



Facilitator(s): Noah Project

Character Education Concept(s): [Consideration of Others](#)

Book Title: Shredders and Builders

Objectives:

- Understand that our words can affect others in a positive or negative way

Lesson Guide and Activities:

- Introduce by using the Shredders and Builders narrative
- Group Activity:
 - Use the paper doll to tear off pieces every time a harsh statement is said
 - Use Jenga blocks to symbolize a person being torn down or built up

Materials Needed:

- PDF of Shredders and Builders story
- Cut out paper doll
- Jenga Blocks (regular or jumbo)
- Acetone and Packing Peanuts (optional)
- Projector (optional)
- USB



Shredders and Builders

1. Explain the *Shredders and Builders* activity:
 - *One thing that is very clear from our discussion about Real Friendship Group Rules is that the way we treat one another matters when it comes to friendship and feeling good about ourselves.*
 - *This next activity shows just how true this is.*
2. Ask for 2–3 volunteers to give a definition of an “insult.” Affirm all responses, emphasizing that insults are words and behaviors intended to hurt someone’s feelings or make them feel badly. In this group, we will be referring to insults as “*Shredders*” because of how they can shred a person’s feelings and self-confidence.
3. Ask for a volunteer to stand in front of the group.
4. Give the volunteer a large sheet of flipchart paper, to hold in front of her. Tell all of the girls that the paper represents a person’s feelings and that this activity will demonstrate the impact of *Shredders* on a person’s feelings.
5. Ask the girls to listen carefully as you read the following short story aloud. Instruct girls to raise their hands each time they hear a *Shredder* in the story. When they do, a second volunteer from the group should tear a small piece from the flipchart paper that the volunteer is holding in front of her. (Each *Shredder* in the story is indicated by italics, for the facilitator’s ease of reference.)
6. By the end of the story, the volunteer should be left with only a fraction of the original paper (do make sure that she has some left to hold). This provides a very visible and memorable image for the participants about the damage that *Shredders* can do.
 - It can make the experience even more memorable to write the words “*Feelings*” or “*Self-esteem*” on the paper prior to reading the story, to emphasize for young girls how these things are “shredded” by the use of insults.

Shredders story

When Gabby woke up in the morning, she was feeling great. She got dressed in her favorite T-shirt and jeans and walked downstairs for breakfast. When she sat down at the table, her mother said, “*Aren’t you going to brush that crazy hair of yours?*” When Gabby reached for her hairbrush, her elbow tipped over her sister’s glass of milk.

Her sister cried out, "*Way to go, Gabby! Now you ruined my homework!*" Gabby rushed to try to clean up the spill, but in her hurry, she tripped over her little brother's toy car. "*Stupid!*" he cried. "*You just can't do anything right this morning, can you?*" asked Gabby's dad.

Gabby hoped that things would improve once she got to school. She smiled as she walked into her classroom, thinking she was off to a fresh start. She approached her best friend, Maddie, and said, "I'm so excited for the dance tonight!" Maddie looked at Gabby and said, "*You're not planning to wear that, are you?*"

"This is my favorite shirt," said Gabby. "You and I bought it together last week." Maddie gave Gabby a top-to-bottom eye roll and laughed, "*Not my fault!*" Maddie sneered.

The bell rang. Gabby rushed to hang up her coat and get her homework out of her folder. Her teacher said, "Gabby, you should have taken care of all of that before the bell. Now you are late. *You really have to be more responsible, young lady.*"

Gabby's face turned bright red. *She looked over and saw Maddie giving Leah "a look."* She knew that look well. It was the look that Maddie usually gave her when they were secretly making fun of someone else.

At lunch, Gabby set her tray down next to Emma. Emma looked up and said, "*Sorry, Gabby. I'm saving that seat for Olivia.*" Gabby moved her tray to the other side of the lunch table. When she sat down, Leah said, "*Eeew. You're having the tacos? Gross! You know that's not real meat, don't you?*" Gabby was too embarrassed to eat her lunch, so she just sat quietly, sipping her chocolate milk until recess.

Outside on the playground, Gabby went to the swings, where she and Maddie met every day at the start of recess. She waited and waited, looking around for what could be keeping her best friend. *She spotted Maddie jumping rope (skipping) with Olivia and Emma on the far end of the blacktop (playground).* Gabby walked over and said, "Can I play too?" Instead of looking at Gabby, *all three girls looked at each other and exchanged smiles.* Emma and Olivia both dropped the jump rope onto the ground. Maddie said, "*Sorry, Gabby. We were just finishing up. We're going to swing now. You can have the rope.*"

At the very end of the school day, as all of the kids were packing their bags, Gabby said to Maddie hopefully, "I'll see you tonight at the dance. I can't wait to do our routine together!" Maddie replied, "*Oh! I totally forgot to tell you. I promised Leah I would do the routine with her. Sorry, Gabby. Maybe next time.*"

Gabby began to cry.

