



Worldviews Clarification

A handbook of practical strategies for
teachers and students.

Mark Plater | Autumn 2024





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Introduction

All of us have a personal worldview. It is the way that we see things, and the way in which we respond to life around us. Our worldview consists of the assumptions we make, our preferences, our hopes and expectations, our beliefs, dreams, experiences, and stories we tell about ourselves and about life in general.

That's not to say that our worldview is something fixed. Rather, it is in a continuous state of change, which makes them even more interesting! How we perceive things today may not be how we perceive them in a year's time, or even how we approached things yesterday.

However, our students - unless they think a lot or follow a formalised worldview (e.g. a religion or ideology) - may inhabit and live from a personal worldview without very much self-awareness of it. And, apart from in very vague ways, they probably don't know very much about how aspects of their own perspective compare with the worldview of others; and maybe they haven't really verbalised such things or given them much focussed attention.

Reflecting on and thinking about ourselves is good fun though, and most of us have an innate wish to know and understand ourselves better. In spite of that, there may be some contexts where we don't feel completely comfortable

sharing the deeper parts of ourselves with others, and there may be some aspects of ourselves where we know that what we perceive is different from the perspective of most of those around us and perhaps we are reluctant to stand out as different. There therefore always needs to be permission in the classroom for participants to hold back, to have permission to 'pass' or an opportunity to express uncertainty about their outlook or perspective.

This book provides a range of games and activities to help teachers and students to explore together their own worldviews, and similarities and differences in the class as a whole. It does not aim to moralise by suggesting that one or another stance is better than others¹, but simply draws attention to individual and shared views and perspectives by helping students to put such things into words.

Engaging with our personal worldview opens us up to change. Sometimes when we openly state what we think or feel, it immediately becomes obvious to us that this does not make sense. We are then faced with an opportunity to re-think or to reframe the stance that we have expressed, and to decide whether we need to create a new story for ourselves. This is what education is all about: engaging with new ideas

¹ This is not to suggest that personal beliefs and assumptions do not matter, but rather that this is not the focus of the Worldviews Clarification exercises. These are intended as 'opening' exercises; how the lesson or study then proceeds is up to the professional expertise of the teacher or group leader.

and information and then utilising that information to restate what it is that we believe and assume about the world.

The task of any teacher is to help each student to expand their skills and perspectives, and to enable them to see and understand the world with greater refinement and accuracy. The starting point for any such activity must obviously be the student themselves, the abilities and understanding that they bring to the learning enquiry. Worldviews Clarification works on the premise that a teacher first needs to know where their students stand, before she is then able to lead them on to greater awareness or expertise.

It is a form of auditing: we first find out what students think (or can do, or how they perceive, etc.) and this provides the starting point for then trying to move them on to more accurate or more refined proficiency. When you know where the student is coming from we have a better idea of what to do next: whether to challenge misconceptions, to provide further factual details, or even to offer foundational ideas which will enable the students to grasp the totally new material that is about to be explored. Not knowing where the students are coming from is like 'teaching blind'; it is like trying to teach Sally to make bread, when every week Sally's family

makes bread at home and her family are even the local village bread-making champions! A simple Worldviews Clarification exercise at the start of the lesson could have saved this teacher some later embarrassment and offered an excellent entrée to their planned classroom activity, possibly also drawing on Sally's expertise!

The idea for such Worldviews Clarification is taken from an approach to moral education that was developed in the 1970s in the USA, and many of the activities in this book are adapted almost verbatim from the Values Clarification Handbook² that was published then. Indeed, that book has many more activities than provided below, and it might therefore serve as a useful companion volume to this text.

² Sidney B Simon, Leland W Howe & Howard Kirschenbaum (1972). *Values Clarification: a handbook of practical strategies for teachers and students*. NY: Hart.

