


Targeted session: Okay and not-okay behaviours in friendships and other relationships

Session overview

This session looks at behaviours that are okay and not-okay in relationships, and how we might respond to them. We will look at different situations and think about when we are being forced to something that we don't want to do (which is sometimes called coercion).

Information for practitioner

The relationships we are looking at are focusing mostly on friendships but also people the young person talks to online. It is important for the practitioner to be age appropriate – while these ideas can be applied to more intimate relationships, this should be led by the young person according to their needs and experiences. It is also important to acknowledge with this age group that their parents/carers are likely to tell them what to do a lot of the time as a means of caring and supporting them – acknowledge that some of these behaviours could usually be seen as ok from a parent and not okay if consistently done by a friend or other peer or an adult they don't know. Other behaviours are not ok from anyone.

 During this session the young person – and practitioner – are expected to share examples. Be mindful not to blame our own behaviours that we may reflect on during the activity.

Pre-session action

Select a *“Looking after yourself”* exercise in advance for the close of the session.

Resources needed for this session

- Statement cards
- Hierarchy cards

Session

Check in with the young person as to how they have been since your last session together. Are there any thoughts or feelings that you may need to reflect on and address before you begin this session?

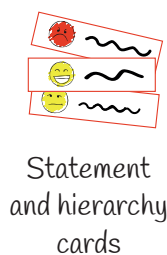
Inform the young person what we are going to do in this session, sharing the overview.

Relationships

In most relationships there is always a bit of 'give and take' as we may do things one person wants to do on occasion and then do things that we want to do on other occasions. Problems can occur when someone always expects us to do everything they say. When they do this once or twice it doesn't always seem unreasonable so can be difficult for us to see that things might not be okay when it happens a lot.

Activity

Place the statement cards across the spectrum of okay, to feeling uncomfortable, through to not-okay behaviour. Discuss each one considering whether the behaviour is fixed in place or moveable depending on the context.



This gives you as practitioner the opportunity to discuss some of the intricacies as there are examples that may be more complex and need unpicking to be able to consider the situation and context.

Both of the following examples could sit in different places across the okay to not-okay spectrum depending on the discussion.

For example, *“Says I should do what they want to do”*. This could be that you might always do what you want and now they want a choice, or it could be that you always have to do what this person wants and you rarely/never have choice.

Another example would be *“sharing funny memes”*. This may be seen as harmless but what if we offend someone? Are they always funny?



Consider the following questions in an open discussion with **both practitioner and young person to share examples.**

- **What would you do if you came across a behaviour you felt was not okay?**
- **Does the intention behind the behaviour make a difference?**
For example, sharing a meme because someone is intentionally laughing at you or sharing without realising it was hurtful.
- **Depending on who it is, does it change how you react and feel?**
- **How does it differ if the behaviour was a ‘one-off’ compared to something that happens again and again?**
- **How might experiencing such behaviours affect how you feel about things?**
- **How do you challenge these behaviours in a kind way?**
- **Have you ever said or done anything that someone else might have felt was not okay?**
- **How does it feel to think about that now?**



Reflection on this session:

It is easy to not notice increasingly unacceptable behaviours when they come gradually, one after another. Something called coercive control starts in this way – we get used to not-okay behaviours bit by bit (they become ‘normalised’), and any attempt to say how you feel is dismissed and you are made to feel like you are wrong. It is possible to not even notice that it is happening, so much so that some behaviours that would have seemed totally unacceptable at the start of a relationship feel normal when you get used to them.



Looking after yourself exercise to close



ACCEPTABLE



**FEELS
UNCOMFORTABLE**



UNACCEPTABLE

I feel safe most of the time

Tells me what to wear

Sharing funny memes

Leaves me out sometimes

We don't often agree

They give me choices

I look forward to seeing them

We make decisions together

Checks my phone and socials

Says I need to do as I am told

I feel listened to

I feel I need to keep my
opinions to myself

Sometimes talks to me,
sometimes ignores me

They are the only person
who understands me

Phones me to check where
I am or what I am doing

They would rather we spent
time only with each other

Wants to know who I have
been talking to

I enjoy spending time with
lots of people

Tells me no one believes anything I say

I never know what mood they are going to be in

Says sorry when they do something wrong

Always asks where I was and who I was with

We have fun together most of the time

They stick up for me when someone is being unkind

I'm worried they will tell someone what I have said

Says I should do what they want to do

I'm scared they won't want me anymore

Takes photos or films of me and shares these without me knowing

We share passwords to things as we don't have secrets

Makes jokes about me in front of others

Tells me to block certain people online (friends, family etc)

Tells me that I've sent pictures before so should just send them again

Says they will send pictures of me to other people if I don't send more to them

If I don't answer messages straight away they get cross at me

Asks me to do silly or funny things online and gets cross if I don't



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