

How students, teachers and parents can help to promote a Happy School:

General:

- Rituals for welcoming new pupils and staff. Rituals for departures.
- Induction for new teachers.
- Promote Positive views of ethnic/cultural diversity in displays.
- Displays to reflect all members of the school community.
- View diversity as a rich resource.
- Staff and students to look after the physical environment of the school. (e.g. classroom prize)
- Use of the environment to give the message that all pupils are valued – ‘friendship displays’ possibly in hall – ideas from www.teacherspet.co.uk ‘banner friendship’ (Ms. Carey)
- Have negotiated rules and sanctions for the playground as well as the classroom.
- Focus on an aspect of the Code during whole school assembly, senior pupils prepare a short PowerPoint presentation on what the required behaviour looks like, for example – walking on the right hand side of the corridor- a brief explanation as to why this rule is important and a concerted effort by all to keep the rule, remind others of the rule, use a signal to indicate to someone that they are walking on the incorrect side....

Teachers:

Value the ability of fellow colleagues.

Make time to listen to colleagues, be non-critical.

Recognise when a colleague is overloaded, offer help with tasks.

Support the decision of the group, not pursue individual views.

Be confident; know that your worth is not reflected in your students’ behaviour.

Handle all or most routine discipline issues

Meet students’ needs for a secure, positive and challenging environment:

Secure:

Promote the idea of a valuable class member:-

Jigsaw display – one piece for each pupil (name or photo)

Christmas tree – photo of each pupil as a ball

Class list on door ‘Our Team’

Class motto displayed on door – ‘It’s not our I.Q. that’s important, it’s our I Can.....

Affirm each student ‘Student of the week’ ‘Star of the week’

Buddy system – Pair older/younger pupils for specific tasks

Teach procedures for lining up, entering, moving about and leaving the classroom

Teach specific directions immediately prior to the first time the activity takes place

Assign and rotate roles and responsibilities fairly, collecting copies, distributing materials, messages...

Encourage peer support –develop collaborative learning skills: e.g. TSI Building Bridges, Peer Tutoring (Ms. Blade), paired work, mixed ability groups. These programmes teach prosocial behaviours, for example,

- **positive interdependence, everyone is responsibility for the success of all group members, (jig-saw approach)**
- **individual accountability**
- **shared leadership**
- **equal opportunities for success**
- **progress review and goal setting for the future**

Display collaborative work by students as well as individual achievements

Involve pupils in formulating classroom rules.

Have a classroom discipline plan with three parts – rules, positive recognition and consequences; remove confusion about the result of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

Use a staged approach – student will be redirected – student will be reminded of the classroom rule – student will be given a choice.....

Have strategies to redirect attention:

- **Physical proximity**
- **Non-verbal cues**
- **Communication with assertive voice and language**
- **Ignoring**
- **Distracting**
- **Praise the next-door neighbour**
- **Paradox**
- **Humour**
- **Broken Record**
- **Don't fight and don't give in – stay completely calm**
- **Give an honourable way out**
- **Break the pattern by doing something different**
- **Foster cooperation**
- **Provide scaffolding**

Build flexibility into sanctions to allow for individual circumstances

***Positive:* See self-control as a developmental task and discipline as a learned skill:
Reframe behaviour problems as learning needs.**

- **Ensure at least one positive interaction with each student on a daily basis.**
- **A commitment to getting to know students as individuals**

- **Consistently communicate high expectations for student behaviour and learning**
- **Honour good behaviour, give positive feedback and honour the partially correct response – I see you are sitting beautifully, now raise a quiet hand and wait**
- **Use ‘I’ statements – it helps pupils become aware of the effect their behaviour has on others and how it makes others feel – when you call Paul names it makes him feel upset and I feel upset as well ‘I’ statements help to reduce confrontation and protects self-esteem.**
- **Orchestrate positive interactions through games – Paired Maths Games (jnr + snr infants) Parachute games...**
- **Record achievements on a display board ‘I am very pleased because I have learned...I can..**
- **Give rewards for academic as well as non-academic achievements**
- **Model appropriate non-bullying behaviour – model in language, body language, tone and content the principles and practice of good discipline and positive behaviour, for example, respect for personal space, using pupils’ names, positive language without shouting....**
- **Keep instructions positive and break into steps**
- **Foster and maintain sound relationships**
 - respond to students’ feelings ‘I see you are feeling angry.....
 - use encouragement focusing on effort and persistence
 - praise effort rather than attainment
 - value pupils despite their behaviour
 - have an array of approaches – WOW (wish others well), Random Act of Kindness, friendship week at the beginning of the year to teach friendship skills, Happy Memories Photo Book - class outings, activities, Surprise Treat now and again

Agree a signal with the class which indicates they are required to listen – ‘Give me five’, teacher holds open/closed hand up....a signal for getting the teacher’s attention or help while remaining seated..

Call the class to order and start lessons on time

Promote self-esteem by focusing on success, help children move towards their goals in small incremental steps – make tasks achievable.

Challenge:

Ensure all pupils are able to access the curriculum through the use of differentiation; brainstorm potential barriers to participation for some pupils and respond...

Devise activities that will challenge the students and enable all routinely to experience some success.

Incorporate periods of silent working to help the students apply themselves to the task.

Ask questions to probe students’ understanding to inform the next steps in teaching and learning.