To the teacher or group leader: How to use this manual

This book is not intended as a source collection of lesson starters but as a springboard for developing your own Worldviews Clarification exercises. It is hoped that once you begin using some of the examples provided, you will see the benefits of engaging pupils in this way, and begin to create your own custom-tailored strategies that lead directly into the kinds of topics that you are covering in your particular classroom subject programmes. Some strategies may work better with different age groups, or with boy or girl-dominated classes, or you may find that your pupils are particularly taken with certain kinds of activities, or that a particular style is ideal for getting your pupils to open up and explore the different worlds that they inhabit. Every group will respond differently to the various activities and to the specific manner and context of their delivery.

Do try the full range of options though. Don't just select the ones that you like or feel most comfortable with yourself; your pupils may have very different likes and preferences! Every now and again it might actually be worth asking the students: did you enjoy that? Or, what did you like about that? On the other hand, don't feel that you have to try them all just because they are all on the menu. Use your own professional judgement, asking the questions, What aspect of the pupils' worldviews relate most directly with the subject matter that we are studying today? What might be the best way of getting them to tap into that dimension of their personal worldview?

In the examples provided, some suggestions have been given to indicate where particular activities may relate to specific subject content, but you may have your own different ideas on this. Don't feel constrained by the guidance given; feel free to adapt the strategies in whatever way works best for you and your group of students.

Strategy 1: My immediate community.

Possible curriculum links: Sex & Relationships education; nationality and Citizenship; literature story-lines; regional history; religious commitment; etc.

Purpose

We are all social creatures, having people around us who support and know us best. For most, this is family and peer group friends, but for others it might include religious leaders, sports coaches, teachers, social workers, neighbours, or even online friends. Thinking about this helps us to appreciate and acknowledge the support systems that we have.

Procedure

Show an example and ask students to draw their own small circle (2-3 cm) in the middle of a page, with two or more larger circles going out from it (or provide pre-prepared sheets).

In the centre circle students write their own name (or nickname, initials, etc.). They then add people “who are close to them”, or “people who understand them best” (etc.) in the surrounding circles, according to their closeness (e.g. best friends/other friends/acquaintances). The outer circle could also include those who are paid to help (doctor, social worker, coach/instructor, etc.) if this were thought to be appropriate to the lesson focus.

When ready, students could share the contents of their diagrams with students and discuss similarities and/or differences.

To the teacher

In most instances this is a simple and engaging activity for discovering who matters most in students’ lives, or who are their key sources for support, inspiration and authority.

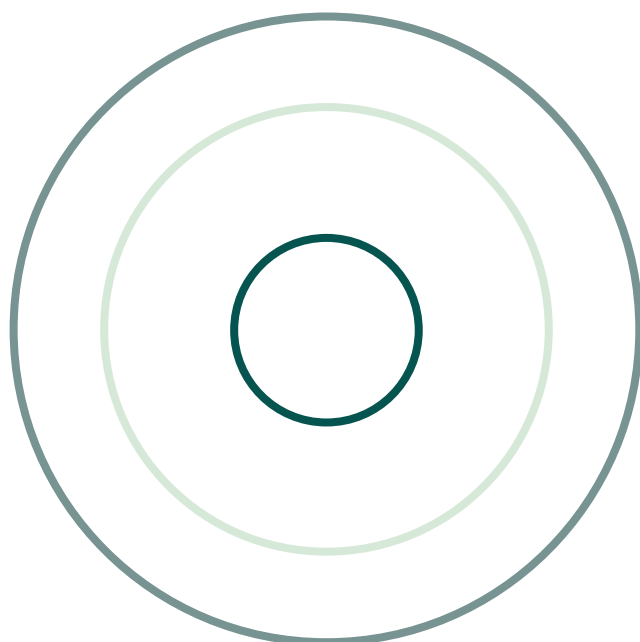
However in extreme cases, this task could highlight issues of concern or welfare-related issues, posing difficult professional challenges for the teacher, namely how to encourage and maintain a classroom atmosphere of open, honest enquiry, while at the same time having to respond to potential child protection responsibilities arising out of student participation. Where such matters do surface it is important that the teacher or group leader responds appropriately and in line with institutional policy and practice. All schools will have such policies in place as well as a lead officer for child protection.

