

Kindness Retreat[®]



Conversation Starters

The following questions or tasks correlate to the activity portion of Morning Meetings as described by The Responsive Classroom[®] protocols.* These questions and tasks seek to reinforce the areas of core learning from the Youth Frontiers Kindness Retreat, which are for students to:

- Understand the difference between kind and unkind behaviors.
- Act kindly toward others.
- Understand how one's words and actions impact others positively or negatively.
- Acquire conflict-resolution skills to reduce bullying incidents.
- Deepen relationships with classmates.

The Social-Emotional Learning competencies enhanced by the retreat are:

- Self-awareness
- Social Awareness
- Responsible Decision-making

Directions for Classroom Teachers, Social Workers or Counselors:

The following activities are designed for students to write on loose-leaf paper or in journals. Students can share in small groups or with the whole group. Put the results of each activity on chart paper or the white board to keep up in the room. Some activities have recommended facilitation instructions (listed in italics). The questions are grouped and ordered below. Feel free to engage in activities that best address your students' needs and issues as they arise.

*For information on Responsive Classroom, visit responsiveclassroom.org.

Kindness



Part 1

- 1 Write your definition of kindness.
- 2 What is a compliment?
Instruction option: Model and discuss the difference between real and artificial compliments. Help kids listen for tone of voice and sincerity on the part of the compliment-giver.
- 3 How might you respond to an authentic compliment?
- 4 Compliments, smiles and including others at recess are all examples of Kindness Boomerangs. What will probably happen if we throw out Kindness Boomerangs to others?
- 5 Write about two different times that you threw out Kindness Boomerangs yesterday. How did it feel when you threw out those Kindness Boomerangs? How does it feel when you receive a Kindness Boomerang?

Kindness

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Part 2

- 6 What situations are happening in our class that we could work on by using the value of kindness?

Instruction option: Have your students write in a journal or on the white board. Pair and share. As a class, decide which ideas you should tackle first. For example, you could begin by discussing the most urgent or the most easily accomplished tasks.

- 7 How can you throw out a Kindness Boomerang today at school?

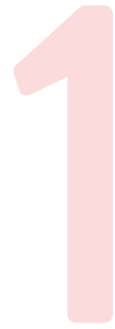
Instruction option: Use one of the bulletin boards in the classroom as a “Kindness Boomerang” posting board. Have boomerang shapes for students to write examples of a Kindness Boomerang they did or saw. Pin these shapes up on the board. You can use it as a discussion point, a reinforcement point, a modeling point, etc.



- 8 What does kindness look like?

Instruction option: Have the students create a visual representation of kindness. Work with the art teacher to help students select a medium from those available. This could be a print or non-print representation. Students could work in pairs or trios. You could use it as an informal assessment of the core learnings from their year’s work with kindness.

Empathy & Respect



Part 1

① “You don’t know until you’ve walked a mile in my shoes.” What does this mean?

② What is empathy?

③ What is perspective?

Instruction option: Use one of Kris Van Alsberg’s books (“Jumanji” works well). Pass around a number of Van Alsberg’s books since all of them illustrate the power of perspective. Have students try to describe what is so magical about the illustrations. In the “Jumanji” example, the reader is a participant in the book. Have them identify where they are in the illustration. Perhaps work with the art teacher to assist in perspective awareness, especially how the still life on the page can be seen differently depending on where the reader is viewing it from. Relate these activities to a hypothetical argument that occurred in a game on the playground among five children. Try to discuss the incident until students realize that each of the five children could have seen the argument differently. How does this relate to solving a conflict in a logical and reasonable fashion?

④ What does respect mean?

Empathy & Respect

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Part 2

- 5 “You don’t have to be everyone’s friend, but you must respect everyone who is here.”
What does this mean?

- 6 How can we disagree and still respect one another?

- 7 How can competition or jealousy interfere with respect?

Bullying



1 What is bullying behavior?

Youth Frontiers describes bullying behavior as when somebody repeatedly uses their power to hurt someone on purpose.

2 What are the three types of bullying? Do they happen in different places at school?

Instruction option: Review the three types of bullying introduced at the Kindness Retreat – physical (hitting, kicking, biting, etc.); verbal (teasing, name calling, gossip, cyber bullying); and silent (exclusion from activities or friend groups). Emphasize how much bullying behavior happens where adults don't see it.

3 When is teasing fun and appropriate and when is it not fun or appropriate? When does teasing turn into bullying or harassment?

4 If you witness a bullying situation, what are some strategies you can use to help?

*Instruction option: Review the technique of I.C.I. from the Kindness Retreat: **Interrupt, Compliment, Invite Away**. First, a student interrupts the situation by calling the name of their peer who is being hurt. Second, the student gives the peer who is being hurt a compliment – in other words, throws out a Kindness Boomerang. Third, the student invites their peer away from the situation to a place that is safe.*

Relationships & Friendships



- 1 What is a friend? What qualities do you look for in a friend?
- 2 What does it mean when you hear “you need to be a friend to have a friend”?
- 3 What can you do if you don’t want to continue being friends with someone in the same way that you have been?
- 4 What can you do if a friend all of a sudden decides you are not a friend anymore?

Self-awareness



- 1 Who in this room is responsible for your behavior?
Instruction option: Have students point to the person. If students point to the teacher or another adult in the room, have the discussion of how each of us is responsible for our own behavior.
- 2 We are each responsible for our own behavior but sometimes we see others not being treated well. What is our role in that scenario?

Group Reflections

After participating in discussion of many of these questions, review the classroom norms. Do they still make sense to everyone? Is there anything to add or subtract? Are there any new awarenesses that can be posted in the room as reminders?