Help the students to recognise good learning behaviour:-

- **Share the learning intention at the beginning of the lesson**
- **Set achievable targets and encourage pupils to set their own**
- **Make the criteria for success explicit so pupils can self-assess**
- **Give clear instructions and make sure they are understood by all**
- **Use multi sensory approaches**
- **Move about the classroom, anticipating needs, monitoring and extending the students' work and maintaining order without disturbing the students' application and concentration**
- **Give positive feedback on achievements and behaviour**
- **Devise practical tasks that enable the students to learn through experience**
- **Encourage pupils to evaluate their own work and continuously improve it**
- **Have a policy for setting out written work, to encourage neatness and care**
- **Counter negative views of student who find lessons difficult**
- **Have a well developed procedures for assessing how students are progressing**

• **Instruct Pupils in **Social Skills**, proactive curricular approaches:-**

- **teach strategies for conflict resolution, for example, both parties state what happened, both parties state how they feel, both parties come up with three different ways in which the conflict can be resolved, both parties agree on a resolution**
- **an emphasis on the prevention of discipline problems, use of programmes which emphasise positive measures to improve discipline and relationships, for example, Circle Time, Bounce Back (Direct instruction), SPHE Programme...Stay Safe**
- **Enable children to explore their feelings in a structured and positive way – Circle Time activities 'I am happiest when...I feel.... A part of me that I like is..... Use of storybooks – to explore feelings and develop the language of feelings: Carol Gray's Social Stories**
- **Role Play and feedback – Steps attached.**
- **Modelling – think aloud/describe the internal process – Steps attached**
- **Teach problem solving – Steps attached.**
- **Teach assertive responses to name calling.... 'I don't like it when....I want you to stop.....I would like you to give me back.....Say 'no'**

Parents:

- **Share information about anything that might affect a student's behaviour in school**
- **Quick communication about any concerns that they may have about a student**
- **Avail of information through Parent Association – talks, workshops on behaviour matters**

- **Model the standards that the pupils are asked to respect and expect students to behave according to these standards**
- **Discuss appropriate and inappropriate behaviours with pupil**
- **Help pupils to take responsibility for actions/behaviours**
- **Promote self-discipline based on respect, consideration and tolerance of others**
- **Be aware of the rewards and sanctions used in child's class/school.**
- **Give positive feedback to pupil when rewards are given.**
- **Discuss why a sanction was used and brainstorm alternative courses of action the student could have taken.**
- **Express concerns about behaviour issues when they arise.**
- **Engage in the planning process to meet a students' behavioural need when necessary.**
- **Request information on appropriate sources of support that may be available.**

Students:

- **Use polite language such as 'please' and 'thank you'**
- **Provide support for other students such as 'that's a good story', 'can I help you...'**
- **Show care for oneself and the environment.**
- **Befriend individual who are upset or by themselves**
- **Offer help to others when needed, for example, provide reading strategies**
- **Congratulate others when progress is shown**
- **Celebrate the achievements of all**
- **take pride in your achievements and the achievements of others**

Teaching Social Skills

Explicit teaching of social skills is necessary for certain youngsters and for younger children with more complex skills, and it can be beneficial for the whole class. There is an increasing awareness of the need to teach social skills in order to build social and emotional literacy. Teaching social skills to children helps them to prevent social problems and conflicts with other people. It also helps them to learn positive prosocial behaviour and appropriate classroom behaviour. The following list helps to identify some of the key behaviours for social skills instruction, and can also help us to identify skill deficits in individual children.

Introducing yourself. Offering help. Giving a compliment. Sharing. Showing respect. Following instructions. Apologizing. Expressing your feelings. Recognising another's feelings (empathy).	Showing understanding of another's feelings. Expressing concern for another (empathy, compassion). Dealing with one's own anger. Dealing with another's anger. Expressing affection. Dealing with fear.	Using self-control. Asking permission. Responding to teasing. Avoiding trouble. Staying out of fights. Problem-solving. Accepting consequences and criticism. Dealing with an accusation. Negotiating.
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(Adapted from McGinnis and Goldstein, 1990)

Role-play and feedback

The classroom provides a rich environment for teachers to observe how children interact with their peers on a daily basis. Role-play helps children learn social skills in a way that is fun. It also helps them to learn the behaviour not only at a cognitive level, but in their muscles. Role-play can be incorporated into cross curricular activities such as SPHE or Drama. You may wish to select a particular social skill which you want to teach to students, or you can use role-play to problem-solve situations which regularly occur in the classroom or playground. These may include addressing bullying or conflict resolution. Be aware of the need for emotional

safety, and remember that it is often easier to use fictional situations than to put the spotlight on those with the problems in the group. You can also make role-play easier by breaking the class into pairs or groups of three. When everybody is on stage, it's easier. Alternatively with young children you may use puppets or dolls. The instructions for this are simple, but keeping it on track so that the experience is positive can be more difficult in practice. The following is a six-step protocol for teaching specific social skills. It can easily be adapted for group or individual work and for older or younger students:

Step 1:

Select one developmentally appropriate social skill.

Step 2:

Describe the skill to be learned and the importance of learning this skill (e.g. the appropriate way of getting the teacher's attention in the classroom). The use of the skill may be illustrated by pointing it out in a video, picture, book, cartoon, a simulation using puppets, or reference to behaviour of peers (e.g. "Look how James raised his hand to ask the teacher a question").

