



Discussion

Begin a conversation about conflict situations, which could have been resolved by good communication.

To help your students you can use the following examples:

Dirty dishes. It is the task of you and your sister to do the washing up after dinner. You yourselves divide the work between you. Recently it has almost always been you doing it and you want your sister to do it today.

Loud music. Your brother is listening to loud music. This often causes arguments between you. You are preparing for a school play and you cannot concentrate. You want your brother to turn down the music today.

A piece of cake. Your aunt is trying to persuade you to eat another piece of cake. You're not that fond of sweet things. You really don't feel like any more cake.

Painting your nails. A friend tries to talk you into painting your nails. You've never done it before and you don't feel like trying.

Dad's car. When his parents are absent a friend of yours tries to persuade you to go for a ride in his dad's car. You don't think this is a good idea. You absolutely refuse.



Talk

Introduce students to the scenario technique. It will help them to devise role plays for specific situations.

An assertive attitude can be learnt. During the lesson the students will find out about the scenario technique, which will help them learn how to behave firmly and decisively.

The scenario technique encourages an assertive approach to solving problems. When we apply this technique, we look at a problem situation as if we were looking at the stage in a theatre. We can get to know the context, feelings, motives and behavior as well as the setting of the scene in such a way that the person with the problem becomes the main hero of this micro performance. This technique is used most often to communicate one's own opinions, needs, dissatisfaction and criticism in a way which does not hurt another person, does not excite emotions and helps the other person understand the situation. When we try to solve a problem using the scenario method we need to take into account four elements:

- a description of the situation,
- emotions,
- needs,
- consequences.

Describing the situation – a brief and concise presentation of the gist of the problem.

Emotions – recognizing your own feelings and communicating those feelings in a simple way to the person you are talking to. Instead of saying: "you're annoying me", say "I'm mad". Show empathy for the feelings and needs of your partner ("I understand your situation...").

Needs – this involves explaining your own expectations in a specific situation. Here it is important to focus on what is really important (it's best to express one "need" at a time) and meeting expectations should not be difficult.

Consequences – this is clearly defined, what happens if someone meets our expectations or doesn't meet them.

Sample scenario

Situation: a daughter has a dance performance, but has forgotten to tell her mom that her costume is torn and needs repairing.

Mom's assertive reaction: You didn't tell me your dance costume got torn. I spent the whole of yesterday evening sewing it together, and I was planning to translate a book (describing situations). I was annoyed as I thought that you hadn't even considered the things I have to do, and after all you know that I needed to finish my work yesterday (describing emotions). Even if something unexpected happens, just tell me about it so I won't be surprised (describing needs). I would like to know that I can count on you (pointing out consequences).



Role-playing

Students prepare role-plays depicting situations involving a conflict of interest in which they can practice assertive behavior using the scenario technique.

Students divide into pairs. They will choose two of the earlier suggested situations. They will share their opinions. The role plays will be improvised using any available objects, such as: a table, chairs, books, etc. However, it is important that students be encouraged to recreate the whole situation. The situation may include several “approaches” to solving the problem. Being creative will help them become more involved in performing the task and in this way make it easier for them to acquire new skills.

The students will change roles for the second role play and the other person can practice being assertive.

This task may last 2 x 5 minutes, although more time will allow for experimentation and fine-tuning the role plays.

Role of the teacher – when they were being introduced to the task the students were able to clarify and improve their knowledge of behavior in situations involving a conflict of interest. Allow them, therefore, to come up with situations on their own and practice different forms of behavior. As a mentor you can help the teams by sharing your own knowledge and experience.



Instructions

Role-playing

The teams act out selected role plays for the audience.

A good idea would be to arrange a stage on which the teams can act out their role plays. Each micro play should be rewarded with applause or summed up with a brief Q&A session. It is important that the students say how they felt in each role as well as name the skills which the role play enabled them to develop. These may include the skills of listening to another person, empathizing with another's emotions or arguing calmly and peacefully.