



The
STEVE
SINNOTT
FOUNDATION



BUILDING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS
Recognising and Understanding Relationships at Home and
School A Teaching Resource for Primary Schools

INTRODUCTION

The Importance of healthy relationships for children's well-being

Welcome to this teaching resource on recognising and building healthy relationships at home and at school. As primary school educators, we play a crucial role in shaping the foundation of children's social and emotional development. Healthy relationships are like nurturing soil for the growth of confident, happy, and resilient individuals. This resource aims to highlight the significance of fostering positive relationships in children's lives and equipping them with essential life skills.

Emotional Development: Healthy relationships provide children with a safe and supportive environment to express their emotions. When children feel heard, understood, and loved, they develop emotional intelligence, which helps them manage their feelings and build empathy towards others.

Social Skills: Positive relationships encourage social interaction, collaboration, and teamwork. Children learn essential social skills like communication, sharing, and cooperation, which are crucial for thriving in various social settings throughout their lives.

Boundary Setting: Experiencing, instituting and maintaining healthy boundaries is helpful to children when these are put in place by adults and helpful as modelled for social relationships and for the future.

Self-Esteem and Confidence: Nurturing relationships boost children's self-esteem and confidence. Encouragement, praise, and constructive feedback help them recognize their strengths and build a positive self-image.

Resilience: In healthy relationships, children learn to cope with challenges and setbacks. These experiences foster resilience, helping them bounce back from adversity and develop a "can-do" attitude.

Academic Performance: A supportive and caring environment at home and in school positively impacts children's academic performance. Feeling secure and valued encourages them to engage actively in their studies and strive for excellence.

Emotional Regulation: Through healthy relationships, children learn to regulate their emotions and manage stress effectively. These skills are vital for maintaining mental well-being and coping with the ups and downs of life.

Conflict Resolution: Positive relationships teach children how to navigate conflicts peacefully and resolve disagreements. These problem-solving skills are essential for maintaining healthy relationships in the future.

Physical Health: Research shows that children who experience supportive and nurturing relationships tend to have better physical health. Emotional wellbeing makes it easier to maintain a healthy lifestyle but also the stress of disregulated/disregulating relationships directly causes health issues.

Objectives of the teaching resource

The primary goal of this resource is to educate children about healthy and unhealthy relationships, including issues surrounding domestic abuse, without causing fear or anxiety. By discussing the topic openly, age-appropriately, and with empathy, you can help them understand the importance of respect and safety in all relationships.

- To offer a structured approach to exploring this topic and to offer a variety of activity ideas that you can choose from and build on to support this learning in your own way.
- To support primary school teachers in teaching the difference between a healthy relationship and an unhealthy relationship, at home, school, and amongst peers.
- To help teach children how to act with respect for each other and support the value of respect for all genders.
- To work towards mitigating unhealthy relationships in later life and avoid possible harm.
- To raise children's awareness about bullying and/or domestic abuse in their own lives.
- To help build better school environments, enabling all children to fulfil their potential.

How to use this teaching resource

The resource is divided into four topics with a resource section at the end. You can select topics or parts of topics that you wish to introduce to your students, or you can use the whole resource.

The resource is for teachers to gain ideas and approaches to the topic. The coloured boxes give some background to the topic area being investigated. The white boxes offer an example exercise or activity that you could do with the class.

We hope that this resource will give you ideas of topics and activities to help you embark on this opportunity to help younger children explore and understand ideas around healthy relationships at home and at school.

We work internationally and it is important that we consider the context of each country we work in. Each country has different laws and practice and teachers in each area will know how best to adapt this resource for their specific context.

We have educators in Sierra Leone, The Gambia, South Africa and the USA who are adapting the resource for use locally.

LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR LEARNING ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

Year 1 & 2

Aiming high

- LO: To know what I'm good at and what I could improve on
- LO: To explain the benefit a positive learning attitude
- LO: To talk about jobs people can do
- LO: To understand how interests and skills make you suited for a job
- LO: To think about things I would like to achieve in the future
- LO: To understand feelings associated with change

Be yourself

- LO: To discuss what makes me unique
- LO: To describe my feelings to others
- LO: To discuss things that make me feel happy
- LO: To understand what makes me feel negative emotions and learn how to manage them
- LO: To recognise how change and loss make me feel
- LO: To share my opinion clearly and confidently

It's my body

- LO: To understand that what happens to my body is my choice
- LO: To make healthy choices about sleep and exercise
- LO: To make healthy choices about food and drink
- LO: To understand how to maintain good personal hygiene
- LO: To recognise when something is not safe to eat or drink
- LO: To understand how to keep safe

Year 3 & 4

Aiming High

- LO: To identify achievements and suggest how my actions can help me achieve.
- LO: To identify personal goals and suggest actions I can take to achieve them.
- LO: To explain how a positive learning attitude can help me learn new things.
- LO: To identify the skills and attributes needed to do certain jobs.
- LO: To understand that gender does not limit us in becoming what we want to in the future.
- LO: To discuss what job I might like to do when I grow up and what skills I will need to achieve this.

Be Yourself

- LO: To say the things about myself that I am proud of.
- LO: To identify the feelings I have and describe how different emotions feel.
- LO: To describe different ways to cope with any uncomfortable feelings I may have and understand why this is important.
- LO: To know how to be assertive.
- LO: To explore messages given by the media and decide if they are helpful or harmful.
- LO: To identify different strategies I can use if I make a mistake.