Step 3:

Model the skill. Clearly demonstrate through role-play what you want the children to do, and specify the sequence involved in the skill (e.g. raise your hand, wait quietly for the teacher to call on you, ask your question using a polite tone of voice). Use thinking-out-loud, say what you are thinking as you are solving the problem to model problem-solving steps. Modelling may be conducted by the teacher or by selected children. With younger children you can use puppets or dolls. To increase the probability of success, the model must be highly regarded by the learner and of the same age and sex. In addition, the model must appear to receive reinforcement for engaging in the social skill. Give many examples of the skill to be learned.

Step 4:

Role-play and feedback. Assign roles and have the children role-play the skill in pairs or groups or use a puppet or doll to practice the skill by copying the teacher's example. Construct practice opportunities in which the child receives descriptive feedback from the teacher (e.g. "well done Sheila for raising your hand. You need to wait for the teacher to call on you before you ask your question. Now watch me do it"). A video recording or photographs of these situations may be useful in providing feedback.

Step 5:

Pupils practise the skill. Encourage the child to use the appropriate skill in different situations and provide multiple opportunities to practice the new skill. Provide praise and encouragement for the appropriate use of the skill.

Step 6:

Maintenance and generalisation of skill. Use visual or verbal prompts to encourage the pupil to use the skill in the classroom (e.g. during Circle Time), on the playground (e.g. during structured games) and at home (if relevant). Provide descriptive praise and reward. Self-monitoring by the child at this stage is important. The child could use a checklist to monitor use of appropriate skill.

Finally, giving positive and constructive feedback is critical. Reinforcement across settings and from different adults helps children to generalise the skills, and practice will help consolidate the learning. Children need to be taught the language of emotion and feelings if they are to discuss and express their feelings and benefit from social skills instruction. SPHE materials and programmes such as the *Stay Safe Programme* provide ideas for doing this.

Modelling

Modelling is a powerful learning tool. Many children are visual learners and will pick up information simply from observation. The downside of this of course is that they will also copy negative behaviour! In an informal way you are a model for your class. Occasionally you will have an opportunity to model the appropriate response to a difficult emotional situation. For example if someone in the class is bereaved or if someone in the class is very angry and has an outburst in class, you can model appropriate responses. Your external behaviours are all important, but it also helps children if you think aloud, describing the internal processes that helped you cope in a situation, as this provides them with a model script for guiding internal dialogue. Peers can also be assigned as role models. Sometimes this is done within a class and at other times a student is allocated a peer model from a higher class. For example as an induction to the school a junior student might be paired with a senior student, or an older student may coach a younger one in sport. Peer tutoring can provide another opportunity for modelling. If you reinforce one student's behaviour this also provides a model for the whole class. Choosing the right model is important. Students are likely to copy the behaviour as long as they:

- are capable of performing the same skill or behaviour.
- respect the student who is being reinforced.
- see themselves as being similar to the other student in significant ways.
- receive reinforcement themselves for the behaviour.

Scripting Procedures

Children who are having difficulty in social situations, or who have difficulty managing anger or stress, may be taught to use a script to help them. Some children can internalise this script in their head, others may need cards or cues actually written out. In an anger management programme for example, a student might practise repeating thoughts that help them to stay calm or learn to reinterpret clenched fists as a signal to stay calm. In some circumstances, children need to keep the cue cards with them. However there are many situations where this draws unwanted attention. These supports should be as unobtrusive as possible and faded out as soon as is practical. The goal in giving a prompt is to get rid of it as soon as possible!

Direct Instruction

The classroom provides a great opportunity to teach social skills, anger management and other emotional literacy skills directly. Giving very clear feedback and helping a child to identify situations that are potential problems for them can be helpful. Supporting them and encouraging them to use positive coping strategies and techniques in the real environment is one of the most effective ways to promote behaviour change. Giving feedback on how they did after the event is also very useful for learning these complex skills. For example, if a youngster is getting angry, prompting them to stop and think and evaluate, may interrupt the cycle and prevent an escalation in the behaviour. Helping younger children to identify and label their feelings can prevent them acting them out.

Self-Monitoring and Recording

It is amazing how unaware we can be of our own behaviour. Self-monitoring can help a student track their behaviour and recognise improvement. Many students do this anyway. For example, marking off homework in a journal is a form of self-monitoring. Correcting their own maths is another example of self-monitoring. Self-monitoring can also be used for other behaviour. In some situations it is useful to hand over responsibility to the student and take a back seat. Areas where this can be done include students monitoring whether or not they are

on time for school each day, students monitoring their own aggressive outbursts and students monitoring their behaviour in the line. A more advanced method of self-monitoring includes keeping a detailed diary – a method frequently used with older students. They might record things that make them sad, angry or anxious, or how often they experienced these feelings. The diary tracks behaviour you want to change. Usually this is done privately between the teacher and the student.

Other Social Skills Approaches

Probably the most well known programme is Carol Gray's *Social Stories*. *Circle of Friends* is another programme, and there are also various social skills guides for running groups. Simply click on the titles below to learn more about each approach.

[Social Stories](#)

[Circle of Friends](#)

[Social Skills Groups](#)

Relaxation Training

Relaxation training is another method of supplementing and strengthening emotional mastery. Relaxation training conducted by parents in the home has been found to be not only effective in improving behaviour and other symptoms, but also effective in improving overall relaxation when measured by biofeedback equipment. Teachers will also find it useful. We need to keep in mind that the mismatch between the student's ability and the demands of the school situation can be stressful and may produce aggression and disruptive behaviour in some. Relaxation training can also be used as a de-escalating or prevention technique. It can be adopted as part of an anger management programme or a stress management or anxiety reduction programme with older students. The following activities will provide some starting points for relaxation training.

