



Hunger Simulations and Lessons Appropriate for All Students*

How Does it Feel to be Hungry in Our Country?

Description:

This simulation will help youth understand the problem of hunger and its emotional and physical consequences and its origins.

Objectives:

Youth will better understand:

1. The definition and relationship between poverty, hunger and food distribution.
2. The relationship between food distribution and being poor in our country.
3. The origins of hunger and common misconceptions associated with why people are hungry in the USA.
4. The emotional ramifications of being food insecure in our country.

Time:

About 20-30 minutes

Materials and Preparation: (based on a group of 20)

Bag of Goldfish crackers

Bag of carrot sticks

Bag of candy (Kisses, hard candy or marshmallows)

15 paper lunch bags

Stapler

Create sets in each bag and staple the bag:

- 8 bags – 20 goldfish, 10 carrot sticks, and 10 marshmallows (representing the 43% food secure families with over \$75K a year income)
- 6 bags – 10 goldfish, 10 carrot sticks, and 10 marshmallows (representing the 29% moderately food secure families with between \$35K and \$74.9K a year income)
- 4 bags – 5 goldfish, 5 carrot sticks, and 5 marshmallows (representing the 18% consistent food insecure families with between \$15K and \$34.9K a year income)
- 2 bags – nothing

Plan:

1. Pass out stapled lunch bags randomly to group.
2. Allow group to open their bags and allow them to explore the contents. Give them time to discuss with each other, allowing them to share (or not) and react to each other.
3. Explain that the paper bags are a metaphor for the uneven distribution of food in our country. Ask questions of the group:
 - a. How did it feel to get a bag with a lot? How did it feel to get a bag with nothing or a little? (Pro Tip: Use thumbs up, thumbs down or thumbs in the middle to allow everyone to gauge each other at the same time.)
 - b. Would you have felt differently if you didn't see what other people had? Why?
 - c. Did anyone want to take someone else's food, or did you feel jealous?
4. Discuss the definitions of food insecurity and hunger. **Hunger** is the condition where people do not get enough food to supply necessary nutrients to the body to function.
Food insecurity is the limited or uncertain access to enough food to live a healthy lifestyle.
5. Optional: Have the group sort based on their bag contents. Discuss how it would feel being in a school cafeteria when you are the two who don't have anything in their bag.
6. Consider and list how we can show love and compassion based on this experience.

*Realize that these lessons are meant to support understanding and compassion for those in need. Be sensitive to the needs of your youth and be careful to know their own situations and how they may respond.

