Twelve General Semantics Lessons for Middle School Students
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Introduction

This curriculum provides twelve science-based general semantics lessons for middle school students. It was developed as part of a research study that used the ideas and techniques of general semantics to reduce feelings of alienation among seventh-, eighth-, and ninth-grade students. (The study is more fully described in "General Semantics and Student Alienation" *ETC: A Review of General Semantics* (Summer 1980.)

General Semantics: An Overview

General semantics, a process-oriented, problem-solving system, helps individuals better evaluate and understand the world and therefore make more intelligent decisions. It was originally formulated by Alfred Korzybski, a Polish engineer and intellectual who came to the United States during World War I. Since then many thinkers, educators, therapists, and other professionals have drawn on and contributed to the system.

Korzybski based his system on the ideas and work of thinkers such as Alfred North Whitehead, Bertrand Russell, and Albert Einstein. He wanted to use the scientific method to explore and understand the importance of language as a shaper of perceptions and thoughts. He believed his system would help humanity avoid future conflicts by helping people improve their ability to examine their hidden assumptions and solve problems. With a better understanding of the thinking and evaluating process, he believed individuals would live happier and more productive lives.

The system stresses precision in description, understanding the differences between the general and the specific, becoming aware of the dangers of overgeneralization, and discovering hidden assumptions underlying how we think and act. To achieve more precise use of language, the system uses tools and techniques called extensional devices, which will be presented later in the lessons.

The Lessons

The twelve lessons that follow are updated versions of those that were administered to the students in the original research study. Each lesson contains an *Introduction* (for the teacher or counselor) of the basic general semantics ideas that will be presented; a *Motivation*, to begin the lesson; and *Activities* for the students. A short reference list is included after the lessons for those who want to learn more about general semantics.

N.B. The quotation marks surrounding sentences in the *Motivation* and *Activities* sections indicate teacher or group leader directions for the students.
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Lesson 1: Problem-solving through the scientific method

Dogma says: "This is so."
Fiction says: "This isn't so, but let's pretend that it is."
A scientific hypothesis says: "Perhaps this is so; let's see if it is."
--Ken Johnson

Introduction

To help solve everyday problems more effectively, general semantics advocates use of the scientific method (identify a problem, test, evaluate). This approach, which has produced many important and useful scientific discoveries, views problems as challenges that call for active responses.

The scientific method was successfully used to solve problems by many of the students in the alienation reduction study. The following example, taken from the study, illustrates this.

Sam, a seventh grader, believed it was horrible to be ignored at any point during a conversation. This belief caused him a great deal of unhappiness because every time he thought someone was not paying attention to what he was saying he felt hurt. When Sam first joined his group several of his teachers reported that he had begun to isolate himself and withdraw from social involvement.

When the group leader investigated the matter, he discovered that Sam was not being unduly ignored during conversations. It was just that he had discovered he wasn't so spellbinding that he could constantly hold the attention of everyone he spoke with. To show Sam that occasionally being ignored during conversations is normal, and that there are better ways of reacting to it than becoming a hermit, the group leader suggested he use the scientific method and conduct a two-part experiment.

For the first part of the experiment Sam was asked to observe student discussions in the cafeteria over a two-week period to determine the extent to which people ignore each other when talking. Sam agreed to do this and it led him to witness numerous instances of students ignoring each other during discussions and to conclude this is not a rare behavior. For the second part of the experiment Sam was asked to interview twenty-five randomly selected students to ascertain their views about being ignored during conversations. The replies he received were varied but basically fell into three categories: (1) "Being ignored in conversation doesn't bother me at all;" (2) "I can't stand being ignored;" and (3) "Since you can't control other people's reactions, it doesn't pay to get overly upset about being ignored."

The last response was by far the most popular and, along with his observations of student discussions in the school cafeteria, helped Sam to understand that one does not have to become highly upset and shun human contact if one is not listened to with rapt attention during every part of a conversation. And while this may not seem like much of an insight to most people, it was to Sam, who had the scientific method to thank for it.

