

## **PUT YOURSELF IN MY SHOES**

From *Teaching About Cultural Awareness*.  
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**Introduction** It is possible to identify several levels of understanding of another culture or ethnic group. Most curriculum limits itself to dealing only with intellectual understanding, if even that is achieved. We believe that materials should provide some opportunity for students to explore deeper, more affective levels of understanding. We also realize that all students may not be able to participate in the experience outlined below. But, through sharing experiences with those who were unable to participate, the activity might enhance their understanding of differences as well.

**Objective** Students will be able to experience cultural differences first hand

**Grade Level** 5-12

**Time** Approximately one day

**Materials** None

**Procedure** 1. Have students choose a partner of the same sex who is of a difference ethnic or cultural group. (Possible pairs: Black-White, Chicano-Anglo, Irish American-Native American, Jewish-Protestant)

2. After students have chosen their partners, explain:

Make arrangements to visit with each other for a day, or evening. You should discuss at considerable length the implications of doing so. Will you feel so out of place that the activity might do you more harm than good? Do both parents know of this experiment and approve?

Spend the day or evening with your partner both in and out of the house. (You'll need to make all the appropriate arrangements and check with parents, or other relative, for permission of course!)

Things to look for and note:

Speak each other's language as much as possible, if applicable.

Wear each other's clothes, if possible.

Attend each other's church service, other family/cultural activities.

Learn and practice each other's customs, mannerisms, etc.

Follow each other's routines.

3. After the day's role switch, discuss the following with students"
- Were each of you comfortable with the new role you took on?
  - What specific things did you learn about the other person and their group that you were unaware of at the beginning of the day?

- What specific things did you learn about yourself and your attitudes about the other person's group?
- What differences between your lifestyle and your partner's lifestyle did you find most difficult to deal with? Least difficult? Why? Do you think most people in similar situations would react this way? Explain.

**Follow – up** Have students find a medium (written, pictures, spoken, drawing, etc.) to express their feelings about the following: MY FEELINGS ABOUT \_\_\_\_\_ ARE DIFFERENT NOW BECAUSE \_\_\_\_\_.

Ask students to keep this reaction statement with them and examine it again in a few months.