

Name:

Period:

Assignment: Close Reading – Handling Reactions to Facial Disfigurement

**Instructions:** Close read the article using the following steps. This requires you to read the article at least twice and annotate the article (add notes that explain or comment on the article). Then answer the questions.

Step 1. Read the article. (Objective – Identify confusing words or ideas)

- Circle words you don't understand.
- Next to each word, write down what you think the word might mean based on how the word is used in the sentence.
- Put a question mark next to any confusing ideas or sentences that you don't understand.

Step 2. Re-read the article paragraph-by-paragraph. (Objective – Identify main ideas)

- In each paragraph, underline 5-6 key words. These should be words that give important information about the topic of the paragraph and article.
- After you finish each paragraph, write a phrase or two next to the paragraph to remind yourself about the focus of the paragraph.

## Handling Reactions to Facial Disfigurement



Notes on the article:

**Learning how to be confident in social situations and handle people's reactions is an important skill for anyone with a disfigurement.**

Having a set of responses ready to use when people stare at you or ask about your appearance can be helpful. If you have an unusual appearance, it can be common for people to look at you when perhaps all you want is to be anonymous and blend in. "The individual can feel as if they're on display or on show. Other people's stares or questions can feel intrusive," says Helen Smith of the disfigurement charity [Changing Faces](#). "That can be hard to deal with."

It's understandable that you may want to avoid situations that make you feel anxious. But if you do this all the time, you will limit your freedom and lifestyle. By not facing challenging situations, you will only increase your anxiety about them because your fears can never be disproved. This will undermine your confidence further. "It's important to learn effective skills to help you feel more confident and self-assured in social situations of all kinds and handle other people's reactions to your disfigurement," says Smith. "There are strategies you can use to appear more confident. The more confident you are, the more positive responses you will get back."

## Your body language

Much of our communication is non-verbal. Think about what your body language is saying. Tips for appearing positive include maintaining eye contact, a firm handshake, remembering people's names, speaking in a confident tone, standing tall, and keeping your shoulders down.

You might want to think about ways of bringing the subject of your disfigurement into the conversation yourself to put people at their ease or if you notice they are curious. This will give you more control over the situation and can stop the anxiety of waiting for others to raise it.

## Staring

If someone stares and you want them to stop, look back, smile and hold the other person's gaze momentarily. They will hopefully smile back at you and then look away. If the staring **persists**, look back and hold their gaze while raising your eyebrows to show them that you've noticed their staring. If you decide to say something, you could use a number of different approaches:

- "I would prefer it if you didn't stare at me." (A firm yet straightforward response.)
- "My appearance seems to be bothering you. It doesn't bother me." (Confident, firm and clearly labeling the person staring as the one with the problem.)
- "Your admiring glances are beginning to embarrass me!" (The confident and humorous approach.)
- "We have clearly met before because you can't seem to take your eyes off me." (Humorous but making the point that their behavior is intrusive and inappropriate.)

## Keep practicing

"If you're worried about forgetting your responses, write them down and keep them in your wallet or bag so you can refresh your memory from time to time," says Smith. You may also find it helpful to think about different ways of answering the same question and either closing the subject or moving the conversation on. For example:

- "I was burned when I was younger. It was a long time ago. I don't talk about it now." (This is clear and brief.)
- "I was burned when I was younger, but fortunately smoke alarms have reduced the number of injuries like mine." (This shows you're confident and at ease talking about it, but encourages a more general discussion rather than purely personal.)
- "I was burned when I was younger and I'm going in for more plastic surgery soon. They're going to take a graft from my leg..." (This shows that you're confident and happy to discuss personal details.)

As you get more comfortable with these responses, you'll feel increasingly relaxed in social situations and become less self-conscious in public. "Learning strategies like these is a skill in itself," says Smith. "It takes time and effort before it begins to feel really natural."

Source:

<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/facialdisfigurement/Pages/Adultcopingstrategies.aspx>

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**Answer the following question(s):**

1. Who is the intended audience of the article?
2. What is the author's purpose in writing the article?

*RI.7.6: I can identify an author's point of view or purpose in a text.*

**Answer the following question(s):**

1. List 3 non-verbal suggestions the author gives to appear positive.
2. What is the first suggestion the author makes to stop a person from staring?
3. What advice does the author give to those who are worried about forgetting their responses?

*RI.7.1: I can supply several pieces of textual evidence to support what the author states directly and what he/she implies.*

**Answer the following question(s):**

1. Define **persists** as used in the text.

*RI.7.4: I can determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text.*