Younger Children: The Turtle Technique

This technique (Robin, Schneider and Dolnick, 1976) is used to teach self-control to younger children. The children are told the story of a turtle who is always getting into trouble because he does not stop to think. These problems make him cross and angry, and he ends up fighting with everyone. With the assistance of a wise old turtle the young turtle learns better self-control. When the turtle has a problem he pulls his body into his shell to think. The children learn the turtle technique; they pull their arms close to their bodies and curl up into their shells, stop and think and then relax. The purpose behind this activity is to get the child to experience the relaxed feeling after tensing their muscles. It also helps develop simple problem solving and self-control strategies.

Guided Imagery

Other active strategies (Koeppen, 1974) take the children through a series of exercises to tense and relax specific muscles. Koeppen reports that these exercises can help children to become aware of feelings of tension in their bodies and provide skills to reduce it. The use of fantasy and guided imagery is incorporated into these exercises so the child does not have to be able to identify specific muscle groups. The use of fantasy and imagery also helps to maintain the child's interest. She cautions that children really get into these exercises and so

may be disorientated if the session ends abruptly. So bring them back gently.

One of the exercises she uses is as follows: pretend you are a furry lazy cat. You want to stretch your arms out in front of you. Raise them high over your head. Way back. Stretch higher. Now just let your arms drop back by your side. Ok kittens let's stretch again and so on.

Storytelling for Relaxation

Students can be assisted to experience a rare sense of calm and comfort using relaxation scripts. Many relaxation scripts are available for adults and are easily adapted for adolescents. With younger children, and even some older ones, storytelling can provide a powerful relaxation medium. Doris Brett, an Australian psychologist and writer has developed this technique in "Annie's Stories." One particular story of a child called Annie who is having a difficult day makes an ideal relaxation tool. Her mother tells her she can go for a ride on a magic carpet but first she has to do some magic breathing in preparation for this trip. They do the magic breaths and then they go off on a magic carpet. Each child mirrors all the things that Annie does; they choose the texture of the carpet, imagine the noise it makes as it flies through the air, the colour of it, etc. They then find a special place to land and rest for a while. The child is told that they can visit this special place in their own head any time they want to. Children love these stories but unfortunately, the book itself is hard to find.

Jenny Mosley has some relaxation stories in her book "More Quality Circle Time". For more information see her [website](#). Murray White has an audio tape and activity booklet "Picture this – Guided Imagery for Circle Time". However there is nothing to stop you making up stories or relaxation imagery and creating your own version with your class.

Setting the Scene for Relaxation

Often teachers have postures they ask the students to adopt as a way to calm things down. For example a common one is asking junior students to put their head down in their hands. You can devise your own equivalent of this or get the students to come up with their suggestions.

At secondary level, asking the students to close their eyes and sit with their shoulders relaxed, their hands on the desk with palms facing upwards and their legs outstretched for a few minutes before beginning a lesson, can relax the mood in the class.

Posture can be incorporated into drama as a key to teaching relaxation. Get a volunteer to role-play and then give the rest of the class a script which involves tension and anxiety, such as the following:

This boy is about to get the results of his test but he does not think he did well. He is sitting in his seat waiting for the paper to come back from the teacher.

The group have to tell the volunteer what posture to assume when he gets his results. This is a great learning experience. It helps to develop awareness of body language and the relationship between our thoughts and feelings and how they can manifest physically in our bodies.

Involve older students in identifying the ways they relax outside school hours. What is your own favourite way of relaxing? Why does it work? Sport, taking a bath, going for a walk are some of the common ones but it is an individual thing. Stress is part of life and having a healthy way to cope with stress is an important life skill.

We all carry tension in our bodies. A certain amount of tension in our muscles helps us to function, walk, talk, eat etc. When we are under pressure, we hold tension in certain areas of our bodies. Having the student identify where they hold tension in their body can clue them into signs that they need to relax. With pre and early teens, use a drawing and have them mark the areas of the body where they experience stress with a pencil or marker. With older teenagers, surveying the body for signs of tension using a list is a helpful exercise.

Click [here](#) to print off body tension map (younger students).

Click [here](#) for print off survey of tension (older students).

Click [here](#) for more on Stress management and Relaxation.

Music can be used as a tool to build a calm atmosphere, or as background for a relaxation exercise. With adolescents, using a walkman with their choice of calming music can help them to unwind. Yoga and meditation can also be used successfully with older students. Get students to try different relaxation techniques and choose their favourites.

Teaching Emotional Mastery through Self-Instruction

The application we will look at here is based on the work of Meichenbaum and Goodman (1971). In the late 1960s these researchers investigated and described a group of youngsters who were culturally deprived, delinquent in their behaviour and had difficulty relating what they said and what they did. This was at the time described as a "central language deficit." This group of youngsters also had difficulty problem-solving verbally. What they did was use a cognitive self-guidance procedure to train impulsive children to talk themselves through specific tasks. They showed that seven to nine-year-olds who received self-instruction or guided self-talk training improved significantly on their performance on a maze test, performance IQ, on the WISC and a measure of cognitive impulsivity. This is a well-proven technique. How can we apply this? This technique can be broken down into five steps, which mirror the normal developmental stages of self-talk, beginning with external speech and gradually moving to covert self-directing speech.

