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Fun with Respect-acles¹

By Janine Yeske, 4-H Youth Development Educator, Jefferson County (OSU Extension)

YouTube Learn more about this activity from the author at: <https://youtu.be/afUi6y-yXpM>

Shel Silverstein authored a poem called "Stupid Pencil Maker" in his book titled *Falling Up*², page 60. It went like this:

*"Some dummy built this pencil wrong
The eraser's down here where the point belongs.
And the point's at the top - so it's no good to me.
It's amazing how stupid some people can be".*

It is a funny poem, but it may have serious meaning.

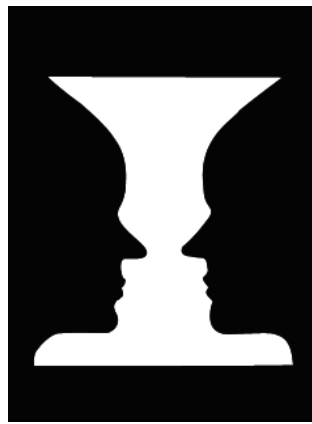
Have you ever found yourself looking at something in the exact wrong way? The person in this poem is a good example. He was obviously looking at this pencil upside down, and then criticizing its maker for being dumb. The way he is looking at it - the pencil is of no use to him. But all he really needs to do is turn the pencil right-side-up and realize it is just a regular pencil - like all other pencils. It writes and erases just like it is supposed to.

Sometimes we do the same thing when we are looking at people. If someone looks different from us, we automatically think they are "wrong" and "no good to us." No, we can not turn them over and make them look like everyone else, but we can change the way we are looking at them. We can realize that different does not mean wrong. It just means different.

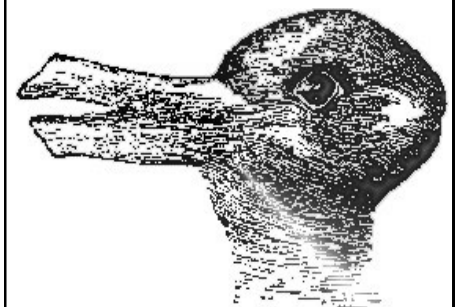
Look at this picture. Do you see an old woman or a young lady? It just depends on how you are looking at it.³



Face or Vase? What do you see in the image below: A vase or two faces facing each other?⁴



How about this picture? Do you see a duck or a rabbit? You see - it just depends on how you are looking at it.⁵



References:

1 *Respect-acles* was originally developed by the University of Missouri Extension.

2 Silverstein, S. (1996). *Falling Up*. New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers Inc., page 60.

3 <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/1c/Youngoldwoman.jpg>, Retrieved December 23, 2015.

4 http://www.marcofolio.net/imagetump/faces_everywhere_15_images_8_illusions.html, Retrieved December 23, 2015.

5 <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Duck-Rabbit.png>, Retrieved December 23, 2015.



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Have you ever seen a person in a wheelchair, or a kid with really thick glasses, or a kid who is really clumsy and decided they were built wrong and not right for you? It is an easy mistake to make, but it is also an easy mistake to fix. You just need to change the way you are looking at them. This might require some super-power! Here's how to get that power.

The next time you find yourself "judging" someone because of the way they look, put on your "respect-acles." Respect-acles are special eyeglasses that will give you super-power and help you look again and see that person more clearly and with respect. When you look through your respect-acles, you will see that there is nothing "wrong" with that person, they are just built different.

Making Respect-acles: Respect-acles are a fun way to remind us to show respect to each other. Respect-acles are made from pipe cleaners. Form two pipe cleaners into circles by twisting the ends together. Then join the two circles with another pipe cleaner to form the nosepiece. Wrap one pipe cleaner around each side and fold down end to go over the ear. Now put your Respect-acles on. Wearing Respect-acles will remind us to look at others with RESPECT.



Try this activity with your new super-power. While wearing your respect-acles, look around the room and find another Cloverbud to talk to. Try to find someone that you have never talked to before. Ask him/her these three questions:

- What is your name? (unless you already know it)*
- What is your favorite thing to do?*
- What is your least favorite thing to do?*

Next, tell that person the same three things about yourself. After you have both answered the three questions, tell your Cloverbud advisor that you are ready to introduce each other. While wearing your respect-acles, introduce your partner to the other Cloverbuds. Tell them his/her name, what he/she likes to do and what he/she likes and does not like to do. As you listen to all the introductions, notice that everyone has feelings just like yours. Even though some Cloverbuds may look different, they are the same as you in many ways.

Now here is the real trick - take your respect-acles off, but keep looking at others with respect.

Let us get back to the "Stupid Pencil Maker" poem. Mr. Silverstein used some interesting words when he wrote his poem. He called the pencil maker a "dummy" and he said that it was amazing how "stupid" some people can be. Dummy and stupid are certainly not nice words - so in a poem about respect - why did he choose those words? Maybe he wanted us to realize that when we look at others in the "wrong" way and do not give them a chance to be "right for us", we are actually the ones who are being stupid.

Sometimes it may seem easy to judge others just by the way they look. If they look different from us, we think they are wrong for us. Instead, we should always look at others with respect and realize that they are a lot like us. Change the way you look at others and see that they are people with feelings just like you. It is your chance to be a super hero.

