Assumptions: Is it Really What You Think?

**What is an assumption?**

Making an assumption is when you make a decision about something or someone without having all of the facts.

We tend to rely on cues and signals from others to figure out what they are thinking. Eventually we become convinced that our guess is fact without proof. This is indirect communication. It encourages you to fill in the blanks on your own and make assumptions about others. It is easy to fantasize what others are thinking and doing. This can eventually lead to gossip and misunderstandings between friends.

**GOAL:** The following activity will help students think about and understand how quickly and easily assumptions are made.

Directions: Read the following scenario and answer the corresponding questions.

**Scenario**

Adam is upset over his math grade. At lunch he avoids looking at his friends in fear he might show that he is upset. He doesn’t want anyone to know how badly he is doing. His friends ask him what is wrong but he just shakes his head and says nothing. One friend in particular, Jared, who is sitting right next to Adam, feels like Adam has been giving him the cold shoulder all day and decides, “*He must be mad at me.”* Instead of asking if Adam is mad at him, after lunch Jared pulls aside their others friends and discusses why Adam would be mad at Jared. When Adam walks by them out of the lunch room the boys fall silent. The rest of the day Jared and the other boys ignore Adam. Adam doesn’t understand why everyone is being mean to him and is confused and feels even more stressed because now not only is he almost failing math, but all of his friends are mad at him.

Because Jared made the assumption that Adam was mad, a cycle has started and not only will the other boys start making assumptions, but Adam is now left to start assuming why the boys are mad at him.

**Map the situation:**

In each box, write what each person does and assumptions they make that contribute to making the situation worse?

*Follow-up questions*

***Adam***

1. *What did Adam do that was okay? What could Adam have done differently and why?*
2. *What could Adam have done after he realized his friends were mad at him?*

***Jared***

1. *What assumptions does Jared make and why? Why are these assumptions wrong?*
2. *What happened when Jared made these assumptions?*
3. *What could Jared have done as soon as he felt Adam was giving him the cold shoulder?*

***The bystanders***

1. *What did the other boys in the group do right? What did they do wrong?*
2. *What could the other boys in the group have done differently?*

ANSWERS:

Assumptions: Is it Really What You Think?

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**Scenario**

Adam is upset over him math grade. At lunch he avoids looking at him friends in fear he might show that he is upset. He doesn’t want anyone to know how badly he is doing. Him friends ask him what is wrong but he just shakes him head and says nothing. One friend in particular, Jared, who is sitting right next to Adam, feels like Adam has been giving him the cold shoulder all day and decides, “*He must be mad at me.”* Instead of asking if Adam is mad at him, after lunch Jared pulls aside their other friends and discusses why Adam would be mad at Jared. When Adam walks by them out of the lunch room the boys fall silent. The rest of the day Jared and the other boys ignore Adam. Adam doesn’t understand why everyone is being mean to him and is confused and feels even more stressed because now not only is he almost failing math, but all of him friends are mad at him.

Because Jared made the assumption that Adam was mad, a cycle has started and not only will the other boys start making assumptions, but Adam is now left to start assuming why the boys are mad at him.

**Map the situation:**

In each box, write what each person did and assumptions they make that contribute to making the situation worse?

Follow-up questions

**Adam**

1. *What did Adam do that was okay? What could Adam have done differently and why?*

* Adam was allowed to feel upset about him math grade and he was allowed to eat lunch in silence, but when him friends asked him what was wrong, he could have said:
  + He was upset over something that happened in math.
  + He was upset over a grade he received.
  + Told them the whole truth.
  + Told them he would talk to them about it later but he just didn’t feel well.

1. *What could Adam have done after he realized his friends were mad at him?*

* Called Jared later and confronted him about the situation.
* Sent Jared a text, asking him if he was mad and what was wrong at lunch.
* Told Jared that he was time for him to talk to when he was ready.

**Jared**

1. *What assumptions does Jared make and why? Why are these assumptions wrong?*

* Jared thinks that Adam is mad at him because he is not talking to him. They are wrong because Adam is not mad at him.

1. *What happened when Jared made these assumptions?*

* Jared is now mad at Adam. Instead of talking to Adam about it, Jared gets the other boys involved and now they are all ignoring Jared.

1. *What could Jared have done as soon as he felt Adam was giving him the cold shoulder?*

* The antidote to assumptions is information.
  + Ask Adam if he is mad.
  + Ask how him day is going, if anything happened.
  + If he doesn’t feel comfortable asking Adam:
    - Know when you are making an assumption.
    - Catch yourself making assumptions in the moment instead of too late.
    - Question the assumption.
    - Are there any other reasons why Adam might be acting this way?
    - You need to be 100% sure the assumption you came up with has to be true.
    - Try thinking about the assumptions that were made.
    - Say in your head “I wonder if Adam is mad at me, or if he is having a bad day.”
    - This makes the assumption not absolute.
    - Do not involve others in your assumptions.

**The bystanders**

1. *What did the other boys in the group do right? What did they do wrong?*

* Jared was the only one who assumed Adam was mad, but once Jared brought it up, the others agreed with him without getting the facts

1. *What could the other boys in the group have done differently?*

* In the lunch room
  + Ask Adam questions. He is obviously feeling bad and may want to talk.
  + If he responds with a short “nothing” or “I am fine” but you know he is not.
    - Ask him if he has had a bad day. He may answer yes and you can leave it at that.
  + Ask what happened.
  + Ask him why he is not talking much.
  + Tell him that if he wants to talk you are there for him whenever.
  + Give him a compliment.
* Do not ask around about what might be wrong.
  + This will let others know that Adam is upset.
  + This will invite rumors and gossiping.
* Tell him Jared he is making assumptions.
* Do not partake in the assumption making.
* Change the subject.
* Tell Jared that they can all talk to Adam about it later.
* When Adam walks by, leave the group and walk with him.