It's My Body

- LO: To know how to say no.
- LO: To know how to keep my body healthy.
- LO: To know why it is important to get enough sleep.
- LO: To know how good hygiene helps to stop the spread of disease.
- LO: To know how to take medicine safely and keep safe around drugs.
- LO: To know how to make better choices and choose healthy habits.

Year 5 & 6

Think Positive

- LO: I understand the link between thoughts, feelings and behaviours.
- LO: I understand the concept and impact of positive thinking.
- LO: I can recognise and manage uncomfortable feelings.
- LO: I understand the importance of making good choices.
- LO: I can use mindfulness techniques in my everyday life
- LO: I can apply a growth mindset in my everyday life.

Aiming high

- LO: I can understand how people learn new things and achieve certain goals.
- LO: I can understand that a positive attitude towards learning can help us succeed in life
- LO: I can identify opportunities that may become available to me in the future and I am aware how to make the most of them.
- LO: I can understand that gender does not determine what jobs people can do.
- LO: I can understand why it is important to develop certain skills to prepare for the world of work.
- LO: I can discuss my goals for the future and the steps I need to take to achieve them.

This resource has been developed by The Steve Sinnott Foundation

<https://www.stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk>

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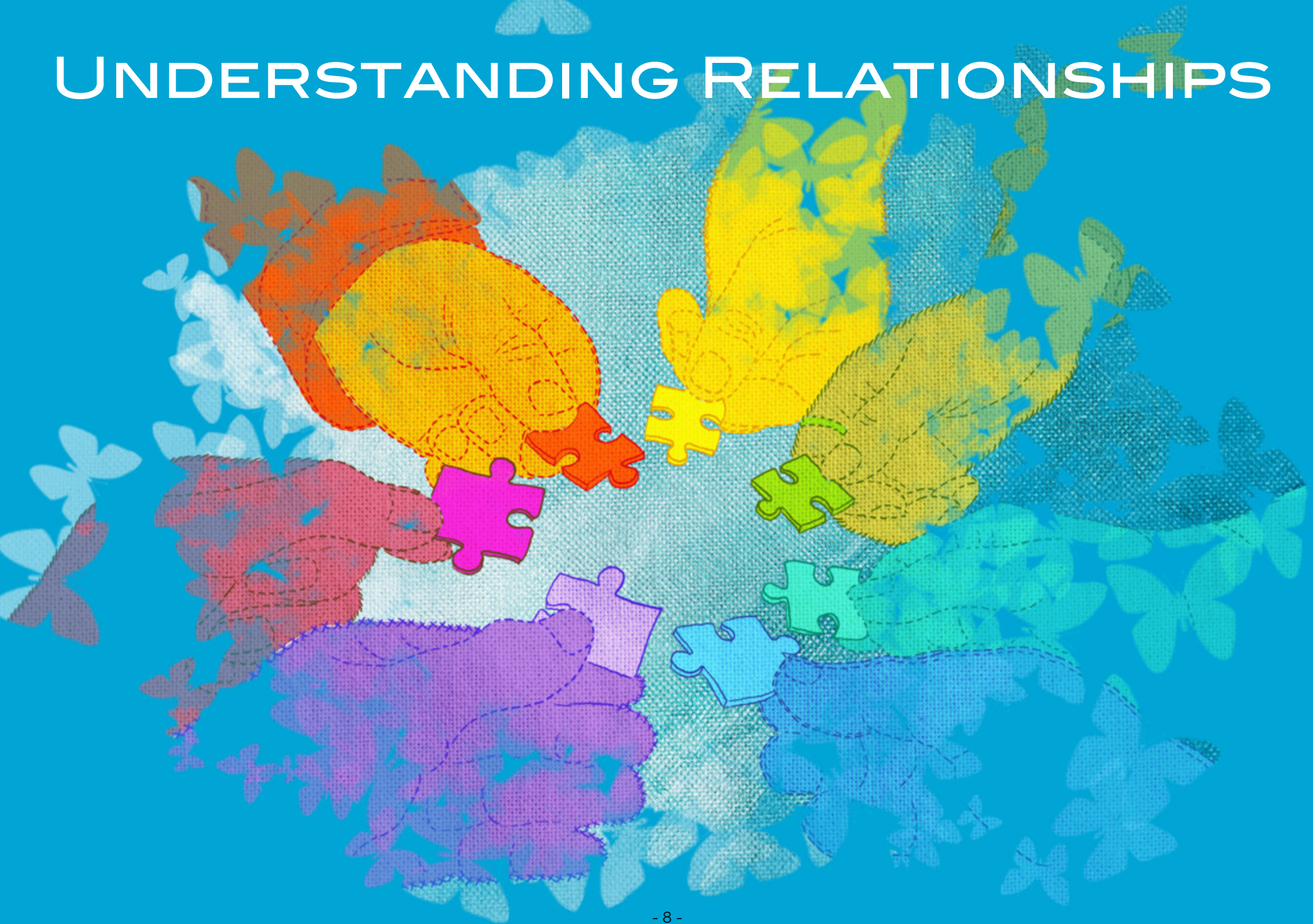
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UNDERSTANDING RELATIONSHIPS



A. Different types of relationships (family, friends, teachers)

Understanding the different types of relationships is an important lesson for primary school children as it helps them navigate their social world with clarity and empathy. Relationships come in various forms, such as family, friends, teachers, and classmates.

Family relationships are built in many different ways. They may have same sex, transexual, or bisexual parents, step-families, grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, or legally appointed carers as the main carers of children. There may also be extended family members, friends and community members that can provide a foundation of love and support.

