

Plan on a Page

Lesson 3: Fitting In Versus Belonging

Guiding Questions

- What does it mean to “fit in”? How is fitting in different from belonging?
 - How might sacrificing our values to fit in affect our relationships, self-esteem, and overall well-being?
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Activities

Activity 1: Reflect on Fitting In at School

- Project an image of a chameleon on the board. Let students know that today, they will be thinking about chameleons, who are associated with changing color to blend or fit into their environment. While chameleons actually change color to communicate to other chameleons and react to temperature and mood, the idea of changing an aspect of oneself to blend in is a powerful one that students will be pursuing in this and upcoming lessons.
- Invite students to respond to the following questions in their **journals**. Let them know that they will be sharing their ideas with a partner.
 - What are some things that students do to fit in at school?
 - In your opinion, is it worth sacrificing your values to fit in? Why or why not?
- Have students do a quick pair share and then see if any volunteers would like to share with the class.

Activity 2: Listen to a Podcast Excerpt about Fitting In Versus Belonging

- Let students know that they will be listening to an excerpt from a podcast where the hosts explore the difference between fitting in and belonging.
- Prompt students to make a t-chart in their journals and label the left-hand column “Fitting In” and the right-hand column “Belonging.” Model by making a t-chart on

the board. **Play minutes 02:17-05:54** from the *Dear Anxiety* podcast episode: **Belonging, Fitting In, and Acceptance**. As they listen, students can jot notes in each column that help them understand the difference between the concepts.

- Have students compare t-charts in pairs and add any new ideas to their notes. If time allows, play minutes **04:00-05:54** a second time so students can check and add to their notes.
- Discuss the following questions as a class. As you discuss the first question, you can populate the t-chart on their board with their ideas.
 - What does it mean to “fit in”? How is fitting in different from belonging?
 - How can our desire to fit in influence the choices we make in our lives?

Activity 3: Read and Discuss a Personal Narrative

- Let students know that they will be reading a personal narrative written by a student reflecting on the lengths they went to fit in while a freshman in high school. You will read the first part of the story out loud to them and then pause for them to make a prediction about what happens in the end. Pass out copies of **Chameleon, by David L.** to the class. Prompt students fold their paper below the fourth paragraph so they cannot see the ending of the story.
- Read the first four paragraphs out loud. Pause and have students discuss the following question in pairs: *What do you think happens next? What makes you say that?* Have a few volunteers share their predictions.
- Read the final paragraph out loud. Then project the following questions one at a time for a class discussion:
 - In the podcast episode, co-host Renee Jain discusses the different ways one might try to fit in, like trying to camouflage or turning oneself into a pretzel. What approach does David take to fit in at his high school?
 - What values do you think David may have sacrificed in his attempt to fit in? How can this reading help you answer the question you explored in an earlier lesson: Why do we sometimes make decisions that are not aligned with our values in order to try to fit in?

- How might sacrificing our values to fit in affect our relationships, self-esteem, or overall well-being? How do the podcast and David's story help you answer this question? How do your own experiences help you answer this question?
- In your opinion, is it possible to stand out and belong at the same time? If so, what conditions are necessary for this to happen? If not, why not?

Activity 4: Create a Headline about Fitting In vs. Belonging

- Follow the steps of the **Create a Headline** strategy to have pairs of students compose a headline that responds to one of the lesson's guiding questions and captures important information from this lesson's sources.