Additional suggestions

Around the edges of the page could be added those people who are close in a physical sense, but with whom the student has no strong emotional bond.

An attempt might be made to see if there are patterns within the class group (e.g. parents and/or siblings are often significant, or close friends tend to be of a similar age, etc.).

See if students can identify any characteristics in common between those who are ‘close’ and those who are more distant.



Strategy 2: 20 things that make me Me.

Possible curriculum links: Sex and Relationships education; character descriptions in literature; aspects of Citizenship; sources of inspiration and authority; aspects of Personal, Social, Health, and Economic wellbeing; attitudes and self-assessment; etc.

Purpose

Each of us is unique and distinctive, but we often only see ourselves as like those around us. This activity gets students to consider who they think they are and what they consider to be their 'unique being' points.

Procedure

Sheets of paper are distributed and students are asked to write down numbers one to twenty, a few centimetres from the left and going down the page (or pre-prepared sheets can be used).

Students are then asked to list twenty things about themselves, going down the page. The teacher could also make their own list on a board or flipchart to act as an example and inspiration.

To encourage students, you could say things like, "They can be big or little things", "They could be things that you think, or do, or experiences you've had, and so on".

Tell students that it's OK to have more than twenty things, or even less, but to jot down as many as come to mind in the time given.

When completed you could ask students to code items as 'highly valued', 'medium value' or 'low value', or, which are 'very common', 'fairly common' or 'quite rare' amongst their age group, etc.

To the teacher

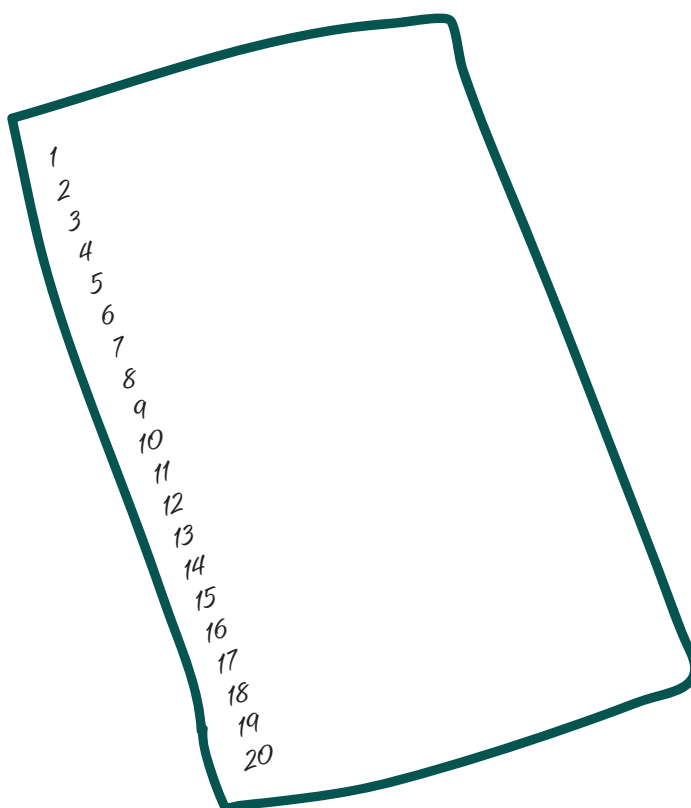
You could provide a pre-planned illustration based on yourself or a fictional character, providing examples of the kinds of items that students could include on their lists.

If any of the group are struggling, you could ask some leading questions to get them going, such as, How would your mum describe you? Or, What is your favourite food/TV programme/music/sport? What do you do in your spare time (activities/social media sites/gaming/best friends)?

