

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

- 2 What is this resource and how do I use it?
- 2 About the lesson resources
- 3 Working together with parents and carers
- 4 Creating a supportive school environment
- 5 How can I support my students?
- 5 Managing your own wellbeing
- 6 Further information



What is this resource and how do I use it?

This guidance supports the *Let's talk about healthy relationships: friendships and conflict* lesson resources for students aged 11–13. It provides an overview of the resource's aims, along with some practical suggestions to help education staff feel more confident when delivering the assembly and lesson, and when supporting students.

You may find it helpful to read this short guidance before delivering the sessions, particularly if you are supporting students who may be experiencing challenges in their peer relationships or navigating the transition into Year 7 and Year 8.

About the lesson resources

The focus of this lesson resources is to support students to develop skills for managing friendships, including how to understand, respond to and resolve conflict in ways that support their mental wellbeing.

Informed by insights from staff and students in Year 7 and Year 8, it reflects the increasing importance of friendships at this stage and the growing role of online communication. The resources introduce key concepts through an assembly and build on these through a follow-up lesson with opportunities for reflection, discussion and scenario-based learning.

The content provides opportunities for students to develop emotional literacy, practise communication skills and explore how their responses can influence situations. It supports students to build confidence in setting boundaries, managing peer pressure and navigating both face-to-face and online interactions, including group chats.

This toolkit has been developed in line with the updated [RSHE guidance](#) for England, drawing specifically on curriculum content relating to respectful relationships, online safety, peer influence, boundaries, and mental wellbeing. More information can be found in the curriculum guidance included in this toolkit.

These conversations can also provide an opportunity to discuss wider influences on relationships, including online interactions, peer dynamics and social expectations. If these topics arise, it can be helpful to approach them with curiosity and care, creating space for students to feel heard and encouraging reflection on respectful and safe behaviour in different contexts.

Working together with parents and carers

Supporting students to build healthy friendships and navigate conflict is often most effective when schools and families work together.

Education staff may wish to:

- reassure families that disagreement is a normal part of relationships, and that students will be learning how to respond safely and respectfully
- encourage parents and carers to have calm, open conversations at home if friendship issues arise
- suggest that families help students think through who they can speak to if they feel worried, pressured or left out
- remind parents and carers to contact the school if they have concerns about their child's wellbeing or peer relationships
- signpost families to further information or support where needed, recognising that some may welcome guidance in navigating these topics
- offer guidance or conversation prompts to help discuss friendship issues at home
- provide opportunities for parents and carers to ask questions or seek advice from staff

This can support a shared approach between home and school, helping students feel more confident to seek support and use the strategies introduced in the lesson.





Creating a supportive school environment

Most students who experience challenges in friendships or conflict do not require specialist intervention. Schools can play an important role in both prevention and early support.

Creating a sense of belonging is a key part of this. Students should feel valued within their school community and know they can trust the adults around them. Positive, consistent relationships between students and staff, based on mutual respect, can make a significant difference.

Staff can also support children and young people build healthy peer relationships through a whole-school approach to mental wellbeing. This includes high quality relationship education, an effective whole-school bullying policy, and opportunities for student voice. Staff can also help students to name and manage their feelings.

These resources are best used as part of a whole-school approach. Our [5 Steps Framework](#) offers free, evidence-based guidance for embedding an inclusive approach throughout your setting.

How can I support my students?

There are several ways education staff can support students who may be experiencing friendship difficulties or navigating conflicts.

Provide a safe environment of open communication



This may be within the classroom or through access to a designated member of staff. Let students know when you are available to listen and offer support, and signpost them to any additional help available.

Listen to understand



Approach conversations with curiosity and openness. Avoid making assumptions, minimising feelings, rushing to reassure them, or telling them to 'not worry about it' or 'relax'.

Plan ahead together



Co-create strategies with students for managing difficult social situations including 'exit plans' they can use if they feel unsure or uncomfortable. Reassure them that it's ok to step away or to make an excuse if something doesn't feel right.

Model healthy communication



Where appropriate, share your own school experience of peer difficulties and how you handled it.

Foster independence



Support students to develop confidence in their own judgement and feel able to make decisions that are right for them.

Help pupils practise assertiveness



Support them to explore boundary-setting through discussion or role play and help them develop phrases to say no in different ways. Help students understand that it's not possible to please everyone and that it's okay to make choices that feel right for them.

If you are at all concerned about a child or young person, you should always speak to your designated safeguarding lead or senior mental health lead as a matter of priority. They will be able to advise on suitable next steps and speaking to them about any concerns should always be the first action you take, ahead of any of the suggestions on this page.

Managing your own wellbeing

It's crucial that, when working with and supporting others, you consider your own wellbeing too.

Be mindful of your own boundaries and triggers, especially when supporting students through emotionally complex situations. If you have concerns, speak with your school leadership team, or contact [Education Support](#) for confidential advice. If you continue to feel affected, you may find it helpful to speak to your GP.



Further information:

- [Mentally healthy schools – Relationships and belonging](#)
- [Mentally healthy schools – Peer pressure](#)
- [Mentally healthy schools – Bullying and cyberbullying](#)
- [Mentally healthy schools – Vulnerable children](#)
- [Mentally Healthy Schools – Internet and social media](#)
- [NHS Maintaining healthy relationships and mental wellbeing](#)
- [Mental Health Training For Schools and Colleges | Anna Freud](#)