



MAKING AGREEMENTS 3. GOOD COMMUNICATION

Objective: Students will be able to improve their communication skills and promote a better understanding of their relationships.

WARM UP

Tell students you are going to play *Chinese Whispers*. Make them sit in a circle (if the group is large, form two or three teams) or stand in a straight line. They need to be close so that whispering is possible. Then the first student in the circle, or line, whispers a phrase into the ear of the classmate sitting or standing to his / her right. Students keep whispering the phrase until it reaches the last player. Ask the last player (or players of each team) to say the phrase out loud to the whole class or team. Everyone will have the opportunity to hear how much the phrase changed from the first whisper at the beginning of the circle or line. Ask students: *Do you think this communication process was effective?*

STEP BY STEP

- A** Make sure every student has a copy of the printed handout to work with.
- B** Ask students to work in groups of four. Remind them that the process of communication is the transmission of a message from a sender to a receiver. Ask: *Can you see the sender and the receiver in the picture? What attitudes do you think correspond to the person who is talking? And to the person who is speaking? Give them some time to assign the attitudes to the sender and the receiver. Encourage them to mention other useful behaviors for the communication process.*
- C** Draw students' attention to the photo. Then invite them to discuss and answer the questions and to share their opinions.

- D** Tell students to read the Four Player Model and to complete the table based on what they did in Step C. Then ask volunteers to share their answers. Ask students if they know other communication skills to enhance teamwork. For example, learning to listen carefully, avoiding dancing around the issue, making affirmative responses to tell the sender you are paying attention, etc. Invite them to mention as many skills as possible.

WRAP IT UP

- E** *What are the benefits of being a good communicator? Are listening skills also important? Why? Do you think communication is one of the basic skills of teamwork? Why?*

Ask students to discuss the questions in small groups. Invite them to give some examples of how good communication skills could help them with any relationship. You could mention that one of the biggest problems in communication is that we usually don't listen to understand, but to reply. When they are discussing the last question, you could mention that it is difficult to understand the meaning of *teamwork* if we are not capable of basing communication on the power of listening, understanding, and reflecting on what we communicate. Encourage them to write down their conclusions.

TEACHING TIP

Having good communication skills is important not only at school but in everyday life. For teenagers, being able to develop these skills is a vital step in their development because it enhances their ability to listen to and understand other people. Suggest that, when they are listening to someone, they put aside distractions, such as cell phones, because this behavior can disrupt the process of listening and give a message to the speaker that they are not interested. Once your students master these skills, they will be able to express their ideas clearly and to understand people better.

- IT** You can draw students' attention to the IT box if you need more help.



MAKING AGREEMENTS

4. RESPONSIBILITY

Objective: Students will be able to act responsibly, thinking of others, and accepting the consequences of their own actions and decisions.

WARM UP

Start the activity by sharing a short fictional anecdote about a pilot who forgot to set his alarm clock and arrived very late at the airport. Encourage students to say if they think the pilot thought of others or about the consequences of his action. Elicit their own definition of *reliability*.

STEP BY STEP

- A** Make sure every student has a copy of the printed handout to work with. Ask students to work in pairs and to read the sticky note from the handout carefully. Then, you could ask them to give their own definition of *responsibility*. If they get stuck, say: *Does it have to do with making decisions with full knowledge? Or does it have to do with accepting the consequences of your own actions?*
- B** Then invite them to read the situation in the handout and to say if they have ever had a similar experience. Give them enough time to answer the questions.
- C** Invite students to read the statements in the pennants and to discuss the possible order of the steps. Remind them that these steps have to do with reaching common objectives. Ask: *What would be the first step for you?* Don't forget to acknowledge your students when they are performing the activity in a collaborative way or applying good communication skills they learned from the previous handout. Give them enough time to discuss the best order for the six steps. When they have finished, ask them to share their step order with other pairs. It is possible to have different answers. Highlight the importance of diversity of opinion.

WRAP IT UP

- D** *What is the importance of making commitments and assuming responsibilities? Is it better to look more for what brings us together than for what separates us? Why? What could happen if someone in the team does not fulfill his or her responsibilities?*

Ask students to discuss the questions in small groups. Invite them to remember a recent school project where they had to work as a team. Ask them: *Were you completely satisfied with the result?* Then, as a class, have students listen to all of their classmates' answers and invite them to reach a general conclusion of why being responsible is a skill that they must learn and work on. Encourage them to write down their conclusions. Highlight the importance of everyone's participation in collaborative work. Close the activity by reflecting on how, in teamwork, every responsibility has the same level of importance, and that if someone does not fulfill his or her part, the whole outcome can be affected.

TEACHING TIP

You could suggest creating a "Responsibility Chart" for their next team project. On a three-column chart, they must write the different tasks on the first column; the names of the students who are in charge of each one on the second column. The third column will be used to write down if the student fulfilled his or her task. Point out that the idea is not to blame anyone in the team, but to help the students that did not fulfill their tasks to be conscious of their behavior, face the consequences, and suggest a solution to repair the damage.