Friendships are based on shared interests and mutual trust, fostering joy and companionship.

Teacher-student relationships play a vital role in fostering a respectful and caring bond that promotes learning and growth.

Classroom relationships with peers create a sense of belonging and cooperation.

By recognizing and appreciating these diverse relationships, children learn to value the uniqueness of each connection and develop essential social skills that enrich their lives.

A1. Mapping activity idea

Draw a map of as many relationships in your life as you want to. It might look like an extended family tree, or a mind map.

- Who is connected to whom?
- How do they connect to you?
- What words would you use to describe these relationships (aunt, step mum, half brother, best friend, teacher, etc)

Materials:

- Large sheets of coloured paper
- Pens, felt pens, pencils

Method:

Start by making one card for each relationship or name. Next, arrange the cards on the large coloured paper to explore how these relationships work together as a map. Draw lines from each card to represent the connections.



B. Definition of a healthy relationship

A healthy relationship is a bond built on mutual respect, trust, and open communication. In a healthy relationship, each person's thoughts and feelings are valued, and both individuals treat each other with kindness and empathy. There is space for individual growth and expression, and conflicts are resolved through peaceful dialogue and compromise.

Healthy relationships and healthy boundaries foster a sense of safety and support, allowing each person to be their authentic selves without fear of judgment or harm.

It is necessary for children to learn that healthy relationships are essential for their emotional well-being and that nurturing such connections empowers them to build strong, positive connections with others throughout their lives.

B1. Art activity idea

What does a healthy relationship look like to you? Have some fun drawing what this could look like.



C. Statistics and the global perspective

Setting the scene for enabling children to explore relationships and to identify both healthy and unhealthy characteristics can be done through storytelling, statistics or asking questions.

Domestic abuse can happen in homes all around the world. It is not limited to any specific country or culture. If you choose to share some basic statistics, keep it simple and age-appropriate. For example 'in some places, about 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men experience domestic abuse at some point in their lives'.

C1. Storytelling activity idea

When using folk tales to explore this topic with children, it's essential to facilitate discussions and reflections on the messages conveyed in the stories.

Cinderella: This classic tale can be used to illustrate the importance of kindness, respect, and not judging others based on appearances. It also highlights the significance of equal treatment and the dangers of mistreatment and abuse from others, such as Cinderella's stepmother and stepsisters.

The Lion's Whisker (Ethiopia): An Ethiopian folk tale that follows a stepmother's dangerous quest in which she must pluck three whiskers from a fierce lion's chin in order to gain her stepson's trust, thus a seemingly impossible problem can be handled with patience and bravery. ([Read more here](#)).

East of the Sun and West of the Moon (Norway): A Norwegian story that tells the tale of a poor girl who must make a perilous journey to break the spell placed upon her beloved, a prince who has been transformed into a polar bear. This tale can be used to discuss the importance of communication, trust, and mutual respect in a relationship. ([Read more here](#)).

D. Identifying positive and negative aspects of relationships

By discussing and understanding both positive and negative aspects of relationships, children develop the skills to build and maintain healthy connections that contribute to their overall happiness and social development.

Positive Aspects of Relationships:

- Kindness and empathy towards each other.
- Respecting each other's feelings, opinions, and boundaries.
- Trusting and being trustworthy.
- Active listening and open communication.
- Supporting each other's goals and dreams.
- Sharing and taking turns.
- Collaborating and working as a team.
- Apologizing and forgiving when mistakes happen.
- Feeling safe and comfortable around each other.
- Encouraging and celebrating each other's achievements.

Negative Aspects of Relationships:

- Disrespectful language or behaviour.
- Ignoring or dismissing someone's feelings or ideas.
- Being dishonest.
- Being controlling or manipulative.
- Bullying or teasing.
- Not letting others speak or be heard or being isolated
- Not respecting personal boundaries.
- Not being there for each other during difficult times.
- Putting others down or making hurtful jokes.
- Feeling afraid or unsafe around someone.

Teaching children to recognize these positive and negative aspects of relationships will empower them to build and maintain healthy connections and seek help if they encounter harmful situations. By fostering their understanding of healthy interactions, we can promote a positive and supportive social environment for all students.

D1. Storymaking activity idea

Make up your own story about a relationship that starts off as a negative or unhelpful relationship, and ends up as a positive or enjoyable one.

- What is the difficulty with the relationship at the start?
- What happens to make something change?
- What is the relationship like at the end?



RELATIONSHIPS AT SCHOOL



A. Importance of positive relationships with teachers and classmates

The importance of positive relationships with teachers and classmates cannot be overstated, as they profoundly impact a child's social and academic development.

Positive relationships with teachers create a safe and supportive learning environment where students feel comfortable expressing themselves and asking questions.

When students have strong connections with their teachers, they are more engaged in learning, motivated to excel, and have higher self-esteem.

Similarly, positive relationships with classmates foster a sense of belonging and cooperation, promoting a positive and inclusive classroom culture.

Students who experience healthy interactions with their peers are more likely to develop essential social skills, empathy, and conflict resolution abilities.

By nurturing positive relationships with teachers and classmates, we foster an environment conducive to learning, personal growth, and overall well-being, laying the foundation for a successful and fulfilling educational journey.

B. Building trust and open communication in the classroom

Building trust and open communication in the classroom is fundamental for creating a supportive and thriving learning environment.

As primary school teachers, we play a pivotal role in establishing a sense of safety and reliability for our students.