This type of strategy can also be adapted to help children reinforce themselves in certain situations, and to help them restrain their negative emotions. In this form, it is referred to as positive self-talk. Providing the child with an internal script for events and situations helps them to cope and develop self-control. So a child in the playground might repeat to himself under his breath "I won't take the bait, I'm going to stay cool", to control his temper. A child might repeat to himself "I can stay out of trouble, I am not going to hit anyone", or "I'm doing well, I can keep it up, so far so good," might be used to self-reinforce behaviour etc. The possible applications are enormous. Rehearsal and guided practice of self-directing speech and positive self-talk are best done on a one-to-one basis; parents can also help out with this technique.

The critical components of this approach are modelling, self-instruction and reinforcement. Modelling can also be done through imagining good performance. Remember it has both application to learning tasks and emotional mastery. It does not always have to be done as a

formal procedure; think of yourself as a coach encouraging and helping the child until they can do it for themselves. The protocol is detailed below:

Teaching Self-Instruction: Guided Self-Talk

- Teacher performs the task while talking aloud and the student observes (modelling).
- Teacher instructs the student aloud while the student performs the task.
- Student performs the same task while instructing himself out loud.
- Student instructs himself whispering while completing the task.

In using self-instruction to guide a student through a difficult or conflict situation and help them maintain self-control, the teacher can begin with step 2.

- Teacher instructs the student aloud with strategies for staying calm and a script for behaving.
- Student talks through calming thoughts and strategies for behaving while instructing himself out loud.
- Student instructs himself, whispering the calming script, while staying in the situation.
- Student instructs himself silently, using internalised speech while he performs the task.

[A Coaching Example](#)

Problem- Solving and Conflict Resolution

In any problem situation it is wise to begin with the use of reflective listening and non blaming “I” messages. Ask open-ended questions such as who, where, why, when? Closed questions close down communication. These include stating the obvious like “do you think I can wait here all day?” “Do you think I am stupid?” Or comments like “that’s too bad, well just get on with it” or “I don’t want to hear it”. Nelsen et al., (2001) recommend that we “stop telling and start asking”. Open questions and reflective listening skills show the student that you are listening and may help the student clarify what they want, what you want, and how it can be achieved. Closed questions are those where the student can give a yes or no answer. Knowing when to keep quiet and listen is an important skill – do not rush to give a solution but allow the students to arrive at their own solutions. Often students tell us things at times when we are preoccupied or at times when we cannot give them the hearing they need. Feel free to put the student off at the time, but arrange an appropriate time when you can listen to them later. Simply say that what they are telling you is too important to rush and can you schedule a time to meet them and discuss it fully. Be sure to follow up on this. If they have come to you with a problem go back later and check that it has been sorted out or simply ask them how it is going.

In order to problem-solve children need certain skills. First they have to be able to recognise that a problem exists. They may need help identifying their feelings. They may have poor reasoning skills, weak logical or sequential thinking skills, or they may have poor memory. A deficit in any of these areas will make it difficult to implement problem - solving strategies. These deficits must be remedied or a way to bypass them identified before proceeding. Children who have these basic skills can solve problems but we must have faith in them and their ability to work through and find solutions (Nelson et al., 2001). It is hard sometimes to trust that our students can make choices and decisions. This demands that we adopt the Adlerian position of driving behaviour from the back seat. In order to implement some of these

ideas we have to trust and let go of some of our controlling ways in the process. All parties must agree on the solution before it can become a plan and this is where we are able to give choices within limits. The teacher sets the limits on the behaviour. He or she structures what is acceptable in agreeing solutions. If the teacher is not open to trying the new suggestions (as long as they are reasonable) then the process will fail and the students will become discouraged.

The problem-solving technique listed here is best done one to one but can be done with a small group. It is used between teachers and pupils but students can also be taught to use the technique themselves. Problem solving has a number of standard steps:

1. Identify the problem: Get everyone's view of the problem and paraphrase the problem. The best way to communicate a problem is to use the assertive "I" message. "I have a problem when everyone comes late to class because..." Taking ownership of the problem as opposed to saying "you are always coming late to class" in and of itself changes the communication. If you start by blaming then the communication goes downhill rapidly. Explain why this is a problem and request a change. If you have a solution agreeable to all, proceed to step 4. If you do not have the solution proceed to step 2.

2. Brainstorm solutions: No matter how crazy the ideas seem, take them down, write out all the possible solutions; sometimes even the craziest idea can be adapted to form part of the solution.

3. Evaluate solutions: Come up with a potential plan of action – everyone has to rate the listed solutions as a plus or a minus – sometimes combining two solutions can work.

4. Agree the plan and set a time to re-evaluate it: Agree and write out who will do what where and when and what will happen if they forget or do not follow through. Set a time to re-evaluate the plan. If you have a weekly or daily class meeting, state when the review will take place. A week is usually enough time to evaluate whether the plan is working or not.

Many of the same rules for the classroom meeting apply here: keep it positive; no blaming; no criticising etc. Encourage students to participate by taking on board their comments and suggestions. Reinforce the process by praising and rewarding their efforts to resolve the issue.

Problem-solving with younger children

When working with younger children it may be necessary to simplify the problem-solving process. They may need to work initially on identifying their feelings so they can recognise a problem. You can use a much simpler process such as:

- What is the problem?
- What are some things we can do to solve the problem?
- What would happen if we tried these solutions?
- Which solution is the best?

