



Kindness

Grades 9-12

Segment Summary:

Arab-born football star Nizar Alawamleh's friends and teachers vowed to protect him from racist backlash after Muslim extremists were accused of perpetrating violent acts against Americans on September 11, 2001.

Even Nizar Alawamleh has to admit it – his name is a mouthful. Born in Kuwait to a Palestinian mother and Jordanian father, Nizar differs from most of his classmates in more ways than one. The Alawamleh's, fleeing political upheaval in Kuwait, came to the United States when Nizar was 6 years old. That first year in this country was difficult for Nizar. He felt different from the American kids his age. He practiced a different religion than the other students, and he came from a different culture, which caused some students to avoid him. Little by little, Nizar adjusted to American life, and now he has dozens of friends. He's a popular football player, and his peers voted him onto the homecoming court. After the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, when many Arab-Americans began to feel like targets, Nizar had the opportunity to experience just how much his friends care about him. They rallied around him and vowed to protect him from anti-Arab sentiment. They also assured Nizar that he has enriched their lives just by being himself. Nizar is thankful for his friends' support and grateful that he fits in without pretending to be someone he is not.

Discussion Questions:

1. In what ways did Nizar's friends demonstrate kindness? What character qualities do you look for when choosing your friends? Why are these qualities important to you?
2. What does friendship mean to you? What criteria do you use in order to judge whether or not you have true friends? What criteria do you use to judge whether or not you are a true friend to others?
3. Has someone ever been kind to you only because he or she had an ulterior motive? How did his or her actions make you feel?
4. Has a friend ever let you down? What were the circumstances? How did you handle the situation?
5. Do you consider yourself to be a kind, benign person? Why or why not?
6. How do you demonstrate kindness toward others at home, at school and in your community?
7. What challenges do you think foreign students face when they start attending schools in the United States? Which adjustments would be the most difficult to make? What could you do make their transitions easier?
8. Are you proud of the qualities that make you different from your classmates, or do you try to hide them? Explain.
9. Do you have friends who have different cultural backgrounds or practice different religions? What do you learn from these friends? What are you able to teach them in return? How important is this cultural exchange?
10. What does it mean to "fit in" with a group of people? How important is it for you to "fit in" at school? Do you feel like you "fit in" at school? Explain.
11. Do you feel that your family "fits into" your community? Why or why not?

Vocabulary Words and Definitions:

Altruism (n.)

Definition: the practice of thinking of the needs and desires of other people instead of one's own

Context: Many people practiced altruism and selflessly helped others during the earthquake.

Amends (n.)

Definition: compensation for a loss or injury

Context: Marcus sent his girlfriend a dozen roses to make amends for an argument he started between the two of them.

Belligerent (adj.)

Definition: very unfriendly, mean and wanting to argue or fight

Context: Jafet was belligerent when she found out that her best friend turned her in for cheating on the psychology final.

Benign (adj.)

Definition: kind and unlikely to harm anyone

Context: After attending anger management classes, Istu's behavior became benign and nonviolent.

Feasible (adj.)

Definition: being possible or likely to work

Context: It is feasible for us to attend both the movie and the concert if we leave the house early.

Implement (v.)

Definition: to put a project, plan, campaign, etc., into action

Context: Yori will implement her campaign by hanging posters throughout the school.

Intrinsic (adj.)

Definition: being part of the nature or character of someone or something

Context: David's calm behavior is an intrinsic part of his personality.

Kindness (n.)

Definition: the state of being caring, compassionate, helpful, etc., toward someone

Context: Sylvia demonstrated kindness toward the homeless man by offering him a blanket.

Relative (adj.)

Definition: relating to or compared with a particular subject

Context: Omar's car is quite valuable relative to the value of his cell phone.

Ulterior motive (n.)

Definition: a reason for doing something that someone deliberately hides in order to gain an advantage

Context: Marla's ulterior motive for helping Tarah wash dishes was that she wanted to borrow her sister's sweater.

Source: *Longman Advanced American Dictionary*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited. 2000.

Activity: Kindness Is Relative

Objectives:

Students will be able to

- Recognize the intrinsic rewards of being kind
- Give examples of kind gestures they have performed or observed in their homes
- Conduct parent interviews
- Discuss the ways in which altruism can be increased |

Materials:

- Pens, pencils
- Paper
- Chalkboard or overhead projector
- **Kindness without Rewards** worksheet |

Procedure:

1. Share an example of something kind you have done for someone in your family. Explain the circumstances behind your gesture and your motivation for being kind to this person. Ask students to give some examples of the kind tasks they perform for their family members. Write these on the board or overhead projector. Then ask students what motivates them to perform these kind tasks. |
2. Distribute the **Kindness without Rewards** worksheet to the class. At the top of the left-hand column, have students list several kind tasks that they perform for their parents. At the bottom of the left-hand column, have students list several kind tasks that their parents perform for them.
3. Have students take their worksheets home and interview their parents using the following guidelines:
 - Students will read the lists to their parents or let their parents read the lists.
 - Students will ask their parents whether they agree or disagree with the items on the students' lists. Students should also ask why their parents agree or disagree.
 - Students will ask their parents to fill out the parent section of their **Kindness without Rewards** worksheets. |
4. Ask students to compare their lists to their parents' lists. Students should discuss with their parents the areas in which they disagree and then generate examples of ways they can be kinder to one another. Students should write these examples on the backs of their worksheets. Students and parents should both sign the students' worksheets.
5. Close the activity with a discussion using the following questions as a guide:
 - What are the external rewards of being kind to your family members?
 - What are the intrinsic rewards of being kind to your family members?
 - What surprised you about your parents' responses to your list?
 - Has talking to your parents about altruism at home changed your motivations for being kind?

Note: Encourage your students to repeat this activity with their siblings and friends. |

Kindness without Rewards

Name: _____

Directions: Fill in only the left-hand column of this worksheet. At the top, list several kind tasks that you perform for your parents. At the bottom, list several kind tasks that your parents perform for you. Interview your parents according to the guidelines given in class, and then ask your parents to fill in the right-hand column of the worksheet.

Students Only

List several kind tasks you perform for your parents.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

List several kind tasks your parents perform for you.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Parents Only

List several kind tasks your children perform for you.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

List several kind tasks you perform for your children.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

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