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**Disabilities: Mine Versus Thine**

**Concept:** This activity can be used to facilitate discussion of disabilities, prejudice, or various social psychological concepts related to our perception of others.

**Materials Needed:** Scratch paper (I usually cut it into quarters) and a board or computer to present pairings and results.

**Procedure:**

1. Begin with some general discussion about the nature of disability. Point out that disability can be defined very broadly to include physical, cognitive, or social issues that are either temporary or permanent in nature. Point out that almost everybody is disabled at some time.
2. Stress with students that their responses in this activity will be held in strict confidence. Students will hear what other students answered, but they will not know who provided any particular response.
3. Distribute a quarter sheet of scratch paper and have students respond to this question: What is the worst disability that you have ever experienced?
4. Have students fold their paper once to preserve privacy. Collect the papers and shuffle them so they are not in the same order they were when collected.
5. Create random pairs of disabilities on the board or computer. For example, shyness might be paired with a broken leg. OCD might be paired with low self-esteem.
6. Pass out a second quarter sheet of scratch paper. Ask students to identify and write down the pairing that includes their answer. Then, have them underline their answer.
7. Next, have students circle the answer they would choose if they had a choice between the two disabilities and write a short explanation of why.
8. Have students fold their scratch paper. Collect the paper and tabulate whether or not students opted for their own disorder.

**Discussion:** In original research conducted by Beatrice Wright in 1975, between 66 and 92 percent of respondents reclaimed their own “worst handicap.” A majority of respondents even claimed their handicap when it was the more serious of the two. When I tried this with a class, over 80 percent claimed their own disability. Why do we choose mine over thine?

1. People with disabilities (insiders) know what the disability is like. Outsiders, who don’t have the disability, can’t know this.
2. Insiders view their situation more favorably than outsiders because they know the disability is only one aspect among many about the person.
3. Insiders are more familiar with the disability.
4. Insiders view the disability as part of their identity.

I am indebted to Dana Dunn of Moravian College for much of the information in this activity. The original mine versus thine activity was developed by rehabilitation psychologist Beatrice Wright.