



Assuming Good Intentions

Discussion

Talk about what it means to assume someone has good intentions. There are times when others may hurt us physically or emotionally without intending to. But when we assume that someone has good intentions, we encourage empathy and a generous spirit, and we create opportunities for others to apologize or rephrase something with kindness. Leading questions help facilitate positive discussions, such as: Did that student cut me off in the lunch line just to make me frustrated? Did my friend ignore me to make me feel sad?

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Break students into small groups and choose several Assuming Good Intentions Dilemmas. Urge students to pay attention to their initial reactions, which may not take into account the other person's intention. Instead, encourage students to consider how their responses might change if they assume the best intentions of others.

1. On Monday morning while Janie was walking to class, Steve, a classmate, bumped into her. Janie dropped her books on the ground, and Steve did not stop to help pick them up.
2. Nate and Juan were on their way to soccer practice riding in Juan's mom's car. While driving, Juan's mom slammed on the brakes, yelled out "Hey!" and waved her hand at another car that cut in front of them.
3. Every day before school, Keisha and Gabby hang out together in the courtyard. Today, Keisha sat down next to Gabby, who was silently eating a snack. Keisha talked to her like she usually does, but Gabby ignored Keisha. After a few minutes, Gabby stood up and walked over to a bench, where she sat quietly by herself until classes started.
4. Marco's family went out to dinner on Friday night at a popular restaurant. Once they were seated, they had to wait a very long time for the server to come to their table. When the server arrived, he took their orders quickly and didn't even ask them what they wanted to drink. It took almost an hour for the food to arrive at their table, and Marco's order was wrong.
5. Natalie was so excited to wear the new jeans they got for their birthday. When they arrived at school, they were showing them off to the rest of their classmates. One classmate, Mariah, posted on Facebook that Natalie's jeans looked stupid and said she didn't like them.
6. Isaiah and Brandon both tried out for the school basketball team. Brandon was so excited when he saw his name on the list of students who made the team! He had worked hard all summer practicing his skills. Isaiah did not make the team. When Brandon came up to him and said how excited he was to play basketball this year, Isaiah said he only made the team because Brandon is taller than him.
7. On a school trip, Shanna is acting overbearing. She has the "right" answer to every question, and she tries to control all of the plans. Lysette gets along well with Shanna at school, and she feels confused because Shanna is acting like a different person on this trip.
8. Marcus and Esther are members of a student club that volunteered for breakfast, lunch, and clean-up at a soup kitchen. When they're done, another student in the group suggests that the group use money from the club's slush fund to buy ice cream for everyone, and their advisor agrees. But Marcus is upset, and it is evident to Esther and the other students. Marcus doesn't want to get ice cream, but he doesn't really explain why. He says he will take the bus home.