

THE PERFECT FRIEND – THINKING ABOUT FRIENDSHIP, (PERFECTION AND A.I.)

Thought Adventure 42

The perfect friend – thinking about friendship, (perfection and A.I.)

This session was put together for teachers asking for sessions for 'anti-bullying week' and for PSHE requirements 'getting on and falling out'. The strategy I took for developing this session was to problematize the two main curriculum themes against the broader theme of *friendship*: are there any situations or circumstances where a friend would be required to fall out with you or where it's okay for friends to not get on? (See also Appendix 5 in *40 lessons to get children thinking* for the process I take myself through when devising sessions such as this one.)

Equipment and preparation needed:

* (Optional) large pieces of sugar paper stuck together so that a child in your class can lie on it to be traced around.

* A whiteboard and pens.

* (Optional) Some string, rope or hoops.

* Three pieces of A4 paper with the following sentences written on (one on each piece) but keep them out of view of the children until the specified time (see below):

- * 'never fall out with me'
- * 'always get on with me'
- * 'always agree with me'

Subject links: PSHE 'getting on and falling out', science (A.I.), R.E. (perfection)

Key concepts and vocabulary: friendship, bullying, perfection, android, robot,

Key controversies: Can a friend be a friend if they do unfriendly things? Can there be someone who is both a friend and not a friend to you?

Session

Begin by reading the following to the class:

Say: Pella is a girl who has no friends but her mum owns a factory that builds computer-robots, so she builds her daughter a computer-robot friend called _____ (have the class name her or invent a name of your own). She tells Pella that [insert name] will be 'the perfect friend', the best 'best friend' anyone could ever have, and that Pella will get to choose exactly what kind of friend [insert name] will be.

Do:

1. Draw a large outline of a person (either on the board or trace round one of the children onto a large sheet(s) of card on the floor). Alternatively, draw an outline of a person on the board.
2. Write 'The best 'best friend'' above the drawing.
3. (Optional) have the children give him or her a name.
4. Next, have the children decide what to write inside the drawing, such as 'like you', 'trustworthy' and so on... Gather a good number of suggestions (such as 5-8).
5. Have them discuss them in groups or pairs before discussing with the whole group. *Hint:* Anchor them by saying, 'So, does a friend have to [insert suggestion]?' etc. Some suggestions will not be very controversial but other suggestions (e.g. 'Does a friend have to 'always agree with you?') will be. Add more suggestions as the discussion proceeds and as they come up in the discussion.

Nested questions:

- ✓ What is a best friend?
- ✓ What would the best 'best friend' be like?
- ✓ What qualities would they possess?
- ✓ What is a friend? Is a friend different from a good friend?
- ✓ Are they different types of friend? If so, how many and what are they?
- ✓ What is perfection?

- ✓ Is it possible to have a perfect friend?
- ✓ Can a synthetic human/android be a friend? (If focusing on friendship then, for the purposes of the discussion assume that the technology will allow for any quality – use the ifting strategy if necessary to facilitate this).

Extension activity: Best friends rule

Do: To help focus the discussion to specific (e.g. specific curriculum) themes of ‘getting on’ and ‘falling out’, for example, you could use the narrative in the following or similar way:

Say: Pella has three rules she wants her best ‘best friend’ to live by. They are the following: that [insert name] will...

1. ‘Never fall out with me’
2. ‘Always get on with me’
3. ‘Always agree with me’

Do: If doing the ‘traced friend’ then these should be written on pieces of separate paper (see ‘Equipment and preparation needed’ above) and placed next to the ‘traced friend’ that is being filled with qualities. If not, then find some other way to present this part of the session. Ask the children to place them inside the ‘traced friend’ or to take them out, depending on their views, then ask them to say why they did what they did.

Task Question

- ✓ Should Pella programme these three rules into her best ‘best friend’?

Nested questions:

- ✓ Should a friend always get on with you?
- ✓ Should a friend never fall out with you?
- ✓ Are there any circumstances where a friend would or should fall out with you?
- ✓ Can you get on with people that are not friends?
- ✓ Are there any rules for friends? If so, what would they be?

Extension activity

Frenemies with ropes and hoops (Venn diagrams) – see 40 lessons to get children thinking, page 37

This activity can be run before, during or after the lesson plan above. Use the ropes and hoops activity (see below) to build this. Put two hoops on the floor and label one ‘Friend’ and the other ‘Not friend’ and ask the children to put words into the hoops such as ‘love’ and ‘hate’, ‘jealousy’, ‘honest’ and so on. You could let the children write the words or you could write them in advance for them to place, or you could use the words they’ve gathered for the first part of the session asking them to find opposites for the ‘not friend’ category), or you could write a few to get things started and then invite them to write more. See if anyone comes up with something that might be in both. If not, you could overlap the two hoops and task them to come up with a word or words that go in the overlapped segment.

Some scenarios to develop this might be:

- a) Your best friend lies to you.
- b) Your best friend talks about you behind your back.
 - a. Saying nice things
 - b. Saying unpleasant things
- c) Your best friend tells you that you are a bad person.
- d) Your best friend says, ‘I hate you!’
- e) Your best friend bullies you.

After each of these scenarios (and other similar one that you come up with or that arise naturally from the discussion) anchor the children, if necessary, to the following **task question: are they, or can they be, a friend?**

Links

The If Machine: The Ceebie Stories, especially ‘Friends’ (this session can be adapted so that it becomes part of the Ceebie stories)

The Philosophy Shop: Charlies Choice, Bobby The Punching Bag

Thoughtings: Ship of Friends