Trust is cultivated by being consistent, approachable, and demonstrating genuine care for each child. It involves being fair and respectful, valuing their opinions, and celebrating their achievements.

Open communication is fostered by encouraging students to express their thoughts and feelings freely without fear of judgment. Active listening, empathy, and constructive feedback are essential components of this process.

When students feel trusted and heard, they become more engaged, confident, and willing to participate actively in their education.

Building trust and open communication lays the groundwork for a positive classroom dynamic, where every child feels valued and empowered to reach their full potential.

B1. Game activity idea

Trust me: Introducing the idea that trust is a fundamental aspect of any relationship.

Instructions: Organise group into pairs. Allocate each individual as either 'A' or 'B'. 'A's are going to experience *Being Trusting*; the 'B's will experience *Being Trusted*. 'A's will need to stand up, supported by 'B's, and gradually lean backwards until they feel like they will fall. The idea is that 'B's catch 'A's and do not let them fall! If necessary, this can be done with one 'A' and two 'B's to ensure 'A's are not dropped.

Follow up activity: In small groups of 4 or 5 people, come up with a drama that shows the characteristics of a trusting school relationship or the characteristics of a relationship without trust. You will have 10 minutes to come up with the drama and then show to the rest of the group.

C. Encouraging teamwork and cooperation

Discuss teamwork with students and highlight how it benefits everyone in the class.

Use team-building activities and icebreakers to help students get to know each other and build connections.

Assign group projects and activities that require collaboration and cooperation among students.

Create mixed-ability groups to encourage peer support and learning from one another.

Teach effective communication skills, such as active listening and expressing ideas clearly and respectfully.

Encourage students to take turns, share responsibilities, and value each other's contributions.

Praise and recognize teamwork efforts and achievements, reinforcing the importance of working together.

Address conflicts within groups as teachable moments, guiding students on how to resolve disagreements respectfully.

Model teamwork and cooperation in your interactions with students and other staff members.

Celebrate the success of the class as a team, reinforcing the idea that everyone plays a vital role in the classroom community.

Provide opportunities for students to give and receive constructive feedback to improve their teamwork skills.

Integrate cooperative learning strategies, such as think-pair-share or jigsaw activities, into daily lessons.

Incorporate games and activities that require students to collaborate and work together towards a common goal.

Set clear expectations for teamwork and cooperation and discuss these with students regularly.

Create a classroom environment that encourages open communication and sharing of ideas among students.

Encourage students to support and help one another, creating a sense of camaraderie and mutual respect.

Involve students in creating class rules for teamwork and cooperation to promote ownership and commitment.

Encourage students to celebrate each other's strengths and talents, fostering a positive and supportive atmosphere.

C1. Social skills activity idea

Objective: The electric shock game explores teamwork.

Scenario: The teacher is the powerhouse and stands in the middle of the circle of children.

Role-play: The students will stand by one another with their hands down, the teacher will use the word *Go*. As soon as the teacher says *Go* they should hold each others hand, for any break in the chain there is disunity and the team is incomplete. The aim is to have a complete chain with no breaks.

D. Empathy and understanding among peers

Empathy and understanding among peers in school are the building blocks of a compassionate and harmonious learning environment. As primary school teachers, we have a unique opportunity to nurture these essential qualities in our students.

By teaching empathy, we encourage children to put themselves in each other's shoes, understanding and valuing their classmates' feelings, perspectives, and experiences.

Promoting understanding helps children appreciate and celebrate the diversity within the classroom, fostering an inclusive and respectful atmosphere.

Through storytelling, role-playing, and group discussions, we can empower students to communicate effectively and resolve conflicts with empathy and kindness.

By instilling these values, we equip our students with the tools to build strong and meaningful relationships, promoting a positive social dynamic and ensuring every child feels seen, heard, and accepted within the school community. Showing respect for each other's differences, such as cultural backgrounds, interests, and abilities.

Here are some of the actions that demonstrate empathy and understanding:

- Using kind and positive language when communicating with peers, avoiding hurtful or disrespectful words.
- Helping a classmate who is struggling with a task or including them in group activities to make them feel included.
- Standing up against bullying or exclusion, advocating for a safe and inclusive environment for all students.
- Showing empathy by expressing care and concern when a peer is going through a difficult time or experiencing strong emotions.
- Practicing patience and understanding when someone needs extra time to grasp a concept or complete a task.
- Engaging in acts of kindness, such as sharing resources, complimenting each other, or lending a helping hand.
- Considering the impact of their actions on others and taking responsibility for their behaviour.

D1. Role play activity idea

You can invent more scenarios to explore feelings, here is one.

Objective: Demonstrate how to express feelings and respond empathetically.

Scenario: Two friends are playing together, and one of them accidentally breaks the other's favourite toy.

Role-play: Students take turns being the friend who broke the toy and the friend whose toy was broken. They practise saying things like, *"I feel upset because my toy broke,"* and *"I understand it was an accident. Let's find a way to fix it together."*

E. Respect and appreciation for diversity

Respect and appreciation for diversity are essential values we aim to instill in our primary school students. By promoting this we foster an environment where every student feels seen, heard, and respected, setting the stage for a brighter, more tolerant, and harmonious future. As teachers, we play a vital role in creating an inclusive classroom environment where students feel valued and accepted for who they are.

Diversity covers the broad range of differences and variations among people, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, age, socio-economic status, religion, abilities, beliefs, and perspectives. It encompasses the uniqueness and individuality that contribute to a rich tapestry of human experiences and identities within a community or society. Embracing diversity involves acknowledging, accepting, and valuing these differences while promoting equality, inclusivity, and respect for all individuals, regardless of their backgrounds or characteristics.

