



Please note: Please consult with your teacher ahead of the activity. The discussions you have in these activities need to be handled sensitively and with consideration given to students' backgrounds and experiences. You want to make the classroom a safe place for students to share their ideas and even experiences. Some students may want to be excused from certain discussions and this should be respected. For some children it could be the first time they have addressed this issue or understood it from a different perspective.

You may find the suggestions here useful as you are handling sensitive topics in your workshops.

How to discuss sensitive topics

At the start of the workshop:



Let participants know about the sensitive topic you will discuss. Reassure them if are uncomfortable discussing the topic they can let your teacher know and they will be given other options. If they wish to participate but are concerned that it could be upsetting, give them appropriate steps to take like leaving the room if necessary.

- Lead into the topic gently. If you are short of time, don't be tempted to skip the "setting the scene" discussions or activities. It can be helpful to imagine that you are carefully opening the lid of a jar of sweets/marbles/beans (which represent potentially sensitive emotions). You don't want all of the contents suddenly flying out, uncontrolled across the floor. Instead, open the jar slowly and tip out the contents carefully and delicately.
- As much as possible, focus on solutions rather than problems.
- If you and your teacher think it's necessary based on the local context (cultural considerations, particular personalities and dynamics in the group etc.), you could divide the class into smaller groups based on age, gender or experience to create a more relaxed atmosphere to encourage students to participate.

Throughout the workshop:



- Keep an eye on students' body language and how they are interacting with each other. Is anyone getting upset? Is anyone uncomfortable or very withdrawn? Intervene gently and discreetly mention it to your teacher.

At the end of the workshop:



- Make sure to close the workshop properly. You need to gently gather all of the "sweets/marbles/beans" back into the "jar" and close the lid. You can do this by: having the opportunity for students to feedback from their group work and to ask any questions; offering them the chance to speak to you separately after the lesson if they're worried about anything; thanking the students for their thoughtful/creative/interesting contributions and for listening to each other in a kind and respectful way; expressing that you thank them for contributing their valuable thoughts on this difficult topic; moving the discussion towards a positive note (looking to the future); ending on a positive, preferably fun note (age-appropriate song, dance, joke etc.).

After the workshop:



- Be prepared for students to approach you to discuss anything that might be bothering them. Gently refer them to your teacher if they would like to speak to someone.