With younger children it helps if the teacher keeps a record of situations as they occur to remind the child what happened when they implemented a particular solution. Another technique is the *Problem-Solving Wheel of Choice* (Nelsen et al., 2001). This wheel can be drawn on a poster or painted on the ground in the play area. It lists strategies to employ when

you have a problem (apologise, walk away, class meeting, use an “I” message, tell them to stop, count to 10, go cool off, go onto another game, shake hands and take turns). Students are encouraged to try two strategies from the wheel when they have a problem. Menus of alternatives to anger, or possible solutions to problems can be posted on the class wall or given to older children.

Conflict Resolution

Students who are not able to negotiate often resort to conflict. To shift conflict you have to shift perceptions and this can be achieved through effective communication. Emotions play a big role in keeping the conflict going. Many people come to a situation ready to fight it out. The main emotions involved here are fear and anger. Sharing emotions can be as important as sharing perception (Bodine and Crawford, 1998). In order to successfully resolve a conflict, students need to feel heard, understood and empowered. Usually in conflict situations communications are poor and participants are high in suspicion. Students also need to feel worthwhile and that they are capable. The focus for them has to be letting go of mistakes and looking to the future (Albert, 2003). Students who learn conflict resolution skills develop social competencies of co-operation, empathy, creative problem solving, social cognitive skills and relationship skills (Bodine and Crawford, 2003). Conflict resolution encompasses negotiation, mediation, peer mediation and collaborative problem solving. According to Bodine and Crawford (2003) there are four underlying tenets of conflict resolution: (1) Conflict is natural; (2) Differences can be acknowledged and appreciated; (3) Conflict when viewed in a positive way can be seen as a solution- building opportunity; (4) When conflicting parties come together and build on each other’s strengths to find solutions, there is a positive knock on effect where a nurturing climate is created and individual self- worth is valued. While acknowledging how difficult it can be to resolve conflict in large groups, Faupel and colleagues (1998) give some advice for positive conflict resolution.

- Wait until everyone is calm (up to 45 minutes after an incident).
- Use good communication skills "I" messages and no blaming.
- Try to get the student to see it from the other side – or the other person’s point of view.
- Acknowledge your part in the problem.
- Generate the solution or part solutions together.

Take a skills training approach outside conflict situations. Teach anger management, communication skills and use group work to develop empathy. There are very few win/win solutions so be prepared to give. Acknowledging the other person’s point of view can sometimes be sufficient to shift the behaviour. It is important to stay positive and stay focused on the behaviour not the student. In this way the student gets a clear message that this is not personal. Separating the deed from the doer can strengthen the teacher-student relationship. Albert (2003) has a 5 step plan for conflict resolution similar to the problem-solving approach but with a greater emphasis on feelings.

1. State problem: State the problem in objective terms – the behaviour is what you can see and hear. Stay away from vague language like “Mary has an attitude” or “Johnny is aggressive.”

2. State the need: In stating what you need from a situation and asking the student to state his or her needs, a clearer understanding can be reached which helps to shift people who are entrenched in their own point of view.

3. Describe the feelings: The logic behind dealing with the feelings is to get the emotions out of the way so that a rational conversation can happen.

4. Discuss solutions: Brainstorming is used to come up with a plan.

5. Decide on a plan: The steps for implementing the plan and a timeframe for reviewing the plan are decided. It is a good idea to agree the plan in writing and have all parties sign off on it.

For an overview of exemplary conflict resolution programmes in school see Bodine and Crawford (2003).

Avoiding Problems

Linda Albert (2003) identifies four problems with problem-solving and negotiation; stonewalling, unworkable solutions, verbal disrespect and blaming. Stonewalling is when the student refuses to co-operate with the process. In this case Albert suggests that you simply say “since you are not ready to talk about it then I will have to decide what happens next”. Leave time for the student to make some attempt to co-operate before moving on. The solution has to be agreed by all parties. With unworkable solutions, the key here is to encourage the student while disagreeing with the plan. Again, honest communication works; simply say you have a problem with the plan and say why and continue with the brainstorming until a mutual agreement is reached. With verbal disrespect, Albert give choices; “you can treat me with respect or be excused to the principal’s office, it’s your choice”. If the student keeps blaming others, acknowledge what they are saying but stick to the task at hand. Stay focused on finding a solution and bring the student with you.

Problem-solving, negotiation and conflict resolution skills are initially taught and practised with the teacher present. The teacher is very much an active participant. These skills can also be applied in situations that develop between two or more students. It is important that once the students have the basic skills they are encouraged to apply them without the teacher’s involvement. In the initial stages of learning these complex skills, students need support and guidance; it’s too easy to let the negotiations slip into a negative confrontation. Once students are skilled in the process they can apply these techniques themselves to their own problems and to resolve their own conflicts.

Anger Management

Relaxation training is an essential part of an anger management programme. The most effective approach to anger management is a cognitive behavioural approach. The cognitive behaviour theorists believe that faulty thoughts and beliefs underlie anger problems. This is a two pronged approach (1) decreasing the physiological arousal using relaxation procedure and (2) cognitive thought restructuring or simply changing how you think. Raymond Novaco (1975) developed a programme for helping adults to deal with anger and this has been modified for use with teenagers and children (Faupelet et al., 1998).

Anger is an emotional reaction to a set of circumstances or triggers. The trigger or stressful event is known as provocation. Anger can have positive functions or negative functions. Anger can be positive as it can make us become more assertive and stand up for ourselves, it can help us express tension, and it can energise us and help us feel in control (Novaco, 1975). It

has negative effects when it is used too frequently, when it leads to aggression, when it is too intense, when it disrupts relationships or when it dictates the way we feel all the time.

A firework has been used as a model to explain the way anger works (Faupel et al., 1998). The trigger is the match that lights the firework and sets off the anger response. The body of the firework is our reaction internally and externally to the event outside us, and the fuse is the mind or our thoughts about the event (Novaco, 1975). There are external factors and internal factors which contribute to the explosion. The external factors we may or may not have control over e.g. stress in the classroom – too hot, too many people, someone pushing into you. The internal factors we can control. These are our thoughts which stem from a belief we hold. The other internal factors that we can control are our physical reaction to a situation. How we interpret the event can make us angry or calm us down. Our internal response stems from our beliefs and expectations in certain situations which triggers the internal dialogue we have in our own heads.

To intervene with a student who has difficulties with anger management first teach relaxation procedures. Next help the student to understand that there are external events that he/she may have no control over, but that he/she can control how they think about them or how they physically react to a situation. Explain anger in terms of the fireworks analogy. The next stage is to help students track their thoughts and anger, to become aware of triggers and signs.

The mind and body are interconnected. Changing how we think can change how we feel. Changing how we interpret events by re-scripting our internal dialogue is called cognitive or thought restructuring. In anger management training this means identifying “hot thoughts” and replacing them with “cold thoughts”. Hot thoughts make us more angry, and cold thoughts are thoughts which calm us down. Help the student to develop a range of cool thoughts and use comic strip style cartoons to document these. These can be written on cue cards as can a range of alternate behaviour or calming strategies. Use role play on a one to one basis, and rehearse common situations which provoke anger.

Develop a worksheet with the visual representation of the firework and have the student fill in the triggers (the match), what physically happens (body of firework) and hot thoughts which help the match ignite the fuse. With older students simply keeping a behaviour diary of situations under the headings (1) triggers – who, where, when, (2) what happened in your body and your head or what were your hot thoughts in the situation and (3) what was the outcome, is a more age appropriate way to document anger. The stress inoculation model described earlier is also useful in teaching appropriate alternative responses to difficult or anger provoking situations.

In Practice: Helping a child control anger

John always gets angry when any child in the school mentions his brother. His brother is in jail for possession of drugs and this is a very emotional issue for John. His brother looked after him financially, and John saw his brother as his protector in the local community. His brother's incarceration has placed a big strain on the family. John lives with his mother and his two older sisters, his young nephew and his mother's boyfriend. His teacher describes him as a smart boy but says that he is “too sensitive” and gets into physical fights in the classroom and at break time, with the slightest provocation.

Using the model described, the teacher had John track his physical response to anger. He described feeling all hot inside like he is “burning up, he also puts up his fists as if to box, and he identified feeling tension in his face (clenched teeth) and in his shoulders. The school

counsellor helped John to reinterpret this as a signal that he needs to calm down. She taught him a simple relaxation procedure he can do to get rid of the tension in his body. John was asked to track his thoughts in situations where he was angry over the course of three days. He forgot to do this and so the counsellor met with him every day and helped him fill in the sheet for that day. They did this for three days.

John's thoughts were all relating to having to defend his brother's name – he believed that families should stick together and that he had to help protect his brother's name. The school counsellor helped John to challenge his belief. He reinterpreted the situation as another student trying to get him mad. He developed a strategy for thinking cold thoughts in each of the four steps preparing for provocation (“these fellas are only trying to get me in trouble, I won't let them get to me, I can keep my cool here”) impact and confrontation (“they can say what they like I am not going to listen to them, I am going to stay out of trouble, I am not going to fight”), coping with arousal (“My shoulders are getting tight I need to take deep breaths and relax, that's it take it easy, let go of my fists and put my hands down because I am going to stay calm”), subsequent reflection (“I did well, I stayed calm, I did not let them get to me”).

Introducing yourself. Offering help. Giving a compliment. Sharing. Showing respect. Following instructions. Apologizing. Expressing your feelings. Recognising another's feelings (empathy).	Showing understanding of another's feelings. Expressing concern for another (empathy, compassion). Dealing with one's own anger. Dealing with another's anger. Expressing affection. Dealing with fear.	Using self-control. Asking permission. Responding to teasing. Avoiding trouble. Staying out of fights. Problem-solving. Accepting consequences and criticism. Dealing with an accusation. Negotiating.
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(Adapted from McGinnis and Goldstein, 1990)

Role-play and feedback

The classroom provides a rich environment for teachers to observe how children interact with their peers on a daily basis. Role-play helps children learn social skills in a way that is fun. It also helps them to learn the behaviour not only at a cognitive level, but in their muscles. Role-play can be incorporated into cross curricular activities such as SPHE or Drama. You may wish to select a particular social skill which you want to teach to students, or you can use role-play to problem-solve situations which regularly occur in the classroom or playground. These

may include addressing bullying or conflict resolution. Be aware of the need for emotional safety, and remember that it is often easier to use fictional situations than to put the spotlight on those with the problems in the group. You can also make role-play easier by breaking the class into pairs or groups of three. When everybody is on stage, it's easier. Alternatively with young children you may use puppets or dolls. The instructions for this are simple, but keeping it on track so that the experience is positive can be more difficult in practice. The following is a six-step protocol for teaching specific social skills. It can easily be adapted for group or individual work and for older or younger students:

Step 1:

Select one developmentally appropriate social skill.