By learning about diversity, we help children develop empathy and understanding for others, as well as a better understanding of themselves, and how this understanding strengthens our communities. We encourage open-mindedness and teach that diversity enriches our lives and strengthens our relationships.

Race and Ethnicity:

- Discuss historical backgrounds and contributions of different racial and ethnic groups.
- Explore cultural celebrations, traditions, and customs unique to various racial and ethnic communities.

Culture:

- Examine the values, norms, languages, and customs within different cultures.
- Share stories or experiences that highlight cultural diversity and its impact on individuals and communities.

Sexuality and Gender:

- Discuss different sexual orientations and gender identities, emphasizing respect and acceptance.
- Highlight LGBTQ+ contributions to society and challenges they may face due to discrimination.

Identity:

- Encourage individuals to share aspects of their identities that are meaningful to them.
- Explore how personal identities intersect and shape experiences.

Economic Status:

- Discuss the impact of socio-economic status on access to resources and opportunities.
- Explore ways to bridge gaps and create a more equitable society.

Religion:

- Learn about various religious beliefs, rituals, and practices.
- Emphasize understanding and respect for different religious perspectives.

Abilities:

- Discuss different types of abilities and disabilities, promoting empathy and understanding.
- Explore ways to create inclusive environments that accommodate diverse abilities.

Beliefs:

- Encourage open dialogue about different belief systems and worldviews.
- Emphasize the importance of respecting diverse beliefs while fostering mutual understanding.

In exploring these areas, it's crucial to create a safe and respectful space for discussions, prioritize empathy, and encourage active listening to learn from diverse perspectives.

E1. Artwork activity idea

Create an artwork to celebrate your own culture or background and what you enjoy most about it.

E2. Creative writing activity idea

Write a poem to celebrate what you like best about yourself and what makes you special.

F. Addressing and resolving conflicts at school

Discussing ways to resolve conflicts at school can support building a safer environment for children to thrive at school. Using these strategies in role play can re-enforce new ways to behave.

- Stay calm and take deep breaths to manage emotions during conflicts.
 - Use "I" statements to express feelings and thoughts without blaming others.
 - Listen actively to the other person's perspective without interrupting.
 - Try to find common ground and areas of agreement to build understanding.
 - Come up with solutions together and consider the consequences of each option.
 - Be willing to compromise and find win-win solutions.
 - Seek help from a teacher or trusted adult if the conflict needs mediation.
 - Use respectful language and avoid name-calling or hurtful words.
 - Apologize sincerely if they have contributed to the conflict and be open to forgiveness.
 - Avoid physical aggression and find non-violent ways to express their feelings.
 - Take responsibility for their actions and be willing to make amends if necessary.
 - Focus on finding a resolution that respects everyone's feelings and needs.
- Learn from the conflict and use it as an opportunity for personal growth and understanding.
 - Encourage open communication and address conflicts early before they escalate.
 - Teach and model conflict resolution skills through role-playing and scenarios.
 - Emphasize the importance of treating each other with kindness and empathy, even during disagreements.

F1. Role play activity idea

Objective: Teach conflict resolution and compromise.

Scenario: Two students have a disagreement about which game to play during break time.

Role-Play: Students take on the roles of the two students in conflict. They practice expressing their preferences respectfully and finding a compromise, such as taking turns playing both games or finding a new game they both enjoy.

F2. Role play activity idea

Objective: Teach the importance of apologizing and forgiving.

Scenario: Two students had an argument, and one of them said something hurtful.

Role-Play: Students take turns being the one who said something hurtful and the one who was hurt. They practice apologizing sincerely and forgiving each other, saying things like, *"I'm sorry for what I said. I didn't mean to hurt you,"* and *"I accept your apology, and I forgive you."*

Can your students think of more scenarios?

RELATIONSHIPS AT HOME



A. Discussing family dynamics and roles

Understanding family dynamics and roles is essential for primary school children as it helps them comprehend the unique structure and functions of their families.

Family dynamics refer to how family members interact and communicate with one another. Positive family dynamics will create a supportive and nurturing environment.

Each family member has a variety of roles, which are like pieces in a puzzle that fit together to make the family work smoothly. For example, parents may take on roles such as caregivers, providers, and teachers, while children have roles as learners, helpers, and contributors.

Exploring gender roles in families can help open up a discussion on gender equality, fairness and respect for individual roles. It can also get students to think about the responsibilities family members have to each other, even when they may not be living with the family.

Exploring family dynamics and roles enables children to appreciate the diversity of family structures and develop a sense of belonging within their own families, fostering a positive and inclusive outlook towards others' family situations, and think about how they might like their own families to be in the future.

A1. Collaborative game activity idea

"Family Dynamics Journey" is designed to help primary school children explore and understand different family dynamics and roles in a fun and engaging way. Through teamwork, creativity, and communication, students will gain insights into the diversity of family structures and the importance of empathy and respect for every family member's unique role.

Preparation: Create sets of cards with various family roles (e.g. parent, carer, step parent, sibling, half sibling, grandparent, aunt/uncle, cousin) and family dynamic style (e.g. nuclear family, blended family, single parent, multi-generational household, foster family). Include pictures and brief descriptions on each card for easy understanding.

Group Formation: Divide the class into small groups of 4-5 students. Each group will represent a 'Family Team.'

Game Rounds

Role Distribution: Distribute the family role cards among each Family Team. Encourage the students to discuss and decide who will play which roles in their family.

