

Let's talk about healthy relationships: friendships and conflict (11-13) assembly plan

Assembly plan (20-25 minutes)



The aim of this assembly is to introduce key ideas about relationships, healthy friendships, conflict and managing emotions. It supports students to understand how their thoughts, feelings and responses can influence situations and prepares them for further learning in the lesson.

Resources

- Assembly slides

Key Vocabulary



Healthy relationship, disagreement, conflict, resolution, empathy, respect, communication, mental wellbeing, emotional regulation

Students will have the opportunity to:

- understand the difference between disagreement and conflict
- recognise common causes of conflict, including misunderstandings and strong emotions
- explore how feelings can build and influence behaviour
- understand how responses can affect what happens next
- be introduced to simple strategies to respond in a more positive and respectful way

Please note:

The suggested timings are a guide. This assembly is designed to be flexible and can be adapted to suit the needs of your setting and the time available. It includes opportunities for student participation, with discussion and activities built in throughout. If more appropriate, the content can be delivered to smaller groups, during form time or across shorter sessions.

Slide	Notes
2	Learning outcomes Explain that the assembly focuses on friendships, responses in different situations, and how these can affect both the individual and others. As students move through Year 7 and Year 8, friendships may become more important, and disagreements or misunderstandings may happen more often. This is a normal part of relationships. The focus is on recognising how to manage these situations in a healthy and respectful way. By the end, students should have a clearer understanding of how communication, emotions and responses can influence relationships.
3	Follow me Students begin by copying a simple, steady rhythm that you demonstrate, such as clapping or tapping a consistent beat. Before beginning, explain that the activity is not really about getting the rhythm perfect. It is about noticing how people respond when something familiar suddenly changes. Once students are comfortable, gradually introduce small changes to the pattern. These changes might include: • changing the pace by making the rhythm slightly faster or slower • adding pauses or gaps in the pattern • changing the sequence or order of beats or movements After the activity, ask: • <i>did it feel easy at the start?</i> • <i>did it become harder when the pattern changed?</i> • <i>did they make mistakes even when they understood the task?</i> • <i>what helped them keep up?</i>



Slide	Notes
3	Explain that it is often easier to respond when things feel consistent and predictable. When patterns change or become more complicated, people can find it harder to respond calmly or confidently. Link this to relationships. Explain that people often respond in familiar ways during disagreements or stressful situations. Sometimes these reactions happen automatically because they are used to certain patterns of behaviour. Highlight that, just like the rhythm changed, situations in relationships can also change. However, if people always respond in the same way, it can sometimes make situations worse or negatively affect others without meaning to. Explain that the assembly will encourage students to notice patterns in their responses, pause before reacting and think about whether there may be a more helpful or positive response they could choose.
4	What is the difference between a disagreement and a conflict? Ask students to quickly discuss the difference with a partner (30–60 seconds). Prompt them to think about what each might look like and how things can escalate. Take a few responses and acknowledge different ideas.
5	What is conflict? Explain that not all disagreements are negative. Part of having a healthy friendship is to have disagreements. This can be about anything! Your interests, opinions and hobbies. We are all different and have different likes, dislikes and opinions. In a friendship, this allows us to hear the opinions of our friends and not get to the stage of falling out with each other. This is called having a healthy disagreement. It's what makes us and our friendships interesting. A disagreement with our friend might turn into a conflict if we are unable to resolve arguments and work through our differences. A conflict is a serious disagreement and can be part of an unhealthy relationship. Conflicts can be challenging for our wellbeing because they can be upsetting. Conflict resolution is how people work through and end a conflict in a way that feels manageable and fair for everyone. This might sometimes involve compromise, where both people make small changes or meet in the middle.
6	Why do conflicts happen? Explain that conflict is a normal part of friendships and relationships, and that it does not always mean something is wrong. Explain that people do not always understand situations in the same way. Tone, body language and messages can be interpreted differently, especially online. Some people may also find social cues easier or harder to read, which can lead to misunderstandings even when intentions are positive. Go through each point briefly, using simple examples where helpful. Which of these do you think happens most often in friendships? • <i>Do you think any of these happen more online or in person?</i> • <i>Which of these do you think is hardest to deal with, and why?</i> Take a few responses.
7	How do we respond in situations? Explain that when something happens that creates a strong feeling, such as happiness, sadness, anger or nervousness, that feeling can build and become more intense over time. When emotions feel strong, it can be harder to think clearly, which may affect how people respond. These feelings can reach a peak and may feel overwhelming in the moment, but they do not last forever and will begin to settle. Remind students that people can experience more than one emotion at the same time, even if examples only show one feeling. For example, during a disagreement someone may feel frustrated, but also embarrassed, worried, disappointed or left out. Make the link to mental wellbeing: this is about how we think, feel and cope with everyday situations. When emotions feel intense, they can affect wellbeing and how people manage situations, particularly in friendships or during conflict. Ask students to briefly reflect on a time they felt a strong emotion: • <i>How did it affect what they did?</i> • <i>How did they feel afterwards?</i> Explain that recognising how we feel is an important first step in managing how we respond. When people are more aware of their feelings, it can help them make more considered choices, which can support their wellbeing and their relationships.