Step 2:

Describe the skill to be learned and the importance of learning this skill (e.g. the appropriate way of getting the teacher's attention in the classroom). The use of the skill may be illustrated by pointing it out in a video, picture, book, cartoon, a simulation using puppets, or reference to behaviour of peers (e.g. "Look how James raised his hand to ask the teacher a question").

Step 3:

Model the skill. Clearly demonstrate through role-play what you want the children to do, and specify the sequence involved in the skill (e.g. raise your hand, wait quietly for the teacher to call on you, ask your question using a polite tone of voice). Use thinking-out-loud, say what you are thinking as you are solving the problem to model problem-solving steps. Modelling may be conducted by the teacher or by selected children. With younger children you can use puppets or dolls. To increase the probability of success, the model must be highly regarded by the learner and of the same age and sex. In addition, the model must appear to receive reinforcement for engaging in the social skill. Give many examples of the skill to be learned.

Step 4:

Role-play and feedback. Assign roles and have the children role-play the skill in pairs or groups or use a puppet or doll to practice the skill by copying the teacher's example. Construct practice opportunities in which the child receives descriptive feedback from the teacher (e.g. "well done Sheila for raising your hand. You need to wait for the teacher to call on you before you ask your question. Now watch me do it"). A video recording or photographs of these situations may be useful in providing feedback.

Step 5:

Pupils practise the skill. Encourage the child to use the appropriate skill in different situations and provide multiple opportunities to practice the new skill. Provide praise and encouragement for the appropriate use of the skill.

Step 6:

Maintenance and generalisation of skill. Use visual or verbal prompts to encourage the pupil to use the skill in the classroom (e.g. during Circle Time), on the playground (e.g. during structured games) and at home (if relevant). Provide descriptive praise and reward. Self-monitoring by the child at this stage is important. The child could use a checklist to monitor use of appropriate skill.

Finally, giving positive and constructive feedback is critical. Reinforcement across settings and from different adults helps children to generalise the skills, and practice will help consolidate the learning. Children need to be taught the language of emotion and feelings if

they are to discuss and express their feelings and benefit from social skills instruction. SPHE materials and programmes such as the *Stay Safe Programme* provide ideas for doing this.

Modelling

Modelling is a powerful learning tool. Many children are visual learners and will pick up information simply from observation. The downside of this of course is that they will also copy negative behaviour! In an informal way you are a model for your class. Occasionally you will have an opportunity to model the appropriate response to a difficult emotional situation. For example if someone in the class is bereaved or if someone in the class is very angry and has an outburst in class, you can model appropriate responses. Your external behaviours are all important, but it also helps children if you think aloud, describing the internal processes that helped you cope in a situation, as this provides them with a model script for guiding internal dialogue. Peers can also be assigned as role models. Sometimes this is done within a class and at other times a student is allocated a peer model from a higher class. For example as an induction to the school a junior student might be paired with a senior student, or an older student may coach a younger one in sport. Peer tutoring can provide another opportunity for modelling. If you reinforce one student's behaviour this also provides a model for the whole class. Choosing the right model is important. Students are likely to copy the behaviour as long as they:

- are capable of performing the same skill or behaviour.
- respect the student who is being reinforced.
- see themselves as being similar to the other student in significant ways.
- receive reinforcement themselves for the behaviour.

Scripting Procedures

Children who are having difficulty in social situations, or who have difficulty managing anger or stress, may be taught to use a script to help them. Some children can internalise this script in their head, others may need cards or cues actually written out. In an anger management programme for example, a student might practise repeating thoughts that help them to stay calm or learn to reinterpret clenched fists as a signal to stay calm. In some circumstances, children need to keep the cue cards with them. However there are many situations where this draws unwanted attention. These supports should be as unobtrusive as possible and faded out as soon as is practical. The goal in giving a prompt is to get rid of it as soon as possible!

Direct Instruction

The classroom provides a great opportunity to teach social skills, anger management and other emotional literacy skills directly. Giving very clear feedback and helping a child to identify situations that are potential problems for them can be helpful. Supporting them and encouraging them to use positive coping strategies and techniques in the real environment is one of the most effective ways to promote behaviour change. Giving feedback on how they did after the event is also very useful for learning these complex skills. For example, if a youngster is getting angry, prompting them to stop and think and evaluate, may interrupt the cycle and prevent an escalation in the behaviour. Helping younger children to identify and label their feelings can prevent them acting them out.

Self-Monitoring and Recording

It is amazing how unaware we can be of our own behaviour. Self-monitoring can help a student track their behaviour and recognise improvement. Many students do this anyway. For example, marking off homework in a journal is a form of self-monitoring. Correcting their own

maths is another example of self-monitoring. Self-monitoring can also be used for other behaviour. In some situations it is useful to hand over responsibility to the student and take a back seat. Areas where this can be done include students monitoring whether or not they are on time for school each day, students monitoring their own aggressive outbursts and students monitoring their behaviour in the line. A more advanced method of self-monitoring includes keeping a detailed diary – a method frequently used with older students. They might record things that make them sad, angry or anxious, or how often they experienced these feelings. The diary tracks behaviour you want to change. Usually this is done privately between the teacher and the student.