Processing the activity

- By the end of the story, the original volunteer’s paper should be torn to shreds, as a visual reminder of the damage that hurtful words and behaviors can cause. The facilitator should use the following questions to encourage group members to consider the impact of *Shredders*.
 - *Gabby said she woke up feeling great. How was Gabby feeling by the end of the day? What caused the change?*
 - *How did the Shredders from Gabby’s family and friends make her feel?*
 - *What were some of the hurtful words that you recall?*
 - *What behaviors hurt Gabby’s feelings?*
 - *There is an old saying, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” Since Maddie, Leah, Olivia, and Emma never laid their hands on Gabby to harm her, is it fair to say that Gabby was really hurt?*
 - *What could be the effect of Gabby being treated this way day after day?*
 - *Have you ever been in a situation where someone’s words hurt your feelings?*
- The facilitator should emphasize that despite the old “sticks and stones” adage, words—and even behaviors like knowing glances and smiles—can truly shred a person’s feelings and self-esteem. Convey the following points:
 - *The words we use really do matter and as members of this group, we will be holding each other accountable for using words in kind, friendship-boosting ways.*
 - *In this final activity, we’re going to do a “Take 2” and practice building up Gabby’s self-esteem, rather than tearing it down.*
- Hand each participant 3–4 blocks. Read Gabby’s story, as rewritten below. Tell the girls that this time, whenever they hear Gabby receiving a “*Builder*” (define as a word or behavior that “builds” or boosts a person’s self-confidence) they should work together to place a block on top of or next to the block added by the last girl. The object of this activity is to work together to build a structure that represents how tall, strong, and proud *Builders* can make a person feel.

Builders story

When Gabby woke up in the morning, she was feeling great. She got dressed in her favorite T-shirt and jeans and walked downstairs for breakfast. When she sat down at the table, her mother said, “*Good morning, sweetheart. How are you feeling?*” When Gabby reached for her hairbrush, her elbow tipped over her sister’s glass of

milk. Her sister cried out, *"Oh no! My homework!"* Gabby rushed to help clean up the spill. *"Thanks for helping!"* said her sister. When Gabby went to sit back down, she accidentally tripped over her little brother's toy car. *"Beep, beep!"* he laughed. *"It's a bumpy morning for you, Gabby"* said her dad, as he *reached out to give her a hug.*

Gabby smiled as she walked into her classroom, looking forward to the day. She approached her best friend, Maddie, and said, *"I'm so excited for the dance tonight!"* Maddie looked at Gabby and said, *"I know—me too! I hope you're wearing that shirt!"* Gabby smiled, remembering the day last week when Maddie helped her pick it out at the store.

The bell rang. Gabby rushed to hang up her coat and get her homework out of her folder. Her teacher said, *"Boys and girls, please make sure you've taken care of all of your responsibilities before the bell rings."* Gabby's face turned red as she rushed to get to her seat. She looked over at Maddie, *who gave her a friendly smile.* She knew that look well. It was the look that Maddie usually gave her to *reassure her that mistakes were okay.*

At lunch, Gabby set her tray down next to Emma. Emma looked up and said, *"Hi Gabby. Olivia actually asked me to save that seat for her while she went to the bathroom, but you can sit on this side of me if you want."* Gabby moved her tray to the other side of Emma. When she sat down, Leah said, *"Yum. Those tacos smell delicious!"* Gabby agreed and enjoyed her lunch with her friends.

Outside on the playground, Gabby went to the swings, where she and Maddie met every day at the start of recess. *It made both girls feel great to know that they could always count on each other.* Usually, the two of them played alone, but today, Maddie suggested they join up with Olivia and Emma to jump rope (skip). The four girls took turns holding the rope and jumping, until the bell rang to signal the end of recess. *"That was fun. Let's do this again tomorrow!"* they agreed.

At the very end of the school day, as all of the kids were packing their bags, Gabby said to Maddie, *"I'll see you tonight at the dance. I can't wait to do our routine together!"* Maddie replied, *"I know. I'm so excited. See you there!"*

Gabby smiled.

Processing the activity

By the end of this version of the story, the girls should have formed a tall, sturdy structure with the blocks. Ask questions to compare the impact of the different stories, such as:

- *How does Gabby feel at the end of this story, compared to the first version?*
- *What made the difference in her feelings?*
- *How do words change how Gabby feels about herself?*

- *Have you ever been in a situation where Builders from a family member, teacher, or friend helped you feel better?*
- *You worked together to build a tall and sturdy structure. How is this structure similar to how Gabby feels in the second story? How is it different from the paper we used in the first story?*
- *How do you want to make your friends and classmates feel?*
- *What can you do on a daily basis to build others up and avoid tearing them down?*

Session conclusion

Summarize the learning from this session and preview next session's agenda:

- *Today, we began to get to know each other as members of the Real Friendship group, and we created our own set of ground rules for how to treat one another and have fun together.*
- *Also, because of what we learned from Gabby's stories, we will avoid Shredders and practice building our friends up through kind words and behaviors.*
- *Next week, we will be talking about the kinds of values that we look for in real friends.*

Friendship Journal

1. Hand out the *Friendship Journal* (page 33).
2. Let participants know that each week they will have the opportunity to take what they learn in group and apply it to their everyday lives. The *Friendship Journal* provides each participant with a chance to reflect on what is discussed in group, through writing and/or drawing topics.
 - While the *Friendship Journal* is an important extension of the group learning, it is not meant to feel like "homework."
 - Use care when describing the *Journal*, to help participants see it as a tool for deeper learning, rather than a burden or obligation.
 - Do not assign penalties for incomplete journals, but rather be consistent in encouraging girls to take this extra step toward developing strong friendship skills.
 - Use discretion in assigning writing journals, art journals, or whatever self-expression method will work best for each participant.