Motivation

"What method do scientists use when they work on scientific problems?" (The scientific method.) "This way of working has made it possible for human beings to go from cave-dwelling to living in high-rise buildings, to go from traveling on foot to flying in airplanes, and to find the cure for many diseases." Present the steps of the scientific method:

1. Identify a problem
2. Analyze it
3. Form possible solutions
4. Experiment
5. Observe
6. Form conclusions

"Can the scientific method be used to help solve problems of everyday living? Let's find out?"

Activities

I.   Ask students to identify a problem they are having and to process it through the first three steps of the scientific method. Then instruct them to set up an experiment to solve the problem and to complete steps five and six. (Periodically review and discuss the progress that the student is making on the problem. If little or no progress is being made help the student to devise a new experiment or alter the old one.)

II.   Scientists use "operational definitions" when they work on problems. These describe "operations," that is, how one can know what is being referred to with words. (E.g., "intelligence"—a score on an IQ test; "mental disorder"—a broad term that is defined more specifically in the DSM-IV, a medical handbook for psychiatrists; "brownies"—a recipe for brownies would be an operational definition.)

       An important advantage of using operational definitions is their specificity makes it is less likely that confusion will arise over what a term means. Such confusion is fairly common in everyday life because many of the words we use are abstractions that can have a variety of meanings. Because they can have a multiplicity of meanings abstract terms can become "meaningless" as the following exercise demonstrates:

<u>Instant Eloquence</u>

Insert the words below, in any position, in the blanks.

peace, justice, freedom, truth, honor, wisdom

       What we need today is not false _____ but old-fashioned _____. For surely, there is no real _____ without _____. And as our forefathers knew so well, the price of _____ is a little _____.

III.   Provide an operational definition for each of the following terms:
- happiness
- success
- failure
- freedom
- intelligence

 Lesson 2: Mental maps—The way to better planning and prediction
       "One look is worth one hundred reports."—Japanese proverb

Introduction
       There is an analogy in general semantics that words and statements are like maps that describe territories. The purpose of the analogy is to remind us that words, like maps, only *represent* reality and are not reality itself: the map is not the territory.

Many people live by inaccurate maps (they have incorrect definitions or perceptions of persons, places, or things). And many confuse their maps with the territory—e.g., labeling a person "good" or "bad," "intelligent" or "stupid," "happy" or "sad," can keep you from observing the full range of attitudes and behaviors of that individual.

General semantics training emphasizes the importance of constructing accurate verbal maps of persons, places, and things and of limiting and refining one's maps to most accurately convey one's meaning.

Motivation

"An accurate map, going east to west, would show: New York—Chicago—Los Angeles. If the map showed New York—Los Angeles—Chicago we would say the map was incorrect, because the map was different than the actual territory. What would happen if we tried to use such a map?"

"Words are like maps. When there is a misunderstanding, conflict, or a failure to communicate, it is often because our verbal maps do not fit the territory (what is actually out there)."

Activities

I.   "Let's check some of our maps to see whether they are false or whether we are reading them incorrectly."

      a.   In some hotel and apartment houses there is no floor marked thirteen. The elevator goes from twelve to fourteen because some guests are superstitious. Is this map accurate?

      b.   Elementary school graduates worry during the summer before they enter intermediate school because of the maps that intermediate school students give them of intermediate school (the territory). How accurate was your map?

      c.   Think of the last argument you tried to settle. Chances are you noticed that the mental maps of both parties were inaccurate. (If not the parties would have been "just fighting" to relieve their feelings about each other. You wouldn't have tried to settle things.) Describe in detail the real "territory" of the case. Also describe how the maps of the participants differed from the facts and from each other.

II.   "It is said that no two people have mental maps that are exactly the same, even for such simple words as *book, table,* and *house*. Write down three features of your mental map for each of these terms. Be honest and specific:"

- teacher
- drugs
- sports
- politics

III.   "Choose an advertisement and test the product. Are the words in the advertisement accurate maps of the territory (the product)?"

IV.   "Think of two ways to help make your maps better fit the territory. We will discuss your ideas the next time we meet."

