

DIGNITY IN SCHOOL RESOURCE

Calm Classrooms

Introduction

While working with children of all ages in school, we found that relationships were central to most aspects of school life. A rights-based approach to working with children puts positive relationships at its heart. In order to be healthy, happy and safe in school children need to be surrounded by positive relationships between their peers and the adults of the school. We used this activity to form the basis of a positive relationships policy with the school.

“I know I’m respected when my teacher takes me seriously”

Rights and Relationships

Adults can sometimes feel challenged by a rights-based approach, worrying that giving children rights may diminish their authority. This is not the case: research has shown a clear link between children learning about their rights and improved relationships between peers and adults. Working with children to develop your positive relationship policies in school can create a lot of benefits, including allowing children to have a real say in matters that affect them, developing problem-solving and teamwork, and creating buy-in. This in turn can lead to children being more invested in the school’s policies and more likely to follow them.

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Aims of the activity

This resource will look at creating a calm classroom space with positive relationships, using a rights-based approach. The aims of this activity are to:

- Find out what children need to be healthy, happy and safe in the classroom.
- Explore what adults can do to support children's needs.
- Build expectations around relationships in the classroom together.

The outcomes of this activity will be different in every class, it is important to have these discussions with each new class to build positive relationships from the start and make sure that you are supporting the needs of your pupil group.

We are using healthy, happy and safe in this resource as these are the key themes of the UNCRC. You can also run this activity using your own school values. In one school we used 'Ready, Safe, Respected' as this linked with their values.

Activity Breakdown

Ideally this activity should be run across two sessions

- 50 mins – Explore the concepts of healthy, happy and safe with children.
- 30 mins – Generate key messages for the class.

The session can be run with any age group, with minor adjustments to length, questions and prompts. This guide is based around upper primary school level. You will need time after the activity to develop your class agreement using the 'Relationship Rainbow' at the end of this resource.

This resource can be used alongside our Peaceful Playground Resource.

What you need

In order to run this activity, you will need the following:

- Lots of space!
- Three big pieces of paper/card.
- Post-its.
- Pens.
- Relationship Rainbow template.

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Session 1

Check-In (5 mins)

At Children's Parliament, we start every session with a check-in. Children love these short activities, and they are a vital piece of our rights-based practice. They set the tone for the session, allow children to express themselves freely and give you a wee heads up if there are any children who may need a bit of extra support or space during the day. You can find out more about check-ins in our ['Check-In Activity Ideas' Learning Kit](#).

Start together in a circle, together on the floor. Go round the circle and ask everyone to say:

- Their name.
- How they are feeling on a scale of 1-10 (and why, if they can).
- Their favourite thing about their classroom.



Remember to take your turn as a participant in the circle as well! Once you've all checked in, you can introduce the session to the class:



All children have the right to be healthy, happy, and safe when they are in school. We know that how we all are in the classroom can play a big role in how you feel about being in school. Today we are going to look at what you need from me and from each other to feel healthy, happy, and safe in this classroom. Together we are going to come up with some key messages to each other about what we want our classroom to be like and we are going to use those messages to create our Relationship Rainbow.

Our relationship rainbow will be unique to our class and after today we will all agree to stick to the messages we come up with today.



Show them the Relationship Rainbow template (included at the end of the resource). Explain how their key messages will populate the rainbow and form a class agreement on what children need to be healthy, happy, and safe. Explain that it is your role, and the role of other adults in the class, to understand what you need and support you in making sure everyone feels healthy, happy, and safe in class. Allow space for any questions.

Top tip

The focus of your rainbow should be supporting positive relationships, not controlling behaviour.

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Session 1 (contd.)

Define ... (15 mins)

Split the children into small groups. Explain that you are going to say a word and that each group will have 10 seconds to create a frozen picture showing that word. After they have made their frozen pictures, explain that you will tap one person on the shoulder from each group to describe/define what their picture is.

Start the activity using the following words:

- Elephant
- Summer
- Water

Now that the children are warmed up and understand the game, you can move on to the more advanced concepts that you want to explore with them. In this part, tap everyone on the shoulder and ask them to describe/define their frozen picture.

- Healthy
- Happy
- Safe

You can prompt children with questions such as:

- What does that word mean to you?
- Why did you choose that shape?
- Did your group all agree on what to create?

Try to capture some of their responses to 'healthy', 'happy' and 'safe'.

