

DIGNITY IN SCHOOL RESOURCE

Peaceful Playgrounds

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.

“ We feel happy when our friends include us. ”

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 playground 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 playground.
- Explore what adults can do to support children's needs.
- Build expectations around relationships in the playground together.

This activity can be done with a small group of children representing the whole school, one of your pupil groups for example, or it can be done on a class-by-class basis.

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

This activity takes around one hour and should be run outside in the playground. We strongly recommend that PSAs who support breaktimes take part in this session.

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 playground agreement using the 'Relationship Rainbow' at the end of this resource.

This resource can be used alongside our Calm Classrooms resource.



What you need

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

- Flags or cardboard shapes in three different colours or shapes. Hole punch a hole in each flag to allow for tying.
- Ribbons/string/wool.
- Scissors.
- Pens.
- Relationship Rainbow template.

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Check-In and Introduction (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.
- Their favourite thing about their playground.



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 playground can play a big role in how you feel about being in school. Today we are going to look at what you need from adults and from each other to feel healthy, happy, and safe in playground. Together we are going to come up with some key messages to each other about what we want our playground to be like and we are going to use those messages to create our Relationship Rainbow. After today we will all agree to stick to the messages we come up with today.’ ”

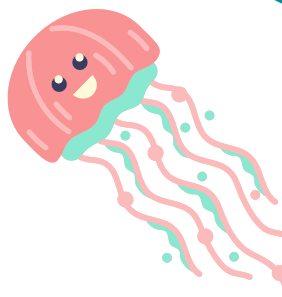
Show them the Relationship Rainbow template (included at the end of the resource). Explain how their key messages will populate the rainbow and form an agreement on what children need to be healthy, happy, and safe. Explain that it is your role, and the role of other adults in the school, to understand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

If you are working with a pupil group remind them that their ideas will be used across the school and they should think about how they represent all children in their responses.

Allow space for any questions.

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

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Jellyfish Energiser (5 Mins)

This is a fun and chaotic game to raise everyone's energy at the start of the session.

In your circle, everyone put your hands on your heads, you are now all jellyfish!

Every person in the circle now secretly picks someone else in the circle, you might have the same person as someone else, that is completely fine. Do not let anyone know who you have chosen.

When you say 'go' everyone, at the same time, has to try and run around their secret buddy three times, keeping their hands on their heads.

Once you have run around your secret person three times, you go back to your place in the circle.

Exploring the Playground (20 mins)

Split the children into three groups, one group will focus on 'Healthy', one group on 'Happy' and one group on 'Safe.'

To begin with ask children what they think their word means in relation to the playground. Talk about this as a group and ensure that everyone understands their word.

Give the children five minutes to talk about the places in their playground where they feel either healthy, happy, or safe, depending on which word they have. Encourage discussion and let them know that it is ok to disagree with each other as long as you respect each other's opinions.

Hand each group a pile of flags or cardboard shapes, each group should either have a different colour or a different shape so you can tell the difference between them. Also hand out ribbon/string, scissors and pens to each group, and adult should be on hand to cut the ribbon/string if the children are small.

Explain to the children that they will have 10-15 minutes to explore the playground. They should find the places they talked about in their group and attach their flags to areas/things that make them feel healthy, happy, or safe, depending on their group. Ask them to write a short sentence on the back of their flag explaining why they have chosen that place.

Top tip

Remember to pre-hole punch your flags for ease!

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Exploring the Playground (contd.)

Before you send the children exploring, establish a way together for how you will get their attention when it is time to come back. This could be anything from a bird call to a hand signal.

Playground Tour (10 mins)

Ask each group to take adults and the rest of the children on a tour of their flags.

You can use the following prompts to support reflection:

- Why did you put your flag here?
- How do you feel when you're playing here?
- Why is this place important to you?

End Reflection (10 mins)

Gather back together in a big circle and support a group discussion around the activity. You can use the following prompts:

- Where there any places that someone else chose that you agreed with?
- Did you disagree with any of the flag placements?
- Is there anywhere in the playground that doesn't make you feel healthy, happy, or safe at the moment?
- What do you think could be done to change that?
- What do you think adults can do to make you feel healthy, happy, and safe in the playground?
- What do you think other children can do?

Listen to their ideas and try and take notes/record what they say. These reflections will be useful when you come to put together your relationship rainbow.



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Creating your Rainbow (non-contact)

Following the activity, you should now have loads of ideas about what children need to feel healthy, happy and safe in the playground. Gather in the flags, noting where they were, and take your time to go through these ideas and seriously consider them with the other adults who support play.

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 the playground. This can then form the basis of an agreement between you and the children that supports positive relationships and promotes a peaceful and happy playground.

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 playground 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



Peaceful playground

Calm Classroom

How are our
relationships...

Healthy

Happy

Safe