

THE MIGHTY LEAGUE VOL. 2

THE HORRIBLE HUG



**CURRICULUM AND
ACTIVITIES GUIDE**

IN THIS GUIDE

- Introduction
- Classroom Environment
- Awareness
- Background Information
- Activity 1: When a New School Makes You Feel Like a Space Alien!
- Activity 2: How Do You Make a Space Alien Feel Comfortable and Initiate a Friendship?
- Activity 3: Making and Keeping Friends
- Activity 4: How do You Feel When Someone Invades Your Space?
- Activity 5: What's in a Face? Why is Body Language So Important?
- Activity 6: When Change Feels Alien and What to Do About It
- Activity 7: Super Star! Self Promotion Among Space Aliens
- Follow Up: Respect

INTRODUCTION

This Horrible Hug App Curriculum has been designed to help educators, teachers, students who are **not** on the autism spectrum, and autistic students have a better understanding of the characteristics of autism and Asperger's Syndrome. It helps to dispel the false assumptions often made by the general education population (both teachers and students) that "different" means "difficult" or disabled.

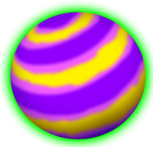
For those on the autism spectrum, this curriculum will help them better understand their learning and social perspectives and introduce specific coping skills to assist them in new situations and in navigating the social curriculum. The *Horrible Hug* story could be used prior to any unfamiliar experience to reinforce that "new" may be uncomfortable at first, but with time and mindset it can turn itself around and be a positive happening. The theme of "the real world seeming like an alien planet" will be used as a continuing analogy throughout the curriculum.

The main goal is to help all children be more aware of their social and emotional health as well as those around them, promote appropriate social skills and give students a "why they are important" overview:

- How to deal with new situations (like a new school)
- How to be a friend to a new student
- Making friends and keeping friends
- Personal Space
- Interpretation of facial expressions and body language
- Promoting your own specific abilities, talents or interests appropriately

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

Educators and fellow students need to be informed about what to do in classroom situations to make the student with autism or Asperger's feel more comfortable and less anxious. The *Mighty League, Vol. 2: The Horrible Hug* educational tools will provide educators and students with answers to questions that they may have about the child with Asperger's or Autism Spectrum Disorder and help teachers deliver best practices in educating all children. The main character in this story will be the catalyst in conveying options for consideration.



Geek Club Books tells the stories of autism through apps, digital media, curriculum and webisodes. The creative nonprofit is focused on innovative autism awareness education. A team of autistic adults is involved in everything they produce. Discover more at geekclubbooks.com.

AWARENESS

The core indicators of autism are challenges related to:

- communication skills
- social interaction
- repetitive behaviors and interests
- lack of understanding social cues
- limited eye contact
- difficulty managing transitions, changes in routine, stress, frustration

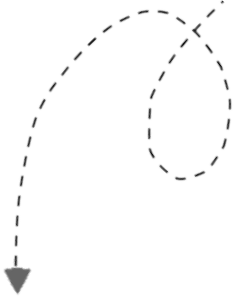
The possible strengths of a child with autism or Asperger's:

- strong visual skills
- solid rote and long term memory (math facts, sports statistics, etc.)
- adherence to procedures
- ability to concentration or focus, especially on a preferred activity
- understanding and retention of concrete concepts
- specific and special talents

Learning strategies that build appreciation for diversity and tolerance, and highlight each student's skills and abilities are best done in cooperative or collaborative learning groups. This requires more prep from the teachers and more class time to complete an activity; however, the development and practice of social skills involved in group problem solving is well worth the extra effort. Social skills can be "learned by doing" especially when the "why" we need to use this skill is included in the plan. Attention to carefully constructed groups, intentional planning, and definitive roles for each student need to be part of the ongoing strategies that will need to be incorporated for success.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Watch Jonathan's high school graduation speech where he mentions the "horrible hugs" that changed his life forever.



SOURCE: <http://bit.ly/real-horrible-hug>

The Mighty League series of stories is based on Jonathan Murphy's real life experiences growing up on the autism spectrum. Being diagnosed with Aspergers Syndrome hasn't stopped him from living a meaningful life. Today he is a professional voice actor and his character voices are in video games, apps, audio stories and even a major California theme park.

The Horrible Hug is based on Jonathan's experiences after transferring to a new school. He was afraid that he'd be bullied again so he just wouldn't engage. His teachers wanted to help him so they came up with "Project Hug." Every time they saw him on the playground or in the classroom they'd give him a big old bear hug. He hated those hugs but they changed his life.

During his high-school graduation speech, he shared that those hugs made him feel safe and more confident. From that point on, he wasn't afraid to try new things and be around people.

