

# *How To Be Human by Florida Frenz*



**Curriculum Guide for: *How to Be Human, Diary of an Autistic Girl* by Florida Frenz**

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**THE ELA STANDARDS:**

## **Reading**

- Key Ideas and Details
- Craft and Structure
- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas
- Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

## **Writing (includes Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects)**

- Text Types and Purposes
- Production and Distribution of Writing
- Research to Build and Present Knowledge
- Range of Writing
- Speaking and Listening
- Comprehension and Collaboration
- Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.1.a, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.1.b, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.1.c, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.1.d, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.3, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.5

## **Key Terms/Concepts:**

- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Empathy
- Diversity
- Neuroplasticity
- Social Skills
- Bullying

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## **Guided Reading:**

Before reading the book discuss ways that people differ. Talk about what it means to use perspective taking skills.

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While reading the book use the activities below. Discuss times when they may have seen, felt or experiences similar to what they read in the book. For more ideas and activities go to <http://mosswoodconnections.com/>

## **Step 1: Figure out Faces**

### **Materials:**

Pictures of people with different expressions.

### **Overview and Activities:**

Many children on the autism spectrum either experience face blindness or find eye contact difficult. Telling them to “look at me!” is rarely effective. All children can benefit from paying attention to physical cues. There are many ways to encourage kids to cue in on facial expressions. Download pictures from the internet, use books or magazines; have the students tell or write one sentence about how that person or character is feeling. To extend this activity have students role play a scene where they act out the feelings. Have the students write about a time that they felt that way. Another exercise that I do is to say the same sentence with varying expressions and have the student describe the difference.

Make a faces collage: <http://mosswoodconnections.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Photo-Face-Collage.pdf>

## **Step 2: Figure out Feelings**

### **Overview and Activities:**

For young children figuring out their own feelings and those of others can be difficult. There are many ways to encourage children to understand their feelings and the feelings of others. One good way to do this is to role play a situation and then to switch characters. For example, set up a scene where two friends are disagreeing about what game they want to play. Have the students act out what they are thinking from their perspective and then have them switch roles and act out how the other character is feeling. Explore more here: <http://mosswoodconnections.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/My-Many-Colored-Feelings1.pdf>

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## **Step 3: Match the Feelings to the Faces**

### **Materials:**

Index Cards

Paper

### **Overview and Activities:**

Florida actually experienced physical issues as well as social emotional delays so when the issue was physical we would draw a body chart and write how different parts of her body felt like and then we would practice making our expressions match the way we felt inside. Another activity would be to write down different feelings and emotions, i.e. stomach ache or excitement on index cards. Have the students pick a card and then act out that feeling/emotion. Try to guess what they are depicting. If there is a mirror available have the students watch themselves as well.

## **Step 4: Figure out Fake Feelings**

### **Overview and Activities:**

One of the best ways to teach kids about “fake feelings” is to read great books like the Amelia series by Marissa Moss. Discuss when the characters have different feelings than what they say or do. Does the facial expression match the internal feeling? Do the words reflect what they may really be thinking and feeling?

## **Step 5: What Kind of Human Are You?**

### **Materials:**

Index Cards

### **Overview and Activities:**

Have the students role play different situations where making a good decision is important. Write down different situations on index cards. Have the kids pick a card and say what they would do in that situation then discuss as a group. Play Jobs Charades:

<http://mosswoodconnections.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/What-Job-Do-You-Want-for-Lola.pdf>

## **Step 6: How Do You Decide to Act?**

### **Overview and Activities:**



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All students can have a difficult time resisting peer pressure. This can be especially hard for children with learning disabilities. Have the kids draw a cartoon or write a story about a time when they followed along with a peer's bad behavior. Have them do the same for a time when they resisted negative peer influences. Discuss how each situation may feel and the consequences of making good versus bad decisions.

## **Step 7: Figure out Behavior and Emotions**

### **Materials:**

Pre-printed meters (optional)

### **Overview and Activities:**

Meters are used by a variety of educators and therapists in a variety of ways. Have the student decide what scale he or she wants to use. As you see Florida usually chose to rate things on a scale of 1-10 but at times she used symbols or facial expressions. The facial expression meter is especially appropriate when exploring social skills and emotions.

## **Step 8: Avoiding the Perfection Trap**

### **Overview and Activities:**

Have one student play the role of a “cop” for a pre-set amount of time. Have him give tickets to any other student who is not behaving “perfectly”. Then have the students discuss, write or draw about the experience. For older students, have a discussion about what are some “perfect” traits they admire. Are these traits attainable? Does everyone agree on what is perfection? Why or why not?

## **Step 9, 10 and 12: Friendship**

### **Materials:**

Pictures for the collage

### **Overview and Activities:**

Read a story about friends, again the Amelia series by Marissa Moss has many good examples of different friends. Discuss what it means to be a good friend. Are there different types of friends?

Make a collage about what type of friend you want to have and what type of friend you want to be.