Before encouraging any sharing, do give students the option of personal privacy. You might want to say something like, "I'd like you to discuss and compare your list with one other person. But only share what you feel comfortable sharing. Don't feel that you have to pass on anything about yourself that you don't feel comfortable letting other people know.

Additional suggestion

If appropriate, get students to discuss their answers in pairs, and if you think that they can do so sensitively, you could even suggest that the other person confirm or challenge if this is also how they see that person.



Strategy 3: Strength of opinion.

Possible curriculum links: Personal values discussions; social or political issues (e.g. pollution, abortion, race); civil rights and activism; social heroes and religious saints; etc.

Purpose

All of us hold opinions on various topics, even though we may not express them publicly. This activity gets us to explore our views and opinions and to interrogate how strongly we hold them.

Procedure

Get pupils to draw a grid with large spaces to the left, and 7 tick-box spaces towards the right, or provide a pre-printed version as below:

	Issue (and 'position')	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								

Ask students to identify some issues to include in the 'issues' boxes (e.g. water pollution, global warming, abortion, gender stereotyping, etc.) or else provide them with some in advance. Once the list is agreed, write them up on a board for students to copy into their own grids.

Against each 'issue', ask students to write a key word or phrase that summarises their 'position' on that issue (e.g. *really important/quite important/not important/no opinion*).

Now get students to evaluate their 'position' by writing in the relevant numbered boxes. If you think that they could cope with it, they could use a numbering system (e.g. 1=high/ 5=low score) or if not, they could use a simple YES/NO response. Write up or display each of the following questions, one at a time, for students to respond to:

1. Are you PROUD of your position on this issue?;
2. Have you ever PUBLICLY stated or affirmed your position?;
3. Did you CHOOSE your position?;
4. Did you choose your position after THOUGHTFUL CONSIDERATION of the pros and cons and consequences?;
5. Did you choose your position FREELY?;
6. Have you ever done anything to ACT ON your position?;
7. Have you ACTED REPEATEDLY or with consistency on your position?

Students should respond to all of these seven questions for each of the five issues listed.

Once completed, ask students to reflect on their responses to the seven questions compared to how important they originally said that the issue was to them (the responses given in the longer spaces).

To the teacher

These seven levels - identified in the seven questions above - indicate increasing levels of commitment to certain values. The seven steps go up sequentially in increasing levels of commitment to a cause.

It should be noted that students are not being asked to defend the position held but to explore the strength of their belief and their level of commitment to it.

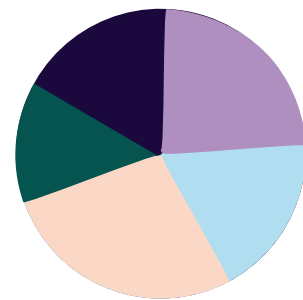
Additional suggestions

Students might be asked to discuss in pairs or trios their responses to the various topics/issues, or to focus specifically on their different responses to one of them in particular.

If appropriate students could be asked to reflect on whether they would now want to change any of their original positions, or to identify the issues their actions show that they are most committed to.

Strategy 4: My life pie.

Possible curriculum links: Personal or religious festivals and rituals; annual cycles and seasons; freedom and responsibility; healthy lifestyles; etc.



Purpose

All of us spend our time and resources in different ways, depending on what we deem to be socially appropriate or else of personal or group value. This activity invites pupils to consciously reflect on their everyday rituals and habits, and to raise questions about how and why these are emphasised.

Procedure

Draw a large circle (or show a pre-prepared one), suggesting, "This 'pie' represents an average day in your (or my) life. To make it 24 hours, we need to imagine that the usual 1 on the clock is 2 hours, 2 is 4 hours, etc. If I sleep for 8 hours that means that 12 o'clock to 4 o'clock is all sleep (draw in that segment and label it Sleep)."