Jonathan's life has been quite the adventure—from being the boy that paced in the corner... from being a social outcast, bullied and reclusive to commanding a stage, making people laugh with him (and not at him), finding friends who like him for him, and earning the respect of professionals in his industry. The Mighty League series is Geek Club Books unique, respectful and, hopefully, entertaining way to share how someone on the spectrum overcomes obstacles, triumphs over social anxieties, and thrives, quirks and all!



ACTIVITY 1

WHEN A NEW SCHOOL MAKES YOU FEEL LIKE A SPACE ALIEN!

OBJECTIVES:

- Students will be introduced to the Horrible Hug story via Powerpoint, video or enhanced e-book and the companion student handout (geekclubbooks/autism edu)
- Students will discuss what “NEW” really means
- Students will understand that entering into new environments is paramount
- Students will gain a better understanding of what it feels like an alien
- Students will problem solve ways to help themselves and others feel less alien

New students often become targeted as invaders. They need special attention and careful pairing with compassionate student buddies to help them through their first weeks at what feels like an alien planet. As a teacher who is aware of the importance of creating safe social climates, you should expect possible problems and take measures to avoid such issues.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

1. How can we as a group help a newcomer feel more comfortable?
2. How can I as the newcomer help myself?

ACTIVITY 2

HOW DO YOU MAKE AN SPACE ALIEN FEEL COMFORTABLE AND INITIATE A FRIENDSHIP?

OBJECTIVES:

- Students will learn social skills of welcoming “newcomers”
- Students will role-play taking turns being the “new or alien” in the classroom

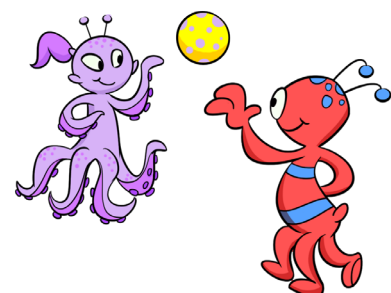
ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

1. A friend is ...

(Use printable worksheet on next page.)

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

- Describe a friend
- Define friendship
- List qualities they seek in a friend
- Describe how to treat a friend



A Friend Is...

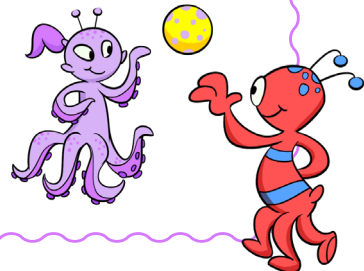


What is a friend?

What is friendship?

What do you want from a friend?

How do you treat a friend?



ACTIVITY 3

MAKING AND KEEPING FRIENDS

OBJECTIVES:

- Introduction and what is involved in keeping a friend
- Students will demonstrate the ability to:
- Identify ways to be a friend to someone else
- Develop methods to maintain friendships

ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

1. How am I a good friend to others?

ACTIVITY 4

HOW DO YOU FEEL WHEN SOMEONE INVADES YOUR SPACE?

OBJECTIVES:

- Students will learn what personal space is
- Students will know what it means to be respectful
- Students will understand that invading personal space or being disrespectful makes people feel uncomfortable

DEFINITIONS:

Personal space: an invisible shield that we have around our bodies that defines our area of privacy and comfort

Invading personal space: Standing or leaning too close to someone and it makes them feel uncomfortable.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

1. What is personal space and why do we need boundaries?



ACTIVITY 4: EXTENSION

HOW DO YOU FEEL WHEN SOMEONE INVADES YOUR SPACE?

Introduce the concept of personal space to the group and inform them that they are all going to make their own personal space. “It’s like an invisible bubble you carry around with you.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why didn’t the main character want to be hugged (or left alone)?
2. Has there ever been a time when you felt this way? when? why?
3. Were there specific circumstances that caused you to feel this way?

Focus on improving the understanding and commitment to maintaining personal space. The definitions of the individual words help students understand what this social skill is all about.