Stand Where You think (20 mins)

This activity is about understanding children's experiences and attitudes towards school and their classroom environment. It can be useful in digging under the surface and understanding what children think and why.

Make it clear that it is ok to disagree with your classmates and all opinions will be valued. For each statement, ask one or two children to reflect on where they have chosen to stand and why.

We used the statements overleaf; however, you may want to add to these or change them to make them work for your class:



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Session 1 (contd.)

“

We are going to create an imaginary scale in our classroom, one end of the room will be 'strongly agree' and the other end of the room is 'strongly disagree'. We will listen to a series of statements and you will choose a place to stand on the imaginary scale that represents how you feel about the statement.

”

Top tip

for added fun you can ask children to move across the room in a certain way e.g. slither like snakes, dance, etc.

I feel safe in class.

If we want something to change, we could go to an adult and ask.

We should always treat each other with respect, even if someone is being annoying.

AGREE

I do not like raised voices in the classroom.

DISAGREE

Adults should be kind to children

Children should be kind to each other.



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Session 2

Healthy, Happy, Safe (30 mins)

Prepare your three large pieces of paper/card, one should have 'Healthy' written in the middle, one 'Happy' and one 'Safe.'

Split the children into three groups. Give each group one of the large sheets of paper and a stack of post-it notes. Explain that they are going to think about examples of how they know that they are healthy, happy, or safe in their classroom. You can provide examples such as the ones below:

'I know I am healthy because I can drink water whenever I need.'

'I know I am happy because I get to work with my friends.'

'I know I am safe because everyone is kind to each other.'

Encourage them to share their ideas as a group and come up with things together. Get them to think about what their ideal classroom would look like and what they would need to make that happen. Encourage them to think about relationships in the classroom, how do they impact on feelings of being healthy, happy and safe. What do they need from each other to support that?

Give children five minutes to generate ideas and stick their post-its on their sheet. Then rotate the words around the room so that each group has a chance to work on each word. If children have the same ideas or agree with something that has already been written, encourage them to give it a big tick, or circle it/

Bring everyone back together to share what they wrote and why it is important. To facilitate this in a class you can ask each child to share the most important thing to them from any of the posters.

Ask children to reflect as a group:

- **Were there any similarities between the different groups?**
- **Were there any differences?**
- **Were there things that could have gone on more than one poster?**

One of the most important questions to ask throughout is:

- **What could we do in class to support that idea?**

This should hopefully generate some practical ideas for your class.

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Session 2 (contd.)

Creating your Rainbow (non-contact)

Following the activity, you should now have three posters filled with what your children need to feel healthy, happy and safe in class. It is important that you take time to go through these ideas and seriously consider them with the other adults in your class.

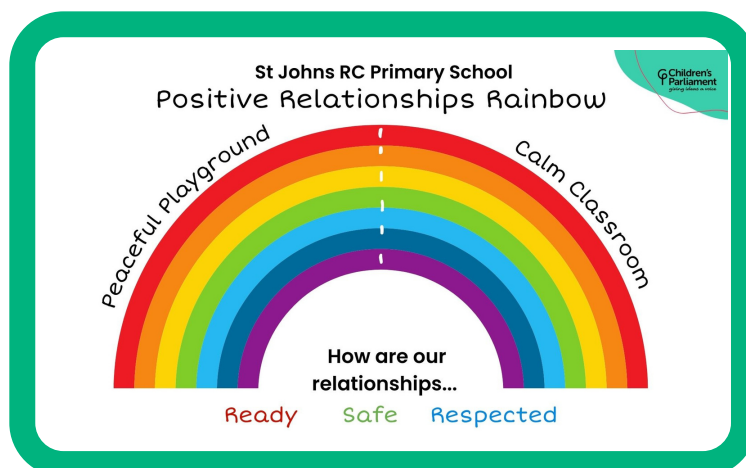
Think about:

- **What ideas were most important to the children?**
- **What did they get most excited about?**
- **What did they agree on?**
- **What can you practically do to support their ideas?**
- **What will need further support from your management team?**

From this reflection fill in your Relationship Rainbow template (on next page) with the children's ideas for how they want to feel healthy, happy, and safe in class. This can then form the basis of an agreement between you and the children that supports positive relationships and promotes a calm and happy classroom.

We encourage you to share your draft rainbow with children and encourage feedback as a group so that you can hone your rainbow together and reach a consensus on what your classroom will be like from now on.

Remember to display your rainbow prominently!



Here is an example from a school we worked with.

Positive Relationships Rainbow

