

BIRTHDAY PARTY

Objective

This activity is designed to simulate an upper arm impairment and to help students understand that people with physical disabilities have to learn to adapt and use other parts of their bodies.

Materials

- 8 to 10 long-sleeved men's shirts with end of right sleeve tied
- 8 to 10 arm slings
- Gift boxes (10 to 15, have extras on hand, boxes get damaged)
- Wrapping paper (butcher paper works well)
- Scotch tape (one for each student)
- Scissors (one for each student, preferable school scissors for safety)
- Ribbon
- Small pieces of scrap paper
- Pencils (8 to 10)

Activity

1. Explain to the students that when they put on the shirts, they will lose the use of their right arm. (They must hold their right hand in a fist.) They will put their left arm in a sling that is tight enough to position their left hand under their chin, thereby losing the use of their left arm but not their left hand.
2. After students have put on shirts and slings, hand students a gift box, a piece of wrapping paper, a roll of tape and a pair of scissors. (Students may work in pairs.)
3. Explain to them that they are going to a birthday party and they will need to wrap a present, write who the present is for on a piece of paper and attach to the present.
4. While students are carrying out the activity, make sure they keep their right hand in a fist without using their fingers through the sleeve.

Discussion

Talk to them about how people who have physical disabilities have to learn to adapt and learn to use other parts of their bodies. Point out to them the other useful parts of their bodies such as: teeth, chin, elbows, knees, feet, etc.

While they are attempting to wrap the present, carry on a conversation about what it might be like to get ready for school in the morning, fix a meal, take a bath, etc. How might they have to adapt if they really did have an upper arm impairment?

* Adapted from Special Pastoral Ministries, Archdiocese of Portland, Oregon, 1982, *Welcome to My World*