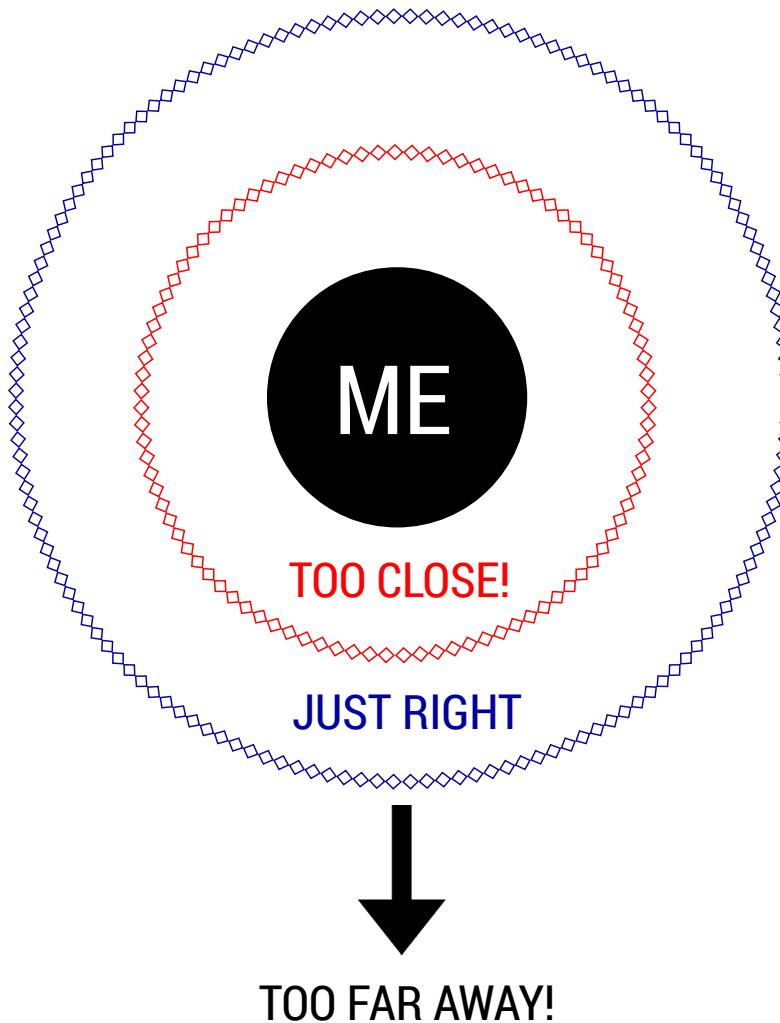
DEFINITIONS:

- **Maintain:** to keep in a desirable condition
- **Personal:** belonging to a person; private
- **Space:** the distance or open area between two people or objects

There are several reasons maintaining personal space is important:

- People in general feel more comfortable when they have their own personal space.
- Being aware of others personal space and respecting it makes everyone more comfortable.
- Having a personal space can help you stay focused. If your mind is on how close someone is standing by you or sitting near you, it is much harder to focus on the task you are doing. People in your personal space can be a distraction and keep you from learning and meeting expectations.





Prepare an area in the classroom, hallway, gymnasium, playground or anywhere else that lends itself to allow for movement and has plenty of room to spread out.

OPTIONS:

- Using chalk draw a box around yourself representing your own personal space with a visual component. (Ideal for tile floor or asphalt)
- Use yarn or rope precut to form a circle representing personal space or use carpet squares, hula hoops, etc.

Using the diagram as a reference point, explain that the purpose of this activity is to bring about a greater understanding of what

personal space looks like and how it needs to be respected.

This diagram will help students understand and respond to the concept. These personal space circles could be color coded for visual learners, eg, “too close” is red.

Teaching students with autism or Asperger’s more about the “why” behind the social behaviors, we are trying to help students gain a greater understanding and apply these skills.

In this case the “why” has to do with respect of personal space or boundaries.

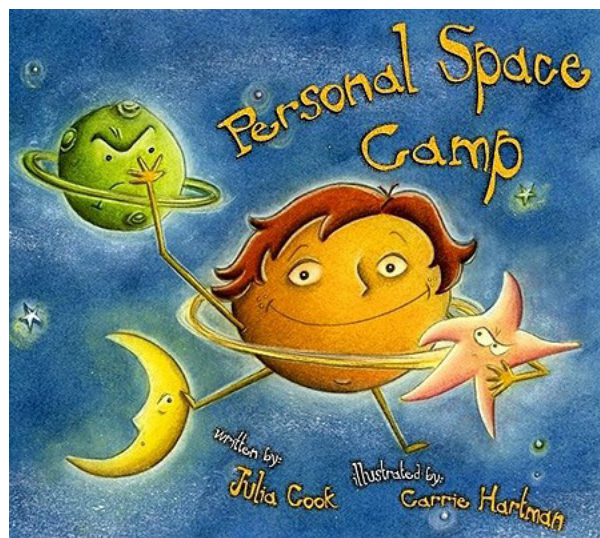
FOLLOW UP: RESPECT!

Have students define the word RESPECT: To give something special attention, to care about or be kind to someone.

Ask students “What do you think it means?”
Have them create a list of:

1. Respect words
2. Respect actions

Note them on the board. Have a discussion about why it’s important to have respect for yourself and others.