Dynamics Assignment: Randomly provide each Family Team with a family dynamics card, describing their unique family structure.

Family Stories: In each round, give the Family Teams a prompt, such as 'Celebrating a Birthday' or 'Going on Vacation.' Each group will collaboratively create a short story based on their family roles and dynamics, incorporating how each family member

contributes to the event.

Presentation: After a set time, each Family Team will present their story to the class. Encourage them to act out their roles and dynamics, fostering creativity and storytelling skills.

Reflection: After each presentation, have a brief discussion about the various family dynamics and roles explored. Ask questions like, 'How did each family member contribute to the event?' and 'What challenges did the family face, and how did they resolve them?'

Empathy and Respect Emphasis: Throughout the game, emphasize the importance of empathy and respect for every family member's role, regardless of the family's structure. Encourage students to ask questions and share thoughts about different family dynamics, promoting understanding and acceptance.

Positive Reinforcement: Celebrate every Family Team's effort and creativity, emphasizing that each family is unique and special in its own way.

By playing *"Family Dynamics Journey"* primary school children will not only have fun exploring family roles and dynamics but also develop empathy and respect for diverse family structures.

This collaborative game creates a safe and supportive space for students to appreciate the importance of every family member's contribution and fosters a sense of belonging within their own families and the larger school community.

B. Positive communication within the family

Recognizing positive communication within the family is a vital skill for primary school children as it helps them build strong bonds and foster a harmonious home environment.

Positive communication involves speaking kindly, using respectful language, and actively listening to one another.

In families with positive communication, members express their feelings and thoughts openly, without fear of judgment or criticism and being able to express what they need from each other.

They offer encouragement and praise, celebrating each other's successes and supporting each other during challenging times.

Active listening is a key aspect, where family members give their full attention to what others are saying, showing empathy and understanding.

By recognizing and practicing positive communication, children learn the value of expressing themselves honestly, resolving conflicts peacefully, and nurturing loving relationships, which ultimately promotes a sense of security and emotional well-being within the family unit.

B1. Discussion activity idea

Discussing the "*Family Dynamics Game*" above can be used to highlight examples of positive communication.

C. Identifying signs of an unhealthy relationship at home

Identifying signs of an unhealthy relationship at home is an essential lesson for primary school children to ensure their safety and well-being.

At home, relationship boundaries are rules that promote safety, respect, and understanding. They involve personal space, consent, and kindness. We respect others' boundaries by gaining consent before touching, hugging, or using others' belongings for example. It's vital to be able to listen when someone says 'no' and to be able to say 'no' if we're uncomfortable too. Respecting boundaries also means not teasing, gossiping, excluding others or being abusive to others.

Some signs of an unhealthy relationship may include abusive or destructive arguing between family members, a lack of respect for each other's boundaries or feelings, or family members controlling or manipulating others, in a way that is not in their best interests.

Other warning signs may include feeling afraid or unsafe at home, being subjected to physical or emotional harm, or witnessing aggressive or harmful behaviours.

Additionally, if there is an absence of open communication and trust within the family, it could also indicate an unhealthy family dynamic, where needs are not recognised or met.

Helping children to become more aware of these signs could empower them to seek help and support when needed, fostering an environment of care and understanding within the school community.

C1. Group poster activity idea

Using emotion expression cards, discuss each one and ask what might make someone feel sad, frightened, upset, helpless, angry, happy, relieved etc. As a group, come up with family scenarios in which someone could feel this way.

Create two posters using these cards, paper and art materials. One poster should represent an unhealthy family situation and one poster should represent a healthy family situation. Allow groups to present each poster to the class and encourage discussion about the choices, roles and family dynamics in each image.

D. Conflict resolution strategies at home

Although it is not a child's responsibility to implement conflict resolution strategies at home, discussing some things that children can do can empower them, make them feel heard, less alone and also give them ideas about things they could try.

For example, in the example of two siblings having a disagreement, these are some ideas about things that they may be able to try to do, to help resolve the conflict:

- Take a deep breath and remain calm when conflicts arise.
- Use "I" statements to express feelings.
- Practise active listening by giving each person a chance to speak without interruption.
- Try to understand each other's perspectives and feelings.
- Brainstorm solutions together and be open to compromise.
- Apologize sincerely when you've made a mistake.
- Focus on finding a solution that benefits everyone involved.
- If needed, involve a neutral family member or mediator to help facilitate the discussion.
- Once a resolution is reached, forgive and let go of any lingering negative feelings.

D1. Discussion activity idea

Are there any ideas from students that they think could be helpful things to try?

E. Showing love, respect, and empathy

Becoming more aware of the healthy aspects of family relationships is also key to the healthy development of relationships.

- Showing affection and saying nice things to family members.
- Using polite words like "please" and "thank you".
- Listening attentively when family members are talking, and showing empathy by understanding their feelings.
- Respecting personal boundaries.
- Helping with household chores and responsibilities.
- Offering comfort and support to family members when they are upset or facing challenges.
- Being patient and understanding when someone makes a mistake, or needs extra time to complete a task.
- Doing activities together, like playing games or going for walks.
- Trying to resolve conflicts calmly and respectfully.
- Celebrating each other's achievements and expressing pride in each other's accomplishments.

E1. Discussion activity idea

Share ideas on some of the nice things you and your family say to each other. How do you show love and respect to your family?

F. Showing love, respect, and empathy

Family involvement is crucial in helping teachers understand and foster healthy family relationships at home, because it provides teachers with valuable insights into each child's familial context and dynamics.