Create a Camera Chain Letter. Instructions are here: <http://mosswoodconnections.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Camera-Chain-Letter.pdf>

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## **Step 11: How to Handle Your Enemies**

Okay, so Florida remembered this one wrong. We were reading an Amelia book where there was an illustration of a voodoo doll and we found it amusing, this activity was just for fun. Please use this illustration to discuss appropriate ways to deal with challenging relationships or for a fun way to deal with anger.

## **Step 12: How Not to Make Enemies**

### **Overview and Activities:**

There are many ways to address appropriate behavior with different friends. Try role playing or start a co-operative story with 2 or more kids where the topic is what to do when 2 friends want to do 2 different things. Brainstorm ways to include the “shy kid”.

## **Step 13: Fear of Bullies**

First discuss the difference between bullying and unkind words. Unkind words can be ignored but constant teasing should be addressed. Have the kids write about different times when they felt teased or bullied. Make a meter of ways to respond to bullying or teasing. For example, the “1” on their meter might be to ignore it. A “10” might be to get as much help as possible.

## **Step 14: Bullying Yourself**

### **Overview and Activities:**

Self-esteem is an important issue. Florida liked for us to talk about the worst case scenario and then brainstorm possible feelings and solutions. Other children like to make list of their good qualities. One of my kids named the negative voice in her head and told her to be quiet and yet another child kept a journal of things that he was proud about. Have the students keep a journal for 1 week. Each day they need to write at least 3 things that they feel proud of and 3 things that they are grateful for. At the end of the week discuss their responses.

## **Step 15: Mega Cool People**

### **Overview and Activities:**

Society tells us that popularity is desirable but in reality many people don't actually want or need to be popular; they just need meaningful relationships. I had Florida research different essays on popularity and then we discussed. It helped her to define the categories by drawing cartoons but some other ideas would be to act out different social groups, watch a video about high school students and discuss whether or not there are clear social groups.

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## **Step 16: Cool People to You**

Have the student bring pictures of different people in their lives. Either talk or write about why that person is important or likable to you. Use the instructions for Gratitude Garlands <http://mosswoodconnections.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Gratitude-Garland.pdf> but change the gratitude garland to positive attributes that you look for in a friend.

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## **Step 17: What Makes a Bad Friend**

### **Overview and Activities:**

Sometimes we can work so hard on making friends that can cause a false belief that any friend is a good friend. Make a collage of traits that you would want in a friend and another of traits that you would NOT want in a friend.

## **Step 18: How to Grow Up**

You can use the timeline idea, write a story about what the student's life might be like in the future or make an "aging" meter which shows the different benefits that come with each year of getting older.

## **Step 19: Consequences**

Have the student brainstorm different scenarios and then ask "What would you do?" Write or act out a story about someone who has no consequences and then discuss the outcome.

## **Step 20: Juggling**

Florida can get overwhelmed with the amount of work she has to do and then she will forget to have fun which makes her more stressed. It is very important to have balance in one's life. Make a list of everything that needs to get done and another list for what one wants to do. Cross off any unnecessary items and make a schedule for everything that is important to get done. Remember, it is important to have fun and healthy habits as well as to getting all their work done.

For more ideas on how to handle stress go here:

<http://mosswoodconnections.com/activities/sensory-regulation-activities/>

### **Discussion Questions:**

- 1) Have you ever been confused by someone's facial expression? How did that feel?
- 2) How would you describe happy? Sad? Pride?
- 3) What does it mean to "match the feeling to the face"?
- 4) Have you ever been fooled by fake tears or by a fake smile? How do you know when they are fake?
- 5) Have you ever had to make a decision between the right thing to do and the wrong thing?



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- 6) How did you handle that?
- 7) What are some traits or behavior that you value in a friend? What are some that bother you?
- 8) What does perfect mean to you?
- 9) Have you ever felt jealous? When that happened what did you do or feel?
- 10) What would you do if you noticed a classmate sitting by themselves?
- 11) Do you worry about bullies? Have you felt bullied? If so, what did you do about it?
- 12) What makes a person “mega cool” to you?
- 13) Does everybody agree on what is “cool”?
- 14) If you could be any age, what age would you be? Why?
- 15) Did you ever get a consequence or punishment that you thought was unfair?
- 16) What does peer pressure mean?
- 17) Do you ever hide how you really feel? When?

### **Vocabulary:**

- **Expression:** the process of making known one's thoughts or feelings.  
the conveying of feeling in the face or voice, in a work of art, or in the performance of a piece of music.
- **Resources:** an action or strategy that may be adopted in adverse circumstances
- **Conscience:** an inner feeling or voice viewed as acting as a guide to the rightness or wrongness of one's behavior
- **Brainstorm:** a spontaneous group discussion to produce ideas and ways of solving problems.
- **Manifested:** display or show (a quality or feeling) by one's acts or appearance; demonstrate.
- **Potential:** having or showing the capacity to become or develop into something in the future.
- **Status:** the relative social, professional, or other standing of someone or something.
- **Temperament:** a person's or animal's nature, esp. as it permanently affects their behavior.
- **Obnoxious:** extremely unpleasant.