

9

Friendship, Cooperation and Ethics

This chapter contains activities to reflect on what it means to be friendly, the qualities that we seek in friends, and the skills involved in becoming and being a good friend. We also address group behaviour – group collaboration and how people might maximize everyone’s wellbeing. Responsible and ethical behaviour includes being aware of how decisions affect others and taking account of this.

Friendliness can be defined as ‘appropriate’ social behaviour and positive interactions with others – often referred to as social skills. This is a pre-requisite to the development of friendship, defined by its reciprocity. You can have friendliness without friendship but not the other way round. The definition of a friend changes with age and to some extent by gender. Boys tend to interact in large activity-based groups, girls in smaller, communication-based groups. You may need to amend some activities here to be sensitive to the needs of students who struggle socially, perhaps have not had a friend and/or may be on the autistic spectrum.

Sentence Completions

- A friendly person would ...
- This class/school is friendly when ...
- A friend is ...
- Having a friend means ...

Silent Statements

Stand up and change places if you:

- have smiled at someone today
- know someone who is shy
- think people sometimes find it difficult to join in a game
- think some people don’t know what to say sometimes
- believe it is OK to disagree with friends sometimes.

Activities with a Partner

Pair Shares

Find two answers to the following questions that you both agree with:

- What are reasons to have friends?
- In what ways might a friend help you feel OK?
- In what ways could you help a friend feel OK?
- If you could go anywhere with your friend, where would you like to go?
- What might spoil a friendship?
- What might mend a friendship?

Paired Interviews

Interview each other about a good friend you had. What was special about this relationship?

Interview each other about activities you enjoy with your friends. What do you like doing most?

What would you do if you wanted to join a game in the playground?

What would you do if someone wanted to join your game in the playground?

Good News

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There are four ways of responding to good news (Gable et al., 2004):

1. Active constructive – showing real pleasure for the other person and giving them credit for any achievement.
2. Passive constructive – minimal comment such as ‘that’s nice’.
3. Active destructive – belittling the good news and finding something negative to say.
4. Passive destructive – ignoring it and talking about something else all together.

Model each of these ways for the whole Circle. The pairs then take it in turns to tell each other about something they have achieved that has pleased them. Each responds first in one of the last three ways and then in an active constructive way.

Discussion

What were the differences in the way you felt?

What would this mean for a relationship?

Why might someone respond in a negative or passive way?

Acrostic Poem

MS

Give each pair some paper, and a word with five to eight letters, such as:

- friend, kindly, helping, trust, loyalty, respect

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This word is written down the page with one letter on each line. The pair agrees a word or sentence beginning with each letter to make an acrostic poem about the word. For example:

Feel happy playing together
Really helps me
Important person
Every day we do things together
Nice nearly all the time
Does funny things.

Both partners have a copy of the poem. One of the pair stands in a circle facing out and their partner faces in. Everyone in the outer Circle takes three steps to their right so they are facing another partner. Both share their poems. This continues until they have been around the Circle reading their poems and hearing several others.

Extension Activity

Try doing these poems as a rap.

Whole Circle Activities

Friendly Questions and Talking Topics

YMS

Ask students in pairs to decide what a friendly question might be and how they might feel about it. They then complete these sentences:

- A friendly question is when ...
- When someone asks us a friendly question we feel ...

The Circle brainstorms topics for today. These might include holidays, TV programs, sporting events, things to do with school, weather, food or festivals. Once students understand what might be a second question after asking 'how are you?', they are ready for the next game.

Speed Dating

MS

Students stand in pairs in concentric circles – one facing in and one facing out. The game starts by pairs saying to each other: 'How are you today?' They then ask one question that could be asked of anyone in the class, such as: 'What did you watch on TV last night?' 'What did you do at the weekend?' When both have had a turn, the outer circle takes three paces to the left and faces another partner to repeat the activity.

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Extension Discussions

What sorts of questions are good ones to ask?

