



Perception and Empathy (1) - Niko Says

Intermediate (Classes 7-10)

Foundation House / Elementary (Classes 5-7)



Perception

Social Justice / Reform (Pestalozzi Approach)

Instructions to students:

The teacher chooses three students.

(NB: The students chosen should be confident and not easily upset.) One student is blindfolded, another has his or her legs tied together and the third has his or her hands tied behind his or her back.

The students play 'Niko Says', the three students with 'differences' participating. To play the game the students must do the action demanded by the teacher only if the teacher says 'Niko says' first. So, if the teacher says 'Niko says touch your toes' the students must touch their toes and if they do not do so they are out of the game. If the teacher simply says 'Touch your toes' the students should not do the action and if they do touch their toes they are out of the game.

(NB: Instructions should include things the three students mentioned above cannot do but not for the first four or five rounds of the game. At various points in the game each of the three students lose the chance of winning because 'Niko says stand on one leg' or 'Niko says put your left hand on your head' or 'Niko says shut your eyes').

When the game finishes the teacher tells these three students that they did very badly and asks how they feel about that. The three students volunteer their feelings. Other students say how they felt when these three students were expected to do things they could not possibly do. This leads into a discussion about unfair treatment and discrimination and the importance of making special provisions for those who have a disability.

Materials Needed

Any props that may be available





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According to Pestalozzi, perception is inner understanding of morality and truth – the powers of the heart, which include empathy. He wanted education to help ensure that people recognise the needs of others, empathise with them, want to help them and have the know how to help them. Pestalozzi was concerned about inequality and struggled constantly for equal rights for disadvantaged people, including disabled people, girls and the poor.

