

THE CRUMPLED PAPER EXPERIMENT

A meaningful exercise on empathy for parents and teachers

STEP ONE - Give every child a blank piece of white paper. Ask them to describe the paper, i.e. smooth, clean, etc.

STEP TWO - Tell them to crumple the paper. They can bend it, crease it, step on it or squeeze it into a ball, but they should use care not to tear it.

STEP THREE - Ask the kids to uncrumple their paper and smooth it out as best they can. Challenge them to get it back to its original state.

STEP FOUR - Ask these thought provoking questions:

- What do you notice about the paper now?
- Was it hard to make the paper smooth and clean again?
- Will the paper ever be like it was before?
- How do you think the paper feels?
- Will the wrinkles and dirt go away if you apologize to the paper?
- Share with the kids that the same thing that happened to the paper is what happens when microaggressions/bullying occur. The "scars" of hurtful behavior remain even after an apology and are hard to make go away completely.

Teach kids that if someone says something that feels unkind, they can use their voice and ask, "Can you tell me what you mean?" Simply asking this question can help the person realize their mistake on their own.

