuck. They won't own the issue, and you can't offer a restorative option to someone who believes they have nothing to restore. Stale mate... often ending in a power struggle... often ending in exclusionary discipline. This lesson allows for an expert way to allow students to take ownership for their own perspective and feel responsible for fixing feelings, even if they don't agree with them.

Teacher Work

Tell this story (or one from your own experience) where your truth was different than someone else's truth, but you had to own it either way.

"When I was in elementary school, I had this weird thing happen to me. I was playing with my friends at recess and there was a great soccer game going. When I had my soccer games on the weekend, my dad would always shout from the sidelines - "Pick it up! Come on team! You can do it! You can't let them through, defense!"

So, during soccer at recess, I would cheer for my team in the same way. I would cheer them on when we did something great, but also point out when we made mistakes.

When the whistle blew for the end of recess, a girl from my team, Megan, was crying to the recess teacher. I walked over to see if she was okay. I was shocked when I walked into them having a conversation about ME. She was telling on me for when I cheered for her to run faster during the game! She thought I was being mean! I wasn't being mean- I was just talking like real soccer players talked. I didn't use bad words or a screaming voice. When the teacher turned to me, I felt so mad that I was getting in trouble for nothing."



Now, use the glasses to explain that my perspective (A) was just talking like I always talked at soccer. It never bothered anyone else and I didn't even do anything wrong. Perspective B, Megan, believed I was being too harsh and it hurt her feelings for me to call out her running during the game. Who is right and who is wrong?

give students a few seconds to discuss

Reveal the poster from the blog post.

That was kind of a trick question. According to me and according to Megan, we both thought we were right. I thought it was okay to be honest with my team in a soccer game, and she thought I was taking it too seriously and being mean. We both had our truths. It's important that I explain to the teacher where I was coming from - how I usually play soccer on the weekend, and how I didn't think I was being mean. I need to speak my truth, but here comes the toughest part...

I didn't have to be "right" or "wrong" - I just had to fix it.



Megan's feelings were hurt and she thought I was saying mean things at soccer. Frankly, it didn't matter that I thought I was right, I had to fix the fact that someone else was hurt by what I did.

Instead of getting mad, shouting to defend myself, and ending up in more trouble. I turned to Megan and explained what happened. I apologized for hurting her feelings and promised her that I would be more careful next time. Then, I went past the apology. The next day at soccer, I gave her a few extra compliments and a high-five at the end. I didn't go overboard, but I wanted to show her that I was a good sport and that she didn't have to think I was mean. It took a few days of being careful with my words at soccer before things felt normal between me and Megan, but it got better.

Even though I disagreed and didn't think that Megan should be upset, I fixed it anyway. Recess soccer should be fun, and changing my words was easy. It wasn't worth other people feeling badly just so I could say what I wanted to.

Student Work

"Has something like this ever happened to you? Can you think of another example of a situation like this? Turn and talk to people around you and try to come up with a good example or two. What were the two perspectives in your story?"

Talk through a couple examples from your circle.

Closing

If we all had GoPros on our heads, we would always know the "truth", but that isn't going to happen any time soon. The most important thing we recognize is that if someone is hurt because of me, it is my job to fix it, even if I disagree with their hurt. You will come to find that most things can be fixed with small, easy changes that help our community run more smoothly.

Keep the poster in the classroom to be able to revisit it when situations arise.



