Goal
To enhance social skills development by illustrating how our words affect people.

Time
15 minutes

Materials
Two apples and a knife

Procedure
Seat a group of six to eight participants at a round table. Take one apple, say something mean to it (for example, “I hate you.” “I don’t want to be around you.”), and drop it to the floor. The next person picks up the apple, is mean to it, and drops it. This continues around the table a couple times as everyone takes turns being mean to it and dropping it. Cut that apple in half and lay it in the center of the table, allowing it to brown. Take the other apple and, as each participant takes a turn holding the apple, have everyone else in the group take turns complimenting or affirming the person holding the apple. Continue until everyone in the group has been complimented by everybody else.

Discussion
Lead the participants in a discussion of how being complimented feels. Were compliments easy to receive? Why or why not? Was it easier to be mean or to give compliments? Why?

Ask if anyone wants the brown, battered apple on the table. Of course, no one does. Discuss how a lot of people feel like that apple—all bruised and battered because they’ve heard mean things all their lives. They feel like no one cares about them and no one wants to be their friend. Explain that our words can make people feel like that apple.

Both youth and adults respond well to this activity. Youth and adults develop social skills as they become more sensitive to the feelings of others.

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