

# Folding Heart

**Intended age group:** Elementary through middle school

**Time Needed:** 5 minutes

**Learning objectives:** Participants will understand that unkind words leave a lasting impression, even if the speaker later apologizes.

**Materials needed:** Large red construction paper heart (you'll need a new one each time you do this activity); tape (for alternate method only).

## Overview:

Hold up the paper heart. Ask participants to share words they have heard which are hurtful and unkind. As each word or phrase is shared, fold down a piece of the heart until it is folded into a small shape. This is how we feel when we have been hurt. Then ask participants to share words that are kind and encouraging. As each is shared, unfold a piece of the heart until it is back in its original shape.

Holding up the heart, ask participants what they still see on it – the wrinkles or scars that are left. Make the point that even if we say we are sorry, we can still leave lasting scars with hurtful words.

Ask the participants to think of a teacher in their own education who was kind and nurturing. Think of how it felt to be in that person's room. Then tell them to think of a teacher they were pretty sure didn't care about them. How did it feel to be in that teacher's room? Share an experience out of your own life, then share this quote from Carl Buechner: "They may forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel."

## Suggested discussion questions:

- What did this demonstration make you think about how you treat others, especially young people?
- Are always aware of how you make others feel?
- Will you be more aware in the future?

## Classroom application:

No modification needed.

**Alternate method:** Tear the heart into pieces instead of folding it, and then tape it back together. This is a more dramatic demonstration and the scars are more obvious that way, but it takes longer because of the taping.

This activity was created by Nat Cooper, a CCI national faculty member.