- IT** You can draw students' attention to the IT box if you need more help.



OBJECTIVITY

1. FOCUS YOUR ATTENTION

Objective: Students will learn to apply a focused meditation strategy for conflict situations to achieve a broader and more objective perspective of things.

WARM UP

Share with your students five things you find relaxing and write them on the board. Encourage them to brainstorm the things they find relaxing and have them come up to the board and write them down. You could make a poster with everyone's ideas and paste it on a classroom wall so students can turn to it whenever they need ideas to relax.

STEP BY STEP

- A** Make sure every student has a copy of the printed handout to work with.
- B** Invite students to read and paraphrase why attention techniques are useful. Then tell them to quickly skim the steps for mindful breathing just to become familiar with them and explain that you are going to guide them through the meditation.
- C** Invite students to sit comfortably on their chairs. Explain that this meditation exercise helps them change the focus of their attention so they can regulate their emotions, reduce stress, and be calm enough to find solutions when the process of communication is not working well. If possible, be prepared with relaxing music for meditation so you can play it in the background. Ask them to close their eyes. Read every step on the handout using a relaxed voice. Finally, give them some time to assimilate the experience.

- D** Get students into groups and ask them to share their experiences with the exercise and to write how they feel in the space provided on the handout.

WRAP IT UP

- E** *Do you think we are able to think straight when we're angry? Do you think this exercise will help you soothe your anger? What differences did you notice in your mental and physical states before and after practicing mindful breathing? How do you think this technique could be helpful in resolving conflicts between peers?*

Ask the students to discuss the questions in small groups, and encourage them to write down their conclusions. Some volunteers can share their answers with the rest of the class. Point out the importance of focused meditation to handle stressful situations at school (like exams) and also at home. Tell them that it is very important to identify when they need to change the focus of their attention so they can deal with negative emotions in a constructive way. Explain that these meditation exercises promote physical and psychological relaxation. Suggest that they repeat this type of meditation whenever they are stressed.

TEACHING TIP

If you have not done it before, practice focused meditation at home so you can explain its importance to your students. Remember that when you meditate, your mind is not focused on the events taking place around you. Meditation is a practical way of calming yourself and letting go of negative emotions. Explain that some of the most important benefits of meditation come gradually over time and are not easily observed. Encourage them to persist in their practice.

- IT** You can draw students' attention to the IT box if you need more help.



OBJECTIVITY

2. ARE YOU A GOOD LISTENER?

Objective: Students will learn that paying attention to what others are saying, instead of thinking about what to reply, is the first step for good communication.

WARM UP

Divide the class into two groups, A and B. Ask group A to think of their own definition of *hearing* and to come up with two examples of it. Ask group B to think of their own definition of *listening* and to come up with two examples of it. Invite a volunteer from each group to come to the front and share their definition and examples with the rest of the class. Finally, ask the whole class: *Do you think hearing and listening are the same? Why?*

STEP BY STEP

- A** Make sure every student has a copy of the printed handout to work with.
- B** Get students into pairs, ask them to read the definition of *active listening*. Invite them to paraphrase it. Then ask them to take a look at the words and phrases in the box. Make sure they understand all of them. Guide them to choose five words from the box that they think belong to each of the couples and write them in the speech bubbles. Invite them to identify which of the two conversations is having a process of active listening. Then elicit from them that the other conversation represents attitudes that we should avoid in a conversation. Finally, invite them to share their answers with another pair.
- C** Have the class read the tips for active listening out loud and provide help with any questions that come up. Invite pairs to ask each other the questions in the handout and to put into practice the active listening tips. Encourage them not to write their partner's answers but to really pay attention to what he or she says.

- D** Ask students to complete the diagram individually with their partner's information using just their memory. Once they finish, tell them to get together again to confirm their answers. Give them enough time to discuss the last question in pairs.

WRAP IT UP

- E** *Why do you think it is important to listen to understand? Can you connect with another person if you don't listen to him or her? Why? How is active listening a useful tool for collaborative work?*

Ask students to discuss the questions in small groups, and encourage them to write down their conclusions. Explain that listening is different from hearing because it is not something that just happens. Listening is an active process in which we make a conscious decision to understand the message of the person who is speaking. If we learn to focus fully on the speaker, the process of communication will run smoothly and collaborative work will be a success. Point out that active listening means paying attention to another person with empathy (the ability to identify with another's feelings, thoughts, etc., as if they were our own). Answer any questions students may have.

TEACHING TIP

Promote active listening by practicing it yourself. Remember that by becoming a better listener, you can improve your ability to influence, persuade, and negotiate with your students. Furthermore, you will avoid conflict and misunderstandings. If you or your students find it difficult to concentrate on what someone is saying, try repeating his or her words mentally; this will reinforce the person's message and help you stay focused. Always keep in mind that active listening involves giving your full attention to the person who is speaking.

- IT** You can draw students' attention to the IT box if you need more help.