You could then add in a few more: time at school; time spent travelling; time spent eating; time watching TV; etc. Then ask pupils to draw their own circle (or preferably, provide pre-printed ones with faint hourly divisions already in place).

Get them to list how they typically spend their time, and then to calculate and write/draw these features in to their life pie.

You could offer suggestions to the group [sleep, school, travel, friends, homework, social media, toiletries & getting dressed/ready, online gaming, football (or other sports), time alone (e.g. reading, journaling), household chores, etc], but suggest that they create their own time divisions based on what best describes their activities in the day.

Suggest that any less than 5 minute tasks (brief phone calls, making the bed, getting dressed, etc) could be lumped together as an 'Other' or 'Various' segment.

When finished, get pupils to discuss and compare their life-pies in pairs, seeing what is similar and what is different.

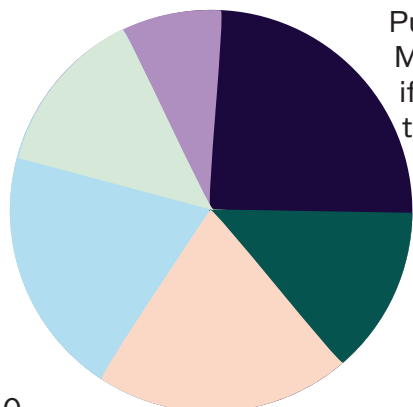
To the teacher

Emphasise that there is no right or wrong way to divide up their pie, and each of them is likely to have things in common as well as differences. Ask them to make the divisions as accurately as possible but not to worry about being completely exact.

Depending on the later focus of your lesson, decide how best to direct the students' attention in ways that will best lead into that content focus. For instance, if you were going on to study Muslim prayer, pupils might be specifically asked to include segments in chronological order throughout the 24 hours of one day and to focus on the things that they considered particularly important rather than mundane activities, even if some of those important things did not take very long.

Additional suggestions

To get students to reflect further on their life-pie they might be asked to grade (or shade) segments as Creative/ Interesting/ Boring, or, as chosen by Them/ Parents/Society, or, as Important to me/ Not important, etc.



Pupils might be asked to consider, If you were an African villager/ Muslim/ wheelchair user/ professional sports-person/ etc... what if anything might be different in your pie? Or, looking at your pie, is there anything that you wish was different?

Strategy 5: Strength of beliefs about the unknown.

Possible curriculum links: reflections on the Ultimate, spirit beings, the source of evil, what happens at death, etc.; laws of nature and sources of authority; fears and coping strategies; history and superstition; Halloween; death and bereavement; etc.

Purpose

All of us have beliefs or assumptions about the things that we can't explain, and all cultures and religions have tried to offer explanations for the things that don't seem to fit within our everyday experience. This exercise allows pupils to state out loud what explanations they presently give and then to review these ideas in the light of discussion with others.

Procedure

Ask pupils to draw a line across a page (or provide them with pre-prepared sheets). Write, Strongly Believe at one end and Strongly Disbelieve at the other. Pupils then write along the continuum the degree of their belief in, for instance, God (or Higher Being); Angels; Demons; Ghosts; Heaven; Hell; an after-life, etc.

You could then do class surveys: for instance, get them to divide the line into 4 equal parts: How many have God in the top quarter of the Strongly Believe end? / How many in the opposite quarter? Which topic elicits the strongest belief by the most pupils? Etc.

To the teacher

This activity deals with significant issues, but may be best dealt with light-heartedly; taking too serious a stance might inhibit pupils in responding honestly. It might be worth saying something like: 'These are serious topics, but let's not be too serious about it just now. Just write down what you think, and let's not be judgemental of each other...'

Additional suggestions

Instead of dealing with a range of issues, the task could be focussed on a specific area that you wished to focus on during this lesson: e.g. different views on what happens to us at death. For this you could offer a range of concepts for them to respond to, or some relevant statements (e.g. Heaven, Hell, Soul, Purgatory, Reincarnation, or, When we die, that's it; The soul never dies; Justice demands an afterlife; etc).