Lesson 3: How real is real?
        "The universe as we know it is a joint product of the observer and the observed."—R. D. Carmichael (A basic concept in Einstein's theory of Relativity)

Introduction
        "Extensionally orientated" people, in general semantics talk, are aware that our verbal maps are never identical to the territory they represent. They understand that to produce optimum map-territory congruence we must use facts, figures, measurements, descriptions, and reports from actual observations that can be verified by other persons.
        "Intensionally-oriented" people tend to show more dependence on the map than on the territory. They function in a world of statements about statements, about statements, etc., on to high level abstractions. Students who manifest problems of adjustment tend to be highly intensional.
        The activities in this lesson are meant to help students avoid the confusion which may arise as a result of not being able to discriminate between language which represents "what is going on within one's skin" or intensional language, and language which attempts to correspond with "what is going on out there" or extensional language.

Motivation
        Hold up an inkblot picture (you can construct your own picture by making inkblots on a piece of paper). Typically students will give different answers about what the picture represents. Allow this to go on until someone says, "Really, it is a bunch of ink blots." That student is the only one who has given an "extensional" answer. The rest of the students have done what most people do every day—they have talked about something inside their skins as if it were out there.
        Extensional—What is actually in the world; what is outside our skin.
        Intensional—What is inside us; how things should be as far as we are concerned.

Activities
I   "On a piece of paper write exactly what you mean (how you see) the following words:"

- a beautiful girl
- a handsome boy
- a long time ago (be specific)
- a cool car—be specific (color, make, etc.)

        "The answers we have just heard tell us more about what is inside the skins of those who gave them than what is really out there. Can anyone explain how this is so?"
        "When people talk or argue over what is beautiful, or what takes a long time, are they talking about something outside their skins?" (No.) "Why can this be a problem?" (Because people discuss things which are inside their skins as if they were outside their skins and this can lead to misunderstandings and unresolvable conflicts.)

"What language habits can remind us that we are talking about something inside our skins instead of something out there?" (The use of the expressions "to me," "it seems," "so far as I know," "up to a point," "etc.")

II.   "Describe an argument you were in or overheard. State what the argument was about, who the participants were, and the circumstances. Indicate whether all or partial agreement was finally reached. Explain whether the argument was (a) due to the fact that people were unaware that they were using words intensionally, or (b) due chiefly to differences in factual statements which needed more research."

III.   "Bring in an advertisement and tell whether the words are being used *extensionally* (subject to verification) or *intensionally*.

Lesson 4: The "is of projection"—The perils of projection

"When we take in our surroundings, we select from them, not at random, but in accordance with our past experience and purposes."—Earl G. Kelly

Introduction

When we say "John is stupid" or "Mary is smart" we imply that "stupidity" or "smartness" are characteristics of John and Mary. However, when we make these statements we are really talking more about ourselves than about John or Mary. We are talking about our own values, concepts, and standards of intelligence. Someone else might have different views. Since "being smart" or "being stupid" are opinions they are intensional statements. However, a statement such as "John is stupid" sounds to most people like an extensional (factual) comment, as if the stupidity is as obvious in John as is his height in inches or weight in pounds.

To remind us that we are projecting when we use "is of projection" statements we can use qualifiers such as "seems," "appears," and "to me." (We can also try not to use false-to-fact statements such as "John is stupid" and to instead, more accurately describe the behavior being manifested—e.g., John received a 50 on the history test, forgot to lock the door when he left the house, talked back to the teacher, etc.)

Motivation

Have students complete this chart:

True   *False*

- I am smart.
- I am stupid.
- Poetry is boring.
- She is lazy.
- He is tall.

After student response is summarized allow discussion and argument to develop. Review each sentence with them.

- I am smart—How do you define "smart?" Do you do all things well?
- I am stupid—How do you define "stupid?" Do you do all things badly?
- Poetry is boring—How about the poetry of rock music?

- She is lazy—How do you define "lazy?" Is she lazy all the time?
- He is tall—How do you define "tall?" Is there an objective measure for "tallness?"

"The word in each of the above statements that caused disagreement is the word <u>is</u> and its variant forms. Be careful how you use this tricky two-letter word."