By engaging with families, teachers gain a deeper understanding of the emotional and social influences that shape a child's behaviour and well-being outside the classroom.

This knowledge enables educators to tailor their approach and support to address specific needs, reinforce positive values, and encourage open communication within the family unit.

Collaborating with families fosters a strong partnership between home and school, creating a nurturing environment that promotes holistic development and strengthens the foundation for the child's overall success and happiness.

F1. Family involvement activity idea

Choose an activity, or more, that you could do in your school.

Family Recipe Exchange: Ask families to share their favourite recipes that have been passed down through generations. During a special event at school, families can prepare and share these dishes with each other, creating a sense of unity and cultural appreciation.

Family Gratitude Jar: Provide families with a decorated jar and slips of paper. Encourage them to write down things they are grateful for within their family and place the notes in the jar. Have a gratitude sharing session at school, where families can read their notes aloud.

Family Journaling: Provide families with a journal and writing prompts related to family experiences, memories, and positive moments. Encourage them to write in the journal regularly and share their reflections during designated family journal sharing sessions.

Parent-Child Workshops: Organize workshops for parents and children to attend together. These workshops can focus on effective communication, conflict resolution, and building strong family connections.



IDENTIFYING RED FLAGS



A. Recognizing signs of unhealthy relationships

Helping children to recognise the signs of an unhealthy relationship is the first step in the journey towards enabling them to create healthy relationships themselves and avoid unhealthy ones in the future.

Domestic abuse and violence, is defined as one person in a family or a relationship hurts, scares, controls, manipulates or undermines another person on purpose. Abuse can take many forms, including physical, emotional, psychological, financial and others. This can happen between parents, between a parent and a child, or between other family members living together.

Unhealthy relationships, bullying and domestic abuse can be nuanced or hidden, making it hard to identify and understand. It can also continue for years and be very hard for those involved to see, resolve, or get away from.

At home children might experience:

- Frequent shouting, or arguing.
- Physical violence or emotional abuse.
- Feeling afraid or unsafe at home.
- A family member controlling, manipulating or threatening others.
- Family members not respecting each other's boundaries or feelings.
- Lack of open and respectful communication.
- Humiliation, degradation, criticism or put-downs.
- Feeling isolated or unsupported in the family environment.
- Experiencing neglect or emotional detachment from caregivers.
- Twisting reality.
- Exhaustion from demanding behaviour.
- Displays of power to instil fear in others.

At school children might experience:

- Being excluded or isolated from peer groups.
- Being a victim of bullying, either physically, verbally, or online.
- Feeling afraid or unsafe in the presence of certain classmates or teachers.

- Experiencing manipulation or peer pressure to engage in harmful behaviour.
- Feeling constant peer pressure to conform or change who they are.
- Being consistently ignored or not listened to by peers or teachers.
- Feeling belittled or ridiculed by classmates or teachers.
- Aggressive behaviours or conflicts among peers or within the classroom.
- Feeling unsupported or not respected by teachers or school staff.

Recognizing signs of bullying or abuse in a child's life is crucial for providing appropriate support and intervention. Here are some key bullet points outlining signs that a child may be experiencing bullying or abuse at home or school:

Problems at school:

- Sudden decline in academic performance or loss of interest in school-related activities.
- Frequent complaints of physical ailments like stomach aches or headaches to avoid going to school.
- Unexplained injuries or bruises.
- Withdrawal from social activities and isolation from peers.
- Changes in eating habits, like sudden loss of appetite or binge eating.
- Unwillingness to talk about school or share experiences.
- Frequent requests for money or belongings going missing.
- Fear or avoidance of specific individuals or places at school.

Problems at home:

- Unexplained injuries or bruises, particularly in various stages of healing.
- Significant changes in behaviour, becoming withdrawn or aggressive.
- Fear or anxiety around a particular family member or caregiver.
- Exhibiting regressive behaviours, such as bedwetting or thumb-sucking.
- Unusual secrecy or unwillingness to discuss home life.
- Frequent absences from school or reluctance to return home after school.
- Lack of appropriate supervision or adult presence at home.
- Showing signs of neglect, such as poor hygiene or inadequate clothing.

General signs might include:

- Emotional changes, such as sudden mood swings, irritability, or depression.
- Unexplained changes in sleep patterns, like trouble sleeping or frequent nightmares.
- Loss of interest in activities they previously enjoyed.
- Decreased self-esteem and expressions of feeling worthless or unloved.
- Running away from home or school.
- Overly aggressive or bullying behaviour towards others, sometimes as a coping mechanism.

It's essential to remember that these signs may not always indicate bullying or abuse, and some children may not show any visible signs at all. If you suspect that a child is experiencing bullying or abuse, it's crucial to approach the situation with sensitivity and involve the appropriate authorities, such as school staff or child protection services, to ensure the child's safety and well-being.

It is essential for teachers to be vigilant and observant to recognize the signs of unhealthy relationships and take appropriate actions to support students who may be experiencing unhealthy relationships at home or at school. Creating a safe and supportive environment for students to share their feelings and concerns can make a significant difference in their well-being and academic success.

B. Encouraging children to seek help when needed

Encourage children to speak up and seek help if they ever witness or experience domestic abuse. Teach them about trusted adults they can confide in, such as teachers, parents, or school counsellors.

Reassure children that if they know someone who is experiencing abuse or if it's happening in their own home, it's not their fault. They should never feel responsible for someone else's harmful actions.

