



At the Speed of Gus

Activity 1: What is Neurodiversity?

Students will watch and discuss 2 videos about neurodiversity and reflect on how their brains work.

Format:

- Teacher-Facilitated Group Discussion

Materials:

- Computer
- Projector

Instructions:

1. Watch this Part 1 video on different brains (1:16):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j8Y4P8fOxk>
2. Discuss the question on the last slide: How do you think your brain works?
 - Ask students to share some things about how their own brains work.
3. Watch this Part 2 video on neurodiversity (1:44):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jHzlQxhtY6U>
4. Discuss the questions on the last slide: Why do you think it's important to have lots of different brains in the world?
 - Return to some of the sharings from part 1 and highlight some of the amazing similarities and differences and how they contribute to diversity and fun in your class/school environment.

Activity 2: Personal Journal

Students will reflect on how they feel about themselves and the things about themselves that they like. They will journal and/or draw about their reflections.

Format:

- Individual

Materials:

- Letter size paper or journal
- Pencil, colouring pencils, markers, crayons

Instructions:

1. Turn to p.27 where Gus is faced with new questions: "How do you feel about yourself? Do you like yourself?"
2. Recognize that these are hard questions and guide students reflect on how they would answer these questions.
3. Have students journal and/or draw about their reflections.

Activity 3: Sense to Ground You

Students will be introduced to a mindfulness activity that is linked back to a realization Gus has and a practice he develops in the book.

Format:

- Teacher-Facilitated Group Discussion

Materials:

- Computer
- Projector
- Optional: pencil and paper to take notes

Instructions:

1. Turn to p.132 where Gus reflects on how important it is to notice the small things around you. He notices that it can be a great way to slow a racing mind and help you think clearly.
2. Watch this video about grounding yourself through a 5 senses activity (3:34):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-MTU8PPTRSc>
 - Pause the video throughout to discuss each of the senses and what students are noticing, or have them take note of them personally.
3. When the video/activity is done, take some time to discuss how the exercise made them feel while doing it and after.
 - Can you remember the 5 senses and the steps of this grounding activity?

Activity 4: Mindfulness Teacher

Students will explore various mindfulness activities online and reflect on the ones that make them feel the best.

Format:

- Teacher-Facilitated Group Discussion

Materials:

- Computer(s)
- Projector

Instructions:

1. Start by discussing Doc Sharon's suggestion that Gus practice yoga.
 - What does she think yoga will help Gus with?
2. Then, as a class, or in small groups if computers are available, explore other mindfulness activities on the Mindfulness Teacher page:
<https://www.youtube.com/@TheMindfulnessTeacher>
3. Discuss some of the things students liked about each one
 - Optional: If working in small groups, have each group pick a mindfulness activity and teach it to the class or make a poster about the group's favourite as reminder to the class.

Activity 5: Good Memories

Students will work individually to reflect on and journal or draw about a difficult time in their life that they were able to draw a good memory from.

Format:

- Individual

Materials:

- Letter size paper or journal
- Pencils
- Colouring pencils, markers, crayons

Instructions:

1. Turn to page p.191. In this scene, Gus is going through a hard time but is doing his best to savour a good memory anyway.
2. Guide students to journal or draw about a good memory they have from a hard time.
 - Note that you may need to have a discussion as a class to get ideas flowing before students complete the activity.
3. As a group, discuss how reflecting on those hard times with gratitude made them feel.