Other topics that might be included if appropriate: UFOs; answers to prayer; ghosts; miracles; aliens; telepathy; messages from God; etc.

Also, rather than getting pupils to write responses on a piece of paper, you could get them to move around and find their place on an imaginary line that runs across the classroom in response to each of the questions. This gives you an opportunity to discuss their 'positioning' in the moment, as a more dynamic form of group engagement.

Strategy 6: Most Evil Game (This version developed from ideas by Lat Blaylock, published by RE Today. For more ideas like this join NATRE at www.natre.org.uk Used with permission of LB.)

Potential curriculum links: History, RE, Citizenship, Literature, etc. lessons on evil & suffering in the world; God and evil; crime and punishment; etc.

Purpose

This game helps students to consider degrees of evil or badness in the world, and to explore how our underlying beliefs or deeper assumptions about life help to shape how we categorise and think about evil and suffering.

Procedure

Copies of the full game board and cards may be obtained from: <https://www.natre.org.uk/resources/5-3-how-evil-how-do-you-judge-game-cards-with-scenarios-ckre-vol-6/>

Alternatively you could produce your own.

Play is carried out in groups of up to 6 students. Cards are shuffled and piled face down next to the game board. Players decide who will begin, and that person picks up and reads out loud the top card. They first ask the player to their left where they would place the card on the board, but then put it where they personally feel it belongs. The next player does the same, and the game continues until all cards have been placed on the board. When it is their go, each player may move one card on the board as well as placing their own new card. If the game needs

to be speeded up, groups can be asked to turn over all of the cards, and then together decide how to place each one on the board.

To the teacher

Although self-explanatory, it is worth going through the rules with the whole class, showing by example how each play is carried out. The class then may either be given a finish time or else invited to continue the game until all cards have been used up.

Any group that finishes before the others could be given additional tasks, such as those suggested below.

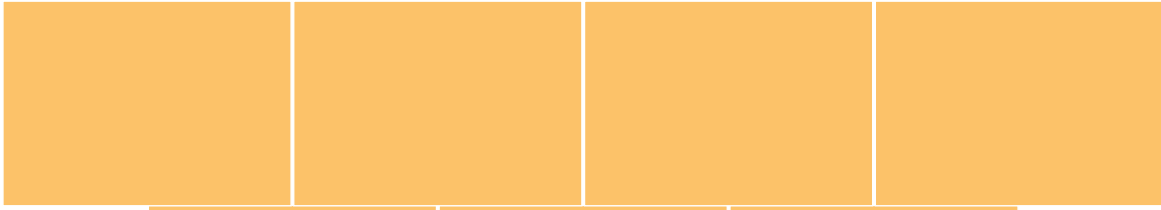
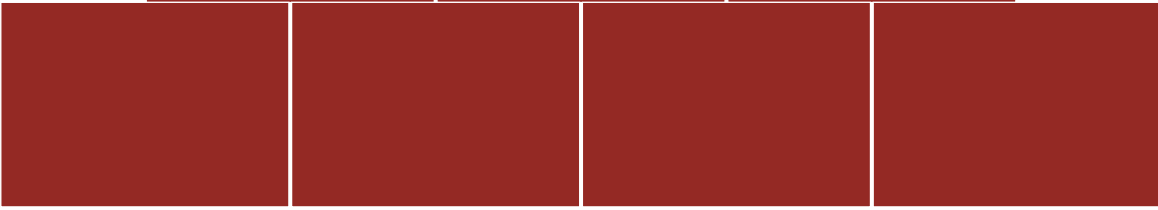
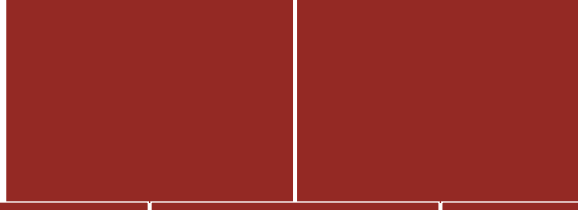
Additional suggestions

Once completed, groups could be invited to rearrange the cards according to a particular formula: for instance, How might Donald Trump, Homer Simpson, a Muslim, etc reorder the cards on the board?