Personal Space Camp by Julia Cook is an excellent resource for the respect follow-up activity.
<http://bit.ly/personal-space-camp>

ACTIVITY 5

WHAT'S IN A FACE? WHY IS BODY LANGUAGE SO IMPORTANT?

OBJECTIVES:

- Students will become aware of body language
- Students will understand the differences body language can make in communication
- Identify simple social cues
- How can I remember to use my body language?

ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

1. How does body language impact communication?

Have pictorial representations of different body language as this it is important for students to see various examples visually. Role model volunteers can also be brought in to help with comprehension.

RESOURCES:

Body Language Images on Pinterest
<http://bit.ly/body-lang-photos>

PBS Kids SciGirls Body Language Activity
<http://bit.ly/robot-body-lang>

Body Language PDF printables
<http://bit.ly/body-lang-printables>

ACTIVITY 6

WHEN CHANGE FEELS ALIEN AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

OBJECTIVES:

- Students will learn to prepare for change
- Students will become aware of new entrants discomfort
- Identify with what it feels like to be an alien
- Problem solve ways to make change comfortable for both parties

Display the ABC's of Problem Solving chart

Ask, "What is the problem?"

Brainstorm solutions

Choose the best solution

Do it

Evaluate the solution

RESOURCE:

The ABC's of Conflict Resolution PDF
<http://bit.ly/abc-conflict-res>

ACTIVITY 7

SUPER STAR! SELF PROMOTION AMONG SPACE ALIENS

OBJECTIVES:

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

- Identify personal strengths
- Identify positive behaviors/strengths in others
- Categorize strengths into two groups: internal (invisible) and external (visible)

ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

1. What is something you do well?

Students brainstorm about the personal strengths that help them make good choices.

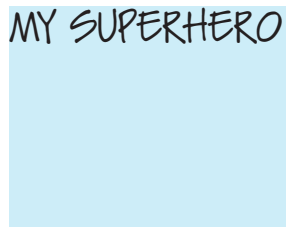
(Use "100% Original" printable worksheet on next page.)



WHAT
I LIKE
BEST
ABOUT
ME



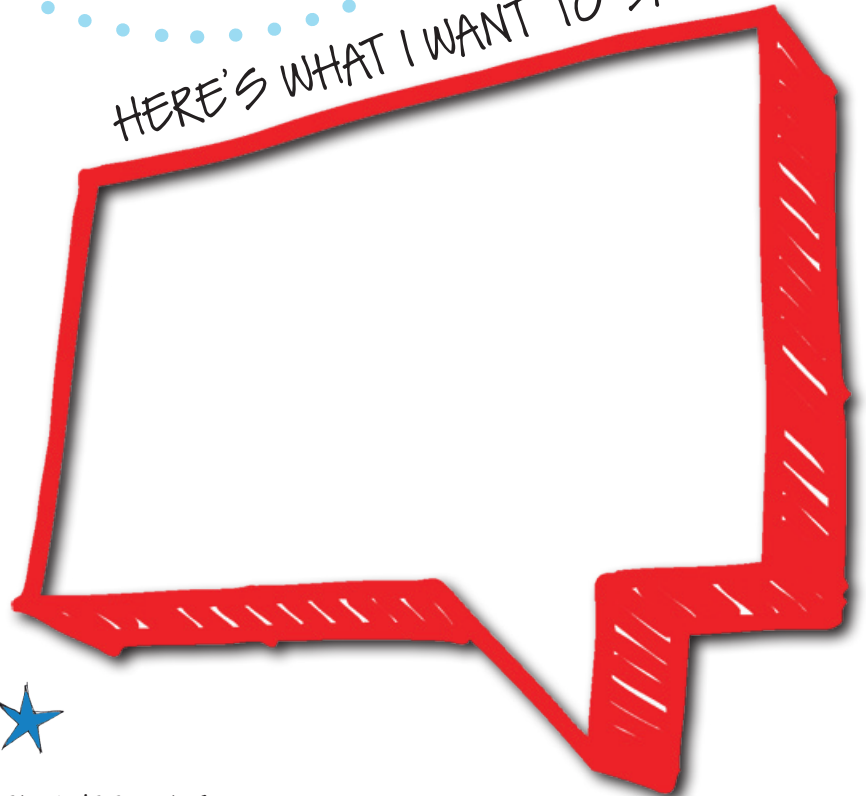
MY SUPERHERO



THIS IS
ONE OF
MY
FAVORITE
THINGS
TO DO



HERE'S WHAT I WANT TO SAY





GEEK

CLUB

BOOKS

**THIS GUIDE WAS CREATED BY
JAYNE CLARE, TEACHERS WITH
APPS, SPED CONSULTANT
© 2016 GEEK CLUB BOOKS
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED**