

Choose Respect

What does respect look like when things are difficult?

Suitable for: Upper primary and secondary, adaptable by age

Time: 45–60 minutes

Theme: Anti-Bullying Week 2024 — Choose Respect

Permanent resource: Yes

Learning aims

Pupils will have opportunities to:

- explore what respect means in everyday behaviour
- distinguish respect from simply agreeing with someone
- consider how disagreement, humour and group behaviour can become harmful
- explore how respect can be shown when relationships are difficult
- identify practical choices that reduce harm without pretending everyone has to like one another

Important note for staff

Use fictional situations throughout. Pupils should not be required to disclose personal experiences.

If a safeguarding concern is raised, follow the school's procedures.

1. What is respect?

Write:

What does respect actually look like?

Ask pupils for examples.

They may suggest:

- listening
- not humiliating someone
- giving people space
- keeping boundaries
- disagreeing without attacking
- including someone
- not sharing something private
- taking another person seriously

Then ask:

Do we have to like someone in order to treat them with respect?

This is an important distinction.

Key idea

Respect does not require friendship or agreement. It affects how we choose to treat people.

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2. Respect, disrespect or depends?

Give groups short fictional examples and ask them to place each under:

Respectful
Disrespectful
Depends

Examples:

- A pupil disagrees strongly with a friend in front of the class.
- Someone makes a joke about another pupil and both people laugh.
- A group repeatedly uses a nickname that one person dislikes.
- A pupil asks another person to leave them alone.
- Someone challenges a friend who is making fun of another pupil.
- A student refuses to join a group activity because they feel uncomfortable.

Encourage discussion about context.

The same behaviour can mean different things depending on intention, impact, repetition and relationship.

3. The disagreement challenge

Give each group a harmless disagreement, such as:

Two pupils want different music at an event.

Two friends strongly disagree about a football team.

A group cannot agree which idea to use for a project.

Ask pupils to create **two short versions**.

Version one: disagreement becomes personal and disrespectful.

Version two: people still disagree, but the disagreement remains respectful.

Ask:

What changed?

Look for things such as tone, interruption, mockery, personal insults, listening, boundaries and willingness to move on.

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4. When humour stops being funny

Present:

Someone keeps making the same joke about another pupil. The pupil laughed the first few times but now looks uncomfortable. The group keeps laughing.

Ask:

At what point does humour become disrespectful?

Explore:

- whether the person can genuinely opt out
- repetition
- embarrassment
- power within the group
- whether others joining in changes the situation
- whether “I was only joking” ends responsibility

Then ask:

How could someone in the group change what happens next?

5. Respect and boundaries

Ask:

Can saying “no” be respectful?

Explore examples:

- “Please stop.”
- “I don’t want to talk about that.”
- “Don’t share that photo.”
- “I need some space.”
- “I disagree.”

Discuss how respecting someone also means recognising their boundaries.

Then ask:

What happens when a boundary is repeatedly ignored?

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6. Respect when someone has caused harm

Give a fictional situation:

A pupil has repeatedly excluded another person from a group and has now been challenged about it.

Ask:

Can we hold someone responsible and still treat them with respect?

Explore the difference between:

- addressing behaviour
- humiliating the person
- asking them to take responsibility
- permanently labelling them

Key idea

Respect does not mean excusing harmful behaviour. Accountability can also be respectful.

7. One respectful choice

Ask pupils to complete:

“Respect can look like...”

Then ask for one example involving:

- a friend
- someone they disagree with
- somebody being left out
- a person who has made a mistake
- someone asking for help

Final reflection

Complete:

“I can disagree without...”

“One respectful choice that can change a situation is...”

Closing message

Choosing respect is not about being nice all the time. It is about how we treat people, especially when things are difficult.

Follow-up possibilities

This lesson could lead into:

- **Different, Similar, Connected**
- **Group Power: Help or Harm?**
- tutor discussion about boundaries and humour
- peer-support work
- reviewing classroom or group expectations
- creating pupil examples of what respect looks like in practice