

Midway through the holidays, you will have read about a young man of 25 called Alex Ong who pushed an elderly lady of 75 off the bus because she had rung the bell too late causing the bus to stop although it was already just out of the bus bay.

As you can expect, someone filmed it and put it up on Youtube and everyone had their turn castigating the young man. However what I found unusual was that Alex Ong knew he was wrong and said so. In his blog, he even says he has apologised to the lady and she has accepted his apology. Apparently he suffers from a variety of psychological conditions including clinical depression, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and Asperger's Syndrome. On the other hand, I know of normal teenagers who just stare at you or giggle among themselves when reprimanded for inappropriate behaviour in public.

This incident might be a good point of discussion with perhaps your student leaders or with some of your older classes. This is especially because it is not an open-and-shut case. The young man was undoubtedly wrong, possibly even in the eyes of the law for voluntarily causing hurt. But how much leeway should be given for his psychological disorders?

It might help your students to see that there are many ways of looking at a situation. There is always more than one perspective. As importantly that there are some issues in life where there is no satisfactory solution.

For those of you working towards a more inclusive society in your school, this might be a good starting point to talk about the students with special education needs and how they should be viewed as people first, disability incidentally.

For your older students especially, please do not use this incident to show how rude young people are and how they should behave better.

Questions for possible use in a class setting

1. What did you think of Alex's action in pushing the old lady off the bus?
2. Would it have mattered if it was a young lady?
3. Would it have mattered if it was a young man?
4. Do you think Alex is excused because he has some psychological problems of his own?
5. Alex did apologise. Is that good enough?
6. If you know an Alex in your class, how would you help him?