What sorts of questions encourage people to talk?

Facilitators may need to explain the difference between open and closed questions.

Guess the Answer

YMS

Students mill around in the middle of the Circle. At a given signal they partner with someone near them. The teacher calls out a statement and each person has to guess whether or not this is true for their partner. Examples are:

- This person likes broccoli.
- This person is the eldest/youngest in their family.
- This person has broken a bone in their body.
- This person has read all of the Harry Potter books.

Once they have guessed, the person says whether or not it is true. They then repeat in another pair with another question.

Beware Crocodiles

YM

Each pair has a large sheet of newspaper. They walk around together until the leader calls out: 'Beware crocodiles'. They put the paper on the floor to make an island and stand on it. They have to stay there for a count of five. They then fold the paper in half and walk around again. Each time the paper gets folded again until it is so small that pairs have to decide how they are going to stay on the island best. If a pair loses their balance and falls into the 'billabong' before they have got to five, they have been attacked by crocodiles and are 'out'. They return to a seat in the Circle. The winner is the pair that manages to stay on their island longest. This game is also an energizer.

Warmer ... Louder

YM

A volunteer leaves the room and an item (treasure) is hidden. The group decides on a familiar song – the closer the person gets to the treasure the louder the song becomes, and when they move away it becomes softer.

Variations

Saying 'hotter', 'warmer', 'cooler', 'colder'
Clapping, whistling, humming.

Snowball Fight

MS

Each pupil has a piece of A5 paper. On this they write the quality they most like in a friend. Everyone screws up their paper into a ball. At the count of five, each one throws their 'snowball' across the circle. The paper must stay within the circle, not be thrown outside. Participants pick up a snowball and throw it again. This continues for up to 30 seconds. Then at a signal everyone keeps the last 'snowball' they picked up. Each student opens this up in turn and reads what is written inside.

Secret Friend

YMS

Each participant puts their name on a piece of paper or lolly-stick. The paper is folded into four and placed in a container, preferably a cloth bag so it is impossible to see inside. Each person takes out a name. That student is their 'secret friend' for the week. During this time they do some things in school that make that person feel good. These could be brainstormed in advance.

Extension Activities

The next week a Sentence Completion could be: 'I felt good this week because ...' or Silent Statements:

- Stand up and change places if you found out who your secret friend was.
- Stand up and change places if your week was especially nice.

Spoon Race

YMS

(Have a dustpan and brush ready, and if you are using water this activity is best done outside.)

Teams of about five sit in a line one behind the other. Each person has a plastic teaspoon. The person at the back has a container of water, sand, lentils or other 'spoonable' material. At a given signal they take a spoonful and pass it into the teaspoon of the second person in the line and so on, going into every teaspoon until it reaches the person at the other end who pours it into a container such as an egg cup. The winning team is the one who has the most in their front container at the end of 5 minutes or manages to fill the container.

Extension Discussions

How can teams encourage each other?

Does it help the team if people get angry with someone who has a spill?

Basket of Compliments

YM

Have a basket full of coloured scarves. These represent compliments. First the facilitator, then the students take out a scarf and give it to another student saying – 'I would like to compliment ... on his (or her) ...'.

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Compliments can be related to:

- what people do
- ways people behave
- qualities people have.

Pupils may begin with the way their classmates look or what they have – this will change as they begin to understand the broader range of compliments available.

Small Group Activities

Little Miss or Mr

YM

(This game is based on the well-known children's books.)

Each small group is given the name of a Little Miss or Little Mr, such as Little Miss Generous, Little Mr Gentle, all describing a personal quality one might want in a friend. The idea is to draw this character so the rest of the Circle might be able to guess who they are. The group can offer ideas to the person who is drawing or writing. It can include what they would say or do.

Silent Construction

YMS

Each group is given some construction materials in a plastic bag. They do not open this but discuss and decide what they are going to make. After 2 minutes they take out the pieces and make their model in silence. Each group does a 'show and tell' to the Circle and talks about who did what and how they made decisions.

