

# Putdowns

## *Verbal putdowns*

These are things that are said to another person (or said about them in their presence) that are designed to make that person feel bad (i.e. feel inferior or humiliated or left out), e.g.:

- ★ That's stupid (ridiculous, absurd, dumb).
- ★ What would you know!
- ★ That's rubbish.
- ★ How can you say that.
- ★ You're such an idiot.
- ★ She is so thick!

## *Nonverbal putdowns*

These are nonverbal communications that are directed to another student or made in their presence and which are designed to make the other person feel bad (e.g. feel inferior, humiliated or left out). Nonverbal putdowns usually involve one of the following categories of behaviour.

### Contemptuous or sneering tone of voice

The tone is derisive and is often accompanied by snorts, laughter or exaggerated send-up comments such as 'really' (said in a drawn-out way).

### Smirking

Smirking is an artificial smile that doesn't involve the eyes. A smirk lasts longer than a normal smile. It is sometimes accompanied by:

- ★ making eye contact with someone else;
- ★ snorting or laughing;
- ★ rolling one's eyes;
- ★ raising one's eyes to the ceiling;
- ★ sighing in an explosive way (hah!).

## Deliberate show of lack of interest

This is done in lots of different way such as:

- ★ making gestures of impatience (e.g. drumming fingers, sighing);
- ★ deliberately looking at someone or something other than the speaker (e.g. up in the air, down at the floor);
- ★ slumping in one's seat in an exaggerated and obvious way;
- ★ whispering to someone else in an obvious way, sometimes while looking at the speaker and smirking at the same time;
- ★ talking to someone else with one's hand over one's mouth while looking at the speaker to make sure the speaker is aware of it.

## Mimicking another's behaviour

This can be done with exaggerated verbal mimicry or by imitating body language but the effect is one of sending the other person up in a mean way by highlighting any individual mannerisms.

## Laughing at another's mistakes

This kind of putdown involves students snorting, smiling (up front or smothered) or laughing outright when another student gets an answer wrong, is reprimanded, mixes things up, uses an inaccurate term etc.