Activities

I.   "Making use of who, what, when, and where descriptions and substituting 'to me,' 'seems,' and 'appears' should make the following statements more reasonable and less argument-provoking:"

- That car is expensive.
- That is a beautiful color.
- _____ was a great movie.
- He is stupid.
- She is beautiful.
- Pizza is delicious.

"Make a special effort to use qualifiers in your communications with others this week. Note whether you have fewer misunderstandings and get into fewer arguments because of this."

II.   "Choose a simple object (e.g., paper clip, pair of scissors, mirror, etc.). List as many ways as you can to classify this object. What *is* it, really?"

III   "Has projecting your own feeling of not being wanted ever kept you from joining a group? Explain."

Lesson 5: Non-allness, and etc.—No one can know all there is to know about anything

"An attitude of this kind 'You can't tell me anything about that' has an effect quite similar to a pus sac in the brain."—Wendell Johnson

Introduction

The world is in process. When people notice anything in their environment they are selecting and abstracting from an infinity of possibilities. This selection is individualistic and dependent on one's nervous system, purposes, hopes, past experiences, etc.

The words we give to our abstractions of reality are themselves abstractions. No word can tell all about anything. We can only reflect a personal selection of details. It is useful for us to think of a "silent etc." when we make allness statements to remind us that there is always something left out of any description.

These concepts should help the student to understand that life is more a matter of dealing with relatives than absolutes. And, as the physicist Neils Bohr said, "We have to learn to live with our relatives."

Motivation

A pencil or pen is selected and students are asked how long it would take to say all there is about that particular object. Each descriptive statement is listed. After each statement ask, "Is this *all* there is to say about the pencil?" After a while it will become obvious that the group could go on indefinitely and not really say *all* there is to say about it.

"We never say all there is to know about anything. But some people say—'Oh, I know all about that.' 'If you know one of them, you've known them all.' 'I know all there is to know about this school'."

"People who make these kinds of statements suffer from <u>Allness Attitudes</u>—they assume their mental maps tell all about the territory."

"Why are allness attitudes harmful?" (They block communication—the person with this attitude is unable to learn and unable to change.)

Activities

I.   "Choose a person you are used to referring to by a single role (e.g., your teacher, mailperson, mother, etc.). List as many other roles that you can think of that this person assumes in their life (e.g., teacher—mother, wife, voter, consumer, etc). We all play many roles in life."

II.   "The next time somebody scolds you by calling you 'lazy,' 'stupid,' 'gross,' 'sloppy,' 'irresponsible,' etc., remind yourself that the person hasn't said all there is to say about you by saying 'etc.' repeatedly to yourself. Report and describe the results."

III.   "During the coming week listen for 'allness statements.' Be prepared to discuss them and the circumstances in which they occurred."

Lesson 6: "Indexing"—Getting closer to what is really going on

"Nature never rhymes her children, nor makes two men alike."—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Introduction

"Teachers stink." "No one likes me." "Sports are stupid." Students who make statements such as these are seeing only similarities and ignoring differences. They are deluding themselves since they probably could find exceptions to their statements if they gave some thought to them. Furthermore, they are hurting themselves, for if they believe statements such as "teachers stink," "no one likes me," and "sports are stupid" then they can only react with apathy or negativism.

Students who consistently make generalized statements are said to be exhibiting stereotypic thinking. One way to avoid this sort of thinking is to get students to look for differences when using words based on similarities. Such an approach is recognized in general semantics by the use of the <u>index</u>, which is based on the idea of index numbers. Indexing is used to show that there are no universals in the real world. Each person or thing is unique and has unique characteristics. Thus:

"Teachers stink" becomes: Teachers = teacher1, teacher2, teacher3, etc.

"No one likes me" becomes: No one = person1, person2, person 3, etc.

"Sports are stupid" becomes: Sports = sport1, sport2, sport3, etc.

Indexing trains students to recognize individual differences and ask themselves, "Does the difference I notice really make a difference?"

