Watch your language!

- Hah! That's so gay. lololol 😁
- I can't believe you just said that!!!
- Why? What's wrong with it?
- It's homophobic - that's what. Gay is OKAY!
- Your mom is so psycho!
- That's a mean thing to say. I don't like it.
- Can't you take a joke?
- That was unkind. Being hurtful to people is not funny to me.
- You're overreacting and oversensitive!!
- That sweater is sooo welfare!
- Hey my family had to go on welfare after my mom got hurt at work.
- Sorry man, didn't mean anything bad by it.
- Maybe... All the same, I feel uncomfortable when you make comments like that. Let's talk about something else instead.
- Hey baby what's up? 12:45 😊
- You know I'm not a baby, right?
- No harm intended
- Then respect me like an equal.

BCTF
**SECONDARY LESSONS**

**To call and be called**

**Rationale**

This lesson aims to identify patterns in derogatory language and illustrate how individuals use language. This is a completely anonymous activity.

Students use a sheet of paper separated into three sections:

1. names I’ve been called
2. names I’ve called others
3. language used by institutions.

The teacher reports the responses anonymously, likely by posting them on the board. The teacher can then engage students in a discussion about what patterns they notice (e.g., categories of language: LGBTQ, women, sizeism, speciesism, militarism, etc). Often, what is realized is that we all use negative language, but dislike it when it is aimed at us. A discussion can then be had about the power of language and what impact certain words have.

**Can include names used as a joke, in social media, and even language students have made up themselves.**

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**ELEMENTARY LESSONS**

**Words that feel like weapons**

**Rationale**

Students often use language without understanding the effect that their words can have on others. Many commonly used terms can have an emotional impact. If students understand the consequences of speaking impulsively, they may choose their words more thoughtfully.

This lesson can be used with primary or intermediate classes, small groups, or individuals. It may be introduced following a specific incident that occurred during the school day, implemented when a current event warrants consideration, or in response to an obvious example read by the class in a novel.

To begin, ask students to consider some words that “hurt” or incite a negative response. Have students brainstorm those “weapon-like” words and record them. (Young children may need you to write the words. Older children, however, can record their own words individually or in pairs.)

Emphasize and record the feelings elicited and provoked by these “weapon-like” words. Focus on helping students recognize the wide range of emotions these words can evoke, and also how the effects differ among individuals. In addition, emphasize that the words being used often do not accurately express the meaning intended by the speaker. Terms like “that’s so lame” are often used without any consideration.

At the end or conclusion of the lesson, students may enjoy destroying these “weapon-like” words by crumpling the papers they are written on and throwing them into the recycling.

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**Watch your language!**

**Word by word: Creating a culture of peace**

Divide a chart of paper into two columns. Label the left side “culture of war” and the right side “culture of peace.”

In the left column, ask the group to create a list of all the war-related words/Phrases that they commonly hear. Read the list aloud. Suggest that to create a culture of peace, we first must raise awareness of how embedded the language of war is in our media and everyday conversation. Introduce the concept of transforming language from war to peace. In the right column, write an alternative phrase that reflects a culture of peace.

**Follow-up activities**

- Encourage students to take mental or written notes on how language is used in daily conversation, the media, sports, etc.
- Have students create a class bulletin board to keep adding to their chart. Include space to post current events articles with violent/war language highlighted.

**Teacher activist suggestion:** Try this at your next dinner party, or quietly in your notebook at your next union or staff meeting.

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**bctf.ca/SocialJustice.aspx**

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**The following list was created by Grades 2–5 students at Moody Elementary School in Coquitlam.**

**Culture of war**

| We’re in the trenches. | We have a lot to do; this is difficult. |
| Kill them. (referring to opposing team) | Let’s win this game. |
| I’m going to explode. | I’m very angry. |
| This work is torture. | This work is very hard. |
| War on drugs. | Get rid of drugs. |
| I’m dead. (when something valuable is lost) | I’m in trouble. |
| I bombed my test. | I failed my test. |
| Let’s kill some time. | Let’s pass some time. |
| Shoot, I forgot to get it! | Oh no, I forgot to get it! |