

GETTING BETTER WHEN I'M SICK

ELEMENTARY LEVEL

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOAL #4: Reduce child mortality

Activity Snapshot:

Students will engage in a discussion about what happens when they get sick. They'll create a list on the board of the services they access (whether in their homes or at a medical facility) and then think about what would happen if these services were taken away.

Rationale:

Child mortality in the developing world is a big concern. Every year, more than 10 million children die before the age of five from causes that are easily prevented in the developed world.

Half of the children who die before the age of five are killed by five diseases or illnesses: HIV/AIDS, diarrhea, malaria, measles and pneumonia. These children lack access to the essential services that would help them recover from the preventable diseases and illnesses that are killing children by the millions.

Objective:

- Students will understand the importance of vaccinations as a way to prevent disease.
- Students will explore the levels of healthcare they have access to, from simple at-home treatments to the help of healthcare professionals.

Time: one 60-minute period

Materials: Black board and chalk, or chart paper and markers, world map on overhead or as a poster.

Steps:

1. In a class discussion, ask your students to think about and respond to the following (make a list of the responses on the board or on chart paper as you go):
 - a. What do you do when you get sick? (Responses can include: tell parents, check temperature, take medicine, take a warm bath, etc.)
 - b. What can your parents do to help you? (Responses can include: tuck you into bed, make you soup, give you medicine, take you to the doctor, etc.)
 - c. What can the doctor do to help you? (Responses can include: take tests, check for infections, prescribe medicine, send you to the hospital or a specialist, etc.)
1. Once the list has been exhausted, slowly scratch things off the list and ask students to imagine along the way that these things are no longer available to them—what would happen? What would happen if you got sick and your parents didn't bring you soup? If you couldn't go to the doctor? If you didn't have medicine, etc.? (Note: Some students may mention death as a consequence of taking away some or all of these comforts or medical services. Gently explain in an age-appropriate way that this is possible with serious illnesses)
2. Discuss students' past experiences with vaccinations: What is it like to get a shot? Lead this line of questions towards a discussion of how shots are actually good, even though they hurt, because they protect us.
 - a. Ask the class to raise their hands if they have had chicken pox. Write the number on the board. (For older grades, create a fraction showing the percentage of the group).

- b. Introduce measles: measles is a lot like chicken pox. When your grandparents were kids, children in North America used to get sick from the measles. Ask if anyone in the class has had measles (record fraction of total group on the board).

Transition:

1. Ask students: What would happen if you didn't get any vaccinations? What would happen if you lived in a country with unsanitary living conditions like unclean water?
2. Explain that, in other parts of the world, kids don't get the shot to stop them from getting measles. In fact, they don't get any shots at all. Point out the following regions on the map to show that these areas are affected by measles: Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, East Asia & Pacific, Middle East & North Africa
3. Ask students to think about and discuss some reasons why children in these places don't get shots – questions like: do they visit the doctor? Do they have a doctor to visit? Why or why not?

Closure:

Discuss the fact that more than 10 million children under the age of five in the developing world do not have access to a lot of the things that are available in rich countries—like vaccines, doctors, medicines, healthy meals, clean water, etc.

Extension Idea:

Ask students to create a poster—either individually or in groups—to share what they know about the differences in their own experiences as compared to those of children in the developing world. They can share their poster with the class.

Assessment Suggestion:

- Participation during discussions
- Collect the posters and assess based on criteria as outlined by teacher