Motivation
"No two of anything have ever been found identical, that is, alike in <u>all</u> respects. Can anyone find an example to contradict this theory?" (Allow students to talk about identical twins, manufactured products, etc., and have other students disprove the fact that complete identity is possible. Introduce how science can't even find total identity using sophisticated apparatus such as electron microscopes, etc.) "Yet when we speak we talk as if things were identical:"

Examples: Boys like sports.
             Girls like to dance.

"There is a way to make our thinking more realistic that comes from mathematics. It involves assigning numbers to persons, places, or things. Thus boy1, isn't boy2, isn't boy3, etc. This method of using numbers to more accurately think and communicate is called <u>indexing</u>."

Activities
I.   List the following statements:
- Boys love to tinker around with cars, sports, etc.
- Girls behave better in school than boys.
- Boys are stronger than girls.
- Girls can dance better than boys.

In each case have the class give an example of a student or students who defy the preceding generalizations.

"What do we do when we speak about general categories"—e.g., boys, girls, etc.? (We look for likenesses.)

"Once we identify the group, what do we ignore about the individual members of the group?" (We ignore differences—e.g., Boy1 is not boy2 is not boy3, etc. Girl1 is not girl2 is not girl3, etc.)

Index yourself on a given day."
        Example:
George1 the athlete
George2 the student
George3 the son
George4 "the pain in the neck"
George5 the helper around the house

"How does indexing yourself affect the way you think about yourself? Does using the index help you to see differences in yourself?"

"Index someone else on a given day."

Example:
Molly1 the mother
Molly2 the wife
Molly3 the homemaker
Molly4 the tutor
Molly5 the disciplinarian

"How does indexing affect the way you think about this person? Does using the index help you see differences in the other person?"

II.   "Discuss the following statements in terms of indexing."
• New Yorkers are unfriendly.
• Teachers are grouchy.
• School is boring.
• Teenagers are irresponsible.

"Give two more examples of universal statements and index them to find differences."

III.   Have the group discuss the importance of going beyond generalities to analyze persons, places, or things. (Bigoted and prejudicial attitudes can keep us from getting to know other people, prejudging situations can keep us from discovering new things about them, etc.)

Lesson 7 "Dating"—We live in a process world
      "One cannot step in the same river twice."—Heraclitus

Introduction
      Another general semantics device that helps to clarify overgeneralization is the technique of *dating*. This device is used to remind us that what we know about anyone or anything must be placed in the context of time. Since everything is constantly changing we must be careful not to rest on our laurels, when good things happen to us, or become overly pessimistic when adversity occurs.

Motivation
    "Since the time of the ancient Greeks, we have known that 'all things change, all the time'—e.g., aging, rusting, fashions, clouds, etc." "Can anyone deny this?" Allow time for discussion.
      "There is a device that we can use to speak more accurately about a changing world. It helps the map fit the territory and it is called the *dating* device. So, America(2007) is not America(2003), my weight(today) is not my weight(six months ago), my view of the world(today) is not my view of the world(five years ago), etc."

Activities

I.   "Will you always have the same attitudes and behaviors that you exhibit now? What can you do to change those attitudes and behaviors that you don't think are good for you?"

II.   "How can dating make a difference in the way you view people, places, and things?" (Ask for specific examples.)

III.   "List the dates in your life in 3 four intervals, starting with your present age." For example:

Date   Your Age
2007   15
2003   11
1999   7

"What changes were you going through during each of the dates you have listed." (Review tastes in food, clothing, friends, music, sports, etc.)

Lesson 8: Two-valued orientations—The limitations of our "either-or" language
"There are no categories in nature; they are in our heads and in our language."—Wendell Johnson

Introduction
The Chinese language differs from English in many ways. Each has its advantages and disadvantages. One strong point of Chinese is that it allows for more "middle ground." People who know both languages say that Chinese is not as likely to lead to two-valued orientations. There are more polarities in English. Our language is geared to talk about extremes rather than gradations. It is either *hot* or *cold*, *good* of *bad*, *thin* or *fat*, etc.
Students are shown that most situations do not involve black or white descriptions or decisions but for the most part deal in shades of gray. By understanding the limitations of a two-valued orientation the students are trained to be more flexible and multi-valued in their approach to problems.

