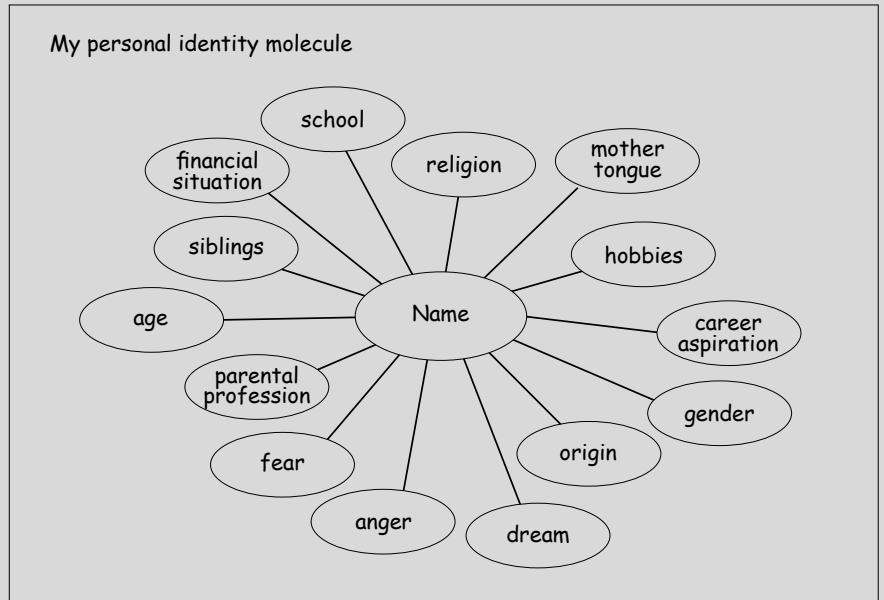


which ones are not?

- In order to address the last question mentioned, it is useful to first discuss various social group affiliations (rich – poor; foreigners – citizens; woman – man; Christians – Muslims; heterosexuals – homosexuals, etc.). The social advantages and disadvantages of belonging to these groups and their acceptance can then be discussed and maybe illustrated with a scale.



1.7 Together we are strong

Goal

Through the principle of collective strength, the students learn that mutual dependence does not mean giving up one's own identity. The advantages of being supported by a group become clearly visible.

7th–9th grade

30 minutes



Materials:
twigs or round wood sticks
(ca. 5 mm diameter,
ca. 30–40 cm length,
two per students), string,
small paper labels.

Hints:

Source: Schilling, Dianne (1993): Miteinander klarkommen. Toleranz, Respekt und Kooperation trainieren. (Getting along with each other. Tolerance, respect and cooperation training). Mülheim an der Ruhr: Verlag an der Ruhr.

Procedure:

- The students form groups of 6–12 persons. Each student receives a wood stick or a twig. The instructor explains that the sticks symbolize the students themselves with all their strengths, vulnerabilities and feelings which they as individuals have. S/he explains that the pressure and stress which people experience in their lives can lead to a situation where they warp and sometimes even break. This should now be practically demonstrated in that the students break their sticks.

- After breaking their sticks, the instructor asks certain students to demonstrate and to report how much pressure was needed – very little, medium or extreme stress. It will become evident that many were able to break their sticks very easily, whereas others had to try harder.



- The discussion will clarify that people – just as the sticks- can withstand the pressure exerted by life to varying degrees. How much stress a person can withstand depends to a great extent on how effectively s/he can deal with pressure. Even the strongest person can break if the pressure is too great.
- The remaining sticks or twigs are then distributed, together with a paper label. All students write their names on the label and affix it to the sticks, which are then collected and bound in a bundle. The instructor then asks various students to break such a bundle with their bare hands. It is clear that even very strong persons would have great difficulties to accomplish this feat.
- Prompts for the final class reflection and discussion:
 - What does this exercise have to do with us, which parallels could be seen?
 - What is the difference between personal identity and group identity?
 - What are the benefits of working in groups?
 - What happens to individual identity if a person becomes a member of a group?
 - When and in which areas can a group help a person to cope with life's difficulties and surmount a challenge; when and in what sense can it not?