Variations

Simple jigsaw puzzles.

Make the tallest building that will stand up, using cardboard, straws, newspaper and sticky tape.

Make a get well card or congratulations card for someone.

Fancy Dress

MS

Give groups some newspaper, ribbons, any scrap material available, sticky tape, felt pens, stapler and scissors. One person volunteers to be the partygoer. The group has 3 minutes to decide what character they will be going as and another 7 minutes to make the outfit. Each group then shows off the partygoer wearing their creation. This can be a lot of fun!

Ask students to report back on how they worked together and how they felt at the end.

Scavenger Hunt

MS

This activity takes place over a week and helps students establish relationships with others and take responsibility as part of a group.

Group of about four or five are all given the same list of about 12–15 items, such as:

- the make and number plate of a red car
- a postcard from a capital city anywhere in the world
- a picture of a blue tongued lizard
- a tiny screwdriver
- a recording of Irish music
- a striped scarf
- a pair of black and white dice
- a piece of rope tied with a reef knot
- a photograph of the group
- a cake made by at least two of the group
- a European stamp
- something growing.

In the first Circle the group decides how they are going to collect the items, who does what, and how they will communicate about how the hunt is going. The following week each group does a 'show and tell', talks about what they did, how it went and the skills they used to get to their goal.

Newspaper Game

MS

Each team is given a newspaper in the wrong order, with some pages upside down. The teams are given 2 minutes to decide how they are going to work together to put the paper in the right order. At a given signal they get to work – the first team to hold up the completed paper wins.

Feedback: How did the groups organize themselves? Did everyone have a role to play?

Variation

Choose different leaders.

Choose only one person who can speak.

Instant Treasure Hunt

YMS

The Circle is divided into groups of five or six, who sit together. The facilitator stands in the middle of the circle and calls out: 'Bring me ...'. Here are some suggestions:

- a pair of shoes that don't match
- a piece of jewellery
- a picture of a black cat
- someone who has the same letter in both their first and last names

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- the oldest person in the group giving the youngest one a piggy back
- something worn inside out
- a handstand
- a smile.

The team who gets there first with each item wins a point – the first team to score five wins. If two or more people from the same team arrive with the object the team loses a point so the team has to decide whose turn it is to be the ‘giver’.

Body Letters

YM

The facilitator calls out a letter of the alphabet and the group makes themselves into that shape. Teams can do this upright or on the floor, whichever is easiest. Then get the whole class to make a word with the same number of letters as groups.

Discussions

How did everyone do that?

What worked, what would they do differently next time?

Who wanted to tell everyone what to do?

Who wanted to be told what to do?

Did people build on one another’s ideas?

Variations

Do this using sign language only.

Make it into a race or making the neatest letter.

Collective Categories

YMS

Three volunteers stand as a team in the middle of the Circle. A leader seated in the Circle is given a ball to be passed around when the game begins. The facilitator calls out a group name and the team shout out as many words in that category as they can before the ball gets all the way round to the leader, who calls ‘STOP’. Categories can be:

- animals
- vegetables
- things you would find in a bathroom
- ball sports
- things to sit on
- musical instruments
- forms of transport.

The group of three is asked if it helped with ideas to hear what others said. Give several teams a turn.

Alphabet Lists

YMS

Each team is given about 12 categories on paper. The leader calls out a letter of the alphabet and each team has to write down something in each category that begins with that letter within a given time limit, such as 3 minutes. If this is run as a competition you might give one point for getting an item in that category and an extra point for something that is different from everyone else. This encourages creativity.

Think Again – Uses For...

MS

Give each team an everyday object such as a coat hanger, a table or a glove and ask them to identify as many different uses for it as they can. They can be as imaginative as they like, including making it a different size or made from a different material. This activity supports the development of the divergent thinking critical to innovation.