Motivation
Write the "Either" side of the chart. Have the students supply the "or" side.

Either   Or
up   (down)
succeed   (fail)

happy	(sad)
popular	(unpopular)
cold	(hot)

"Wouldn't it be more accurate to think in terms "of degrees" rather than 'either-ors'? For example, if you set up a scale about how you are feeling right now where would you place yourself?"

good	____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____	bad
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

beautiful	____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____	ugly
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

cold	____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____	hot
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

happy	____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____	sad
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
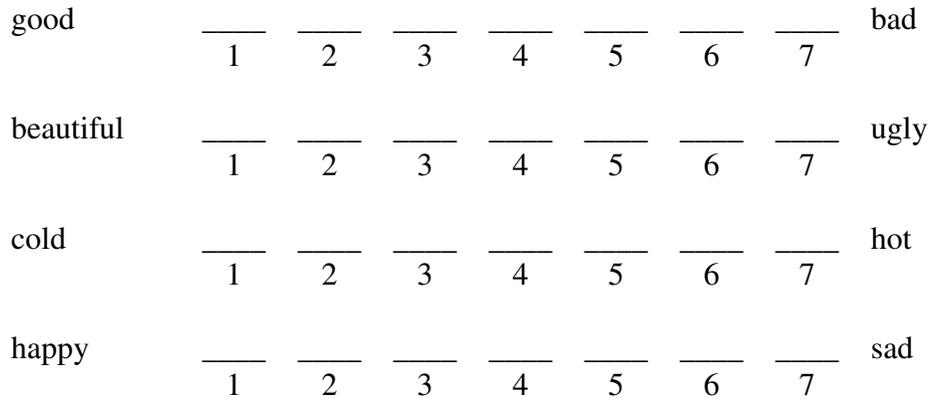
Activities

I.   "Select a pair of words from the chart listed above. How would scientists discuss them?" (They would use a thermometer, for example, and measure the degrees between the two extremes.) Continue this line of reasoning—e.g., scales are used to measure the degrees between heavy and light, speedometers measure degrees of speed, etc.
        "What do we leave out when we think and talk with 'either-or' language?" (We leave out most of what is happening between the two points—we ignore most of what is out there if we think 'either-or.') "This can cause problems in thinking about and understanding people and things." (E.g., "There are only two sides to every argument," "There are two kinds of people in this world.") "Can you give additional examples of the limitations of two-valued thinking?"

II.   "Many commercials try to get us to think in terms of 'either-or' so that we forget there are other choices. For instance, "What was left out of this example? Find an example of either-or advertising and be ready to discuss it."

III.   "In movies and on TV the hero is usually shown as being all good and the villain being all bad. Is that the way it is in real life? Why do TV and the movies give us 'either-or' characters?"

IV.   "During the next week bring in some examples of how your friends, teachers, parents, and you use either-or reasoning."

Lesson 9: Distinguishing facts from inferences—statements and reality
        "It is not only true that the language we use puts words in our mouths; it also puts notions in our heads."—Wendell Johnson

Introduction

To make accurate assessments of situations, and to avoid jumping to wrong conclusions about them, general semantics emphasizes the value of distinguishing facts from inferences. This ability is especially important when we assess ourselves. For example, thinking oneself a failure is an inference that can lead to a poor self-image that can negatively affect our capacity to learn and perform well. Believing we are failures, we begin to act that way and so create a condition known as a "self-fulfilling prophecy." In addition, if we strongly believe the labels we give ourselves, we may act in ways that can help to create "other-fulfilling prophecies" and have people behave toward us as if the labels we have assigned ourselves are true.

Motivation

Present these definitions:

Fact—A statement which can be observed, verified, and proven.
Inference—A statement about the unknown that goes beyond what one experiences or observes.

Relate the following story (this story is more fully described in the alienation reduction study)*:*

"Jane, an eighth grader, believed that Mary, a classmate, was stuck up and that she enjoyed mocking her. This belief caused Jane to feel a great deal of resentment toward Mary, and eventually her hostility escalated to such an extent that the two girls got into a fight in the school lunchroom, which resulted in both being suspended from school for a week.