B1. Role play activity idea

Asking for Help.

Objective: Encourage students to seek help when needed.

Scenario: A student is struggling with a math problem and needs assistance.

Role-Play: Students pair up, with one pretending to be the struggling student. They practise asking for help from their partner, who responds by offering assistance and encouragement.

C. Teaching boundaries and consent in relationships

Teaching boundaries and consent in relationships is a crucial aspect of a comprehensive primary school education. By encouraging students to nurture these concepts both at home and in school, we empower children to establish healthy connections and recognize the importance of personal autonomy.

Teaching consent emphasizes that any form of interaction requires mutual agreement and understanding. Through age-appropriate discussions, role-playing, and interactive activities, we can help children understand the difference between comfortable and uncomfortable situations, equipping them with the skills to communicate effectively and seek permission in various contexts.

By fostering a culture of respect and consent, we lay the foundation for safe and respectful relationships that promote emotional well-being and mutual understanding among all members of the school community.

Educating students about boundaries involves discussing the importance of respecting others' physical and emotional limits while also asserting their own boundaries confidently.

What are boundaries?

Boundaries are the limits and guidelines that individuals set for themselves to protect their physical, emotional, and mental well-being.

These limits define what is acceptable or comfortable for a person in different situations, interactions, and relationships.

Boundaries help individuals establish their personal space and protect themselves from feeling overwhelmed or taken advantage of.

They are essential for maintaining healthy relationships and self-respect, as they communicate how one wants to be treated and what behaviours are not acceptable.

Boundaries can vary from person to person and can include physical boundaries (e.g., personal space, touch preferences), emotional boundaries (e.g., sharing feelings and emotions with others), and mental boundaries (e.g., respecting one's thoughts and beliefs).

Understanding and respecting boundaries is crucial for fostering positive and respectful interactions in various aspects of life, including friendships, family relationships, and professional environments.

C1. Role play activity idea

Learning about boundaries and consent through "The Personal Space Game".

Objective: To help children understand the concept of personal boundaries and consent.

Scenario: Invading personal space.

Activity: One child stands in the middle of the room, another approaches and leans on them without asking for permission. (Pause and ask how the child being approached felt, engage the other children in this discussion). Replay this with someone else approaching and asking "*May I come closer*" each time they approach. Discuss how different this felt.

Practise other scenarios: borrowing a pen, hugging a friend, starting a ball game.

CONCLUSION

This resource for learning about healthy and unhealthy relationships is designed to equip educators with the knowledge and tools necessary to foster a safe and nurturing environment for their students, and to lay the foundations for enabling children to foster healthier relationships as they grow.

By understanding the signs of both positive and negative relationships, teachers can identify and support children who may be experiencing challenges at home or school.

With a focus on age-appropriate activities, discussions, and role-playing exercises, teachers can empower their students to recognize and start to cultivate healthy relationships, both at home and at school.

We have offered some ideas in this resource of activities to support each area of learning, and we hope that this will inspire your own ideas about how to explore this important topic with your students, using your own creativity and experience.

By promoting empathy, respect, and effective communication, educators play a vital role in shaping the social and emotional well-being of their students, paving the way for a future generation that values and fosters healthy, positive connections with others.

RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

The work of the SSF so far

We will be holding CPD session for educators to work through this resource pack, they are free to attend and accessible online.

The Foundation has developed other resources which you may find useful and are listed here. All our resources can be found on our website:

<https://www.stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk/resources>

- [Creating Change: the world I want to live in. Resource to explore Human Rights](#)
- [Bereavement and Loss resource](#)
- [My Life Changed: storytelling resource pack](#)
- [Storytelling Workbook](#)

Recommended videos, and online resources

The resources below are for use with both primary and secondary students. We think all of these resources are useful for students and adults to gain more knowledge about relationships. Teachers will identify the suitability of the resources to use in their context as they have the best knowledge of their students ability and prior knowledge.

- <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/support-us/listen-up-speak-up/>
- <https://www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/about-us-new/>
- <https://agendaonline.co.uk/welcome/>
- <https://everyfuturefoundation.co.uk/>

Recommended books

- I have the Right: an affirmation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - Reza Dalavand
- All the Ways to be Smart - Davina Bell
- WHO'S YOUR REAL MUM? - Bernadette Green (illus. Anna Zobel)

Trauma Informed Schools provide training and support to schools and have lots of resources on their website: www.traumainformedschools.co.uk

- Book: Helping Children talk about their lives

Guidance for accessing professional support when needed

Let students know that there are people and organizations who are ready to help those who experience domestic abuse.

Share resources available in your country or community, such as helplines or organizations that support victims. What kind of support is there for children in your area?

Childline is a national organisation in the UK for example, which children can call for advice or just to talk to someone. They have lots of resources on their website too, covering current issues such as climate change and war which might be affecting children and young people: <https://www.childline.org.uk/>

School policies and procedures for handling relationship-related issues

You will know best where to go to find out more about school policies, procedures and people locally who can help in your school.

Be Available for Questions: after sharing this information, create a safe space for children to ask questions and share their feelings. Answer their questions honestly, but in a way that is appropriate for their age level.

Thank you to everyone who has worked with us to develop this resource. We hope you find it useful.

This resource is a first step in making the space to safely discuss relationships with students. Please share your adaptations to the resource and the exercises that work for you with your students. Please also send us resources that you have used, which we can share with other educators to keep the resource updated. We welcome your feedback.

If you have any questions or feedback you wish to share; please email: admin@stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk

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