Rights and Responsibilities

MS

Although making ethical decisions can be complex it is mostly related to what is most fair. Copy the table below and cut up so each right and responsibility is on a different piece of paper. Small groups match up the rights with the responsibilities. Now ask groups to see if they can put these in order with the most important first. There are no right or wrong answers, but the group needs to give reasons for their choice.

Table 9.1 Our Rights and responsibilities

Our Rights	Our Responsibilities
Not to be accused of something I haven't done	To check with people what matters to them
Not to be made fun of because I am different in some way	To listen to what other people have to say, not ignore, interrupt or put them down
To be treated fairly	To accept and celebrate that we are all different
To be listened to	Not to accuse others
	To be honest and own up when I do something wrong
To have a say in what concerns me	To have courage and stand up for others when you see them being treated badly
For others to stand up for me	To be fair to others



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True or False

MS

In small groups the students discuss one of these statements at a time and decide whether they think it is true or false, or 'it depends', giving their reasons for their answer to the Circle:

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- It is always bad to fail a test.
- If you don't join in with cyber-bullying you might get targeted.
- Some people are just born bad.
- It would be great to be famous.
- There is no point in worrying.
- It's not what happens to you that matters most – it's how you deal with it.
- Only girls cry.
- We are more afraid of what we don't know than what we do know.
- Teachers should always be strict.

Fair or Unfair: What Should Happen Now?

YM

Give the scenarios in Table 9.2 to small groups and ask them to decide what is fair or unfair. They then discuss what should happen now. Teachers could choose just one scenario for the whole Circle or give different groups different scenarios. In either case, ensure there is time for feedback.

Embedding Circle Solutions as a Tool for Wellbeing

Friends and friendship is an issue in every class but can be particularly problematic in primary school. There will be daily opportunities to encourage students to reflect on and use their Circle learning.

Growing a Tree of Friendship

YM

This has been a successful activity in many classes. It both acknowledges pro-social behaviours but continually gives pupils ideas of what are friendly things to do and say. For less skilled students you may need to structure success experiences in the first instance.

The bare branches of a tree are drawn on the classroom wall. Children are told that they are growing their 'tree of friendship' for the class. Pupils are asked to look out for each other doing and saying especially friendly things in class and playtimes and then report back to the Circle. Identified children are given a leaf with their name on it and what they said or did – the leaf is placed on the tree that grows each week for a whole term.

Extension

Blossoms for group friendliness!

Random Acts of Kindness

MS

There is evidence that doing things for others increases our own wellbeing. Put up a pinboard in the classroom (or even the corridor) and ask everyone to put up little thank you notes for random acts of kindness. Include adults. Ask people to also write how it made them feel. This board will become a focus of discussion. Ensure that children with special educational needs have the opportunity do things for others and be acknowledged for this – they are usually on the receiving end.

Table 9.2 Fair or unfair?

What happens?	Fair or unfair?	Do we need to change what happens – and how? If not, why not?
Timmy has been playing with the bike for a long time. Abby asks for a go but he says he hasn't finished yet.		
The plate of cookies is for all the children but some take too many so others miss out.		
There is only one book between two people. Cassie holds the book in front of her and Daniel can't see it.		
Sana cannot read yet so the teacher spends more time helping her than the other children.		
There are lots of jobs that need doing in the classroom. The teacher has made a list so that everyone has a turn.		
On the table are eight coloured pens for six children to use. Matthew has got three in his hand; he says he's using them.		
When the teacher asks the whole class a question Sam shouts out the answer.		
Monica is going to have a party. She asks all the girls in her class except for Izzy.		

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Pass It On Gotcha Cards

YM

Have five to ten Gotcha cards that say things like:

- I gotcha inviting someone into a game
- I gotcha asking how someone was today
- I gotcha giving someone a helping hand

These are not rewards but acknowledgements and are first given out by a teacher who is specific about why someone is receiving this. Once someone has been given a Gotcha card they then look out for someone showing the same friendly behaviour and pass it on. Have just one or two circulating at a time.