When Jane returned to school she investigated the situation and discovered that Mary's parents were undergoing a nasty divorce and that Mary's boyfriend had recently broken up with her. Mary's friends told Jane that Mary was so unhappy that even they felt ignored and "dissed" by her indifference. This new information caused Jane to go from being angry with Mary to feeling sympathetic toward her.

Mistaking an inference for a fact had cost Jane a week's suspension from school and a great deal of avoidable upset. But the experience had taught her a valuable lesson. Next time, she said, instead of jumping to conclusions, she would behave more like a scientist and investigate before making assumptions."

Activities

I.   Ask the students to volunteer stories about how they had jumped to conclusions without checking the facts first and discuss why it is better to check out assumptions before acting.

II.   <u>An exercise for mastering impulsive reaction to words</u>:   .
In a role play ask a student to call another an "idiot." The student called the name should write it down on a piece of paper and carefully think about the word. "Does being called an idiot really make one an idiot? Can a mere word magically change someone into something the person is not? How smart is it to let another individual control your reactions through being called a name?"

Review these questions with the students and let them see that they can view insults with some detachment and less emotion. Have them come up with strategies to defuse situations rather than to instantly respond to them. Discuss that putting someone down and calling them a name can narrow the way one thinks about that person and can cause one to overlook their positive attributes.

III.   The importance of subjectivity in making evaluations
         Have students give examples of some human relations problems they are having. Then present the following two general semantics formulas:

         WIGO≠WIS and WIS≠WIGO (WIGO=what is going on; WIS=what I say).
         (The idea behind these two equations is that we can never completely describe what is actually going on in a situation, because some details are always left out, and that whenever we describe situations we are being subjective, because we all have biases and perceive things differently.)

         Referring to the two equations, ask the students if there might be more to their problem than they originally described (if they maintain the problem is exactly as described you can ask them additional questions to elicit more information about it). Introduce the idea that human subjectivity influences the way we evaluate situations and that it is more accurate to say "I see it this way," and That's my take on the situation," rather than "Anyone can see that," or "That's the way it is."

Lesson 10: Nonverbal communication—understanding the world of non-words
         "Nonverbal communication = Ideas without words."—Robert Potter

Introduction
         All of us use nonverbal communication. If fact, whether we realize it or not, we practice it most of the time. Even in the absence of words we can't help communicating.
         Students are reminded that we often project "meanings" into the "meaningless" actions of others. Students are further reminded that unconscious behavior is a form of communication.

Motivation
         "Sometimes people project ideas about our character based on our nonverbal cues (e.g., your teacher thinks you are lazy because you sit "far down" in your chair and chew gum). Can you list some other nonverbal cues?"

Activities
I.   "Pick someone in the group to work with and write down three nonverbal cues you perceive from them. Discuss how these nonverbal cues may be creating certain impressions on others."
         "Choose one of your typical nonverbal behaviors (postures, expressions, etc.) that you think may create an unfavorable impression and reverse the behavior. Observe other people's reactions to your new way of behaving over the next two weeks and be prepared to discuss them with your partner."

II.   "What does your clothing communicate to others? What do you intend your clothing to say about you? What does music communicate? Why do you like particular kinds of music? What reactions do colors have on you? How are colors used in design? How far away do you stand or sit when you talk with your friends? Is this the same distance away as when you speak with your teacher, the principal?"

III.   "Write down three examples of nonverbal behavior that you observe from TV. Note how these behaviors affect you when you first see them."

Lesson 11: Signal-delayed reactions—Keep cool
        "Look before you leap."—Folk maxim

Introduction
        This lesson attempts to show students the difference between a signal (instant) reaction and a delayed reaction. We easily become conditioned "signal reactors." For example, if someone calls us a derogatory term, we may reply in kind or strike out at the person. In this instance we would be allowing words to use us, rather than choosing our behaviors and reactions in a more mature manner. Students are shown the advantages of delaying their reactions and are advised to probe more diligently into situations before reacting to them.