8	How could you resolve a conflict with your friends? Explain that in situations with others, especially when emotions are strong, it can be easy to react quickly. Highlight that we may not always control what happens first, but we can control what we do next. Explain that by pausing, thinking about what might happen, and choosing a response, we can influence how the situation develops. Make the connection: Looking after our own mental health includes building positive relationships with others. Learning conflict resolution strategies helps us improve our own wellbeing and maintain healthy friendships.
9	Strategies to support conflict resolution Explain that there are simple strategies that can help manage and resolve conflict in a positive way • Listening to understand - Listen carefully to what the other person is saying so that you understand how they might be feeling and why they are acting in that way, instead of only talking. • Showing empathy- Empathy is sharing someone else's feelings or experiences by imagining what it would be like to be in their situation. • Communicating calmly (tone, words, body language) - This is about what you say, but also how you say it. When we are upset about something, it is easy to show this through our words, our voice and our body language. It is not always easy to find the right words to explain how we are feeling. Sometimes it can help to take some time first, for example by writing down thoughts or feelings before having a conversation later. • Staying calm (e.g. breathing strategies) - Being aware of our own wellbeing and using self-care strategies to regulate our emotions and remain calm. A good way to keep ourselves calm is by doing breathing exercises, such as 5 finger breathing (trace up one side of each finger as you breathe in and down the other side as you breathe out). Prompt class to suggest how they would keep themselves calm based on previous discussions • Asking a trusted adult for support if needed - Sometimes we might arrive at a point in the conflict where it is too challenging to resolve by ourselves. Reach out to someone else that everyone in the conflict trusts – this could be a class teacher, a mental health champion, etc. Reinforce that these strategies are skills that can be developed over time and that different strategies may be helpful in different situations.
10	Which do you think is more helpful? Explain that students will look at the situation and decide which response they think is more helpful. Explain that there is not always one right or wrong answer, as different responses may be more helpful in different situations. Highlight that it is not about using as many strategies as possible, but about choosing the most appropriate ones for the situation. Encourage students to think about which response is more likely to lead to a positive outcome and why. • Which response is more helpful? • Which strategies can they identify in each option? • What might happen next because of that response? Ask students to vote for the option they think is more helpful.
11	Why does this matter? Explain that even if something was not meant to cause harm, it can still have an impact on others. Explain that while we cannot always control what happens, we can think about how we respond next. Link back to earlier learning: Emphasise that choosing a thoughtful and respectful response can help prevent situations from escalating and support more positive relationships. If a situation feels difficult or does not improve, it is important to talk to someone. This could be a member of staff in school or another trusted adult. Reinforce: Using conflict resolution strategies can help people manage situations in a way that supports relationships and wellbeing.
12	Exploring this further Explain that students will build on this learning in their next lesson and practise these skills.