Motivation
        Administer the "signal-delayed reaction" test to the students. (Most of the students will not complete the sheet correctly. The correct answer to the test is 36 letter Fs.)

<div align="center">Signal-Delayed Reaction Test</div>

        Directions: Go through once and count the f's.
        The necessity for training farmhands for first class farms in the fatherly handling of farm livestock is foremost in the minds of farm owners. Since the forefathers of the farm owners trained the farm owners of first class farms in the fatherly handling of farm livestock, the farm owners feel they should carry on with the family tradition of training farmhands of first class farms in the fatherly handling of farm livestock because they believe it is the basis of good fundamental farm management.
                                        Total number of f's _____

        Questions for the students:
        a. "Did you obtain the correct answer?" (Students who correctly completed the instructions can be complimented on carefully following instructions.)
        b. "Why is it important to sometimes delay our reactions?"

Activities
I.   Review the following story (an actual incident taken from the alienation reduction study)

"When Bill, an eighth grader, was pushed by Joe in the school hallway, his first response was that it must have been done intentionally (the two boys had a history of not getting along). Bill immediately challenged Joe, but before Joe could respond Bill hit him and was subsequently suspended from school. When the incident was investigated it was found that Joe had been pushed into Bill by another student."

Questions for Students
- "If you were Bill, how would you have reacted to being pushed by Joe?"
- "When there may be a potential for trouble, why is it usually a good idea to engage one's highly developed brain and nervous system (the human brain is the most highly developed of all the creatures in the animal kingdom) and take some time to try to figure out what is going on?"
- "If someone insults you why is it usually smart to not immediately respond?" (Delayed reactions can give one a better chance to size up and intelligently deal with situations. The person who insults you may be baiting you with the hope that you will react verbally or nonverbally in ways that will get you into trouble.)

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II.   "In the coming week try to consciously delay a response in a situation where you usually give a signal (immediate) response (e.g., someone calls you a name and you call them one back or respond physically). Be prepared to discuss what happened."

III.   "During the next week notice how others use signal reactions. Be prepared to talk about an incident you have observed where signal reactions were used."

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Lesson 12: The art of questioning—How to avoid "unsane" questions
"A part of the scientific method consists of fashioning questions that can be answered by means of observations that can be made."—Wendell Johnson

Introduction
Many people get into difficulty because they ask themselves questions whose solutions cannot be tested. Korzybski termed such questions "unsane." Scientists ask questions which can be tested. Doing this leads to effective problem solving.

Motivation
"Which do you think really came first—the chicken or the egg?" (Allow time for discussion.) "This is an extreme example of a contradictory statement that can be argued either way without reaching any valid result. What can we call these questions?" (Nonsensical, useless, unanswerable.) "Another term that can be used for such questions is 'unsane'."
"What is the first step that a scientist takes toward the solution of a laboratory problem?" (States the problem in such a way as to suggest a useful way to solve it.) "This approach, the asking of productive questions that can be worked on, can also be used to solve problems of everyday life."

Activities

I.   "Change each of the following unsane questions (questions whose solutions do not lend itself to scientific problem solving) into productive ones (questions whose solutions can be tested.)"

     a.   Unsane question: Do I dare go home with this lousy report card?
        Productive question: _____? (E.g., How can I improve my grades?)

     b.   Unsane question: Why did this have to happen to me?
        Productive question: _____? (E.g., How can I change this situation?)

     c.   Unsane question: Why do I have to go to school?
        Productive question: (E.g., What can I learn in school today?)

"Make a list of three unsane questions and change them into productive ones. Notice when you change the question, it enables you to stop going around in circles. Now, you can either answer your question or act on it."

"What effect does asking unsane questions have on the person who asks them?"

"What effect do they have on the person who attempts to answer them?" (Unsane questions can cause people to worry and become anxious.)

II.   "Make a list of questions that you have asked, or others have asked, which you now consider unsane. Restate them as productive questions."

        Example:

Unsane question: "Why couldn't I have been born (rich, smart, a member of the opposite sex, etc)?"

Productive question: "What useful thing can I do right now?"

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