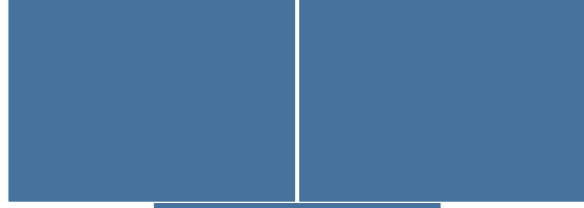
If you wished to develop a writing activity from this, students could be asked to complete a writing frame: "XXX is the most evil thing in the world because..."

Inequality: women get paid less than men for the same job	Laziness: someone knows what to do but thinks it is too much effort	Lying: an underage person lies to get into a nightclub	Climate crisis: low-lying countries face devastating flooding as sea levels rise	Disease: preventable diseases like malaria still claim millions of lives, particularly in Africa
Fraud: someone steals an item then returns it to claim a refund	Pain: someone deliberately kicks your shins	Murder: one person is killed in a violent outburst	Arrogance: someone thinks they are better than other people, without good reason	A national government deliberately sets out to kill and eliminate an ethnic group (genocide)
Domestic violence: a person is regularly struck and hurt by their partner	A snakebite: painful but non-fatal bite from an adder while on a walk	Ghosting: someone breaks up with a partner without word or explanation	Sexism: someone treats another person unequally because of their gender	Apathy: someone can't be bothered to take part or to be active to change themselves or the world
Pollution: oil companies create millions of tonnes of greenhouse gases	Hurricane: fierce storms can cause lots of damage to people and property	A virus causes a global pandemic that kills millions	Thoughtlessness: someone doesn't pay any attention to the harm their actions may bring about	War: a country invades its neighbour to claim the land, killing thousands of civilians indiscriminately
Racism: a person dislikes a whole group of people because of the colour of their skin	Poverty: people do not have enough money to eat, or heat their homes, or support their families	Hatred: someone feels an emotion or attitude of hostility towards someone else	Animal Testing: life-saving drugs are tested on animals for harmful effects before being used on humans	Avarice: someone seeks wealth and riches, without thought about how their goal might impact others
Adultery: a married person sleeps with someone who is not their spouse				

Most terrible evil



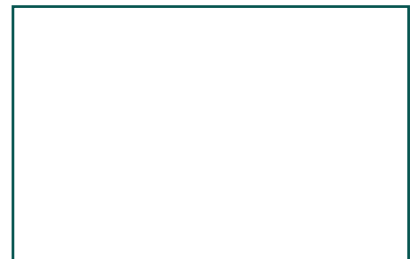
Neutral



Not that bad



Something else



Strategy 7: Forced choice moral priorities.

Possible curriculum links: rules and rule-making; ethics studies; Historical or Literary study of contentious topics such as sex, death, abortion, race, etc.; sources of legal, religious, or moral guidance; community decision-making; etc.

Purpose

This activity goes one step further than merely rank ordering of viewpoints, asking students to identify which topics they have the strongest feelings about. They must weigh up the relative importance of alternatives and think about the consequences of those decisions. They might also be asked to think about what is behind their decisions: what beliefs or assumptions have guided their choices?

Procedure

Students draw some steps or a ladder on a large piece of paper, with up to 10 possible steps: the lowest rung indicates weak feelings, and the top, the strongest feelings. Scenarios are firstly all read out slowly and carefully (or provided on printed sheets/cards) and, then, as they are read out a second time students must place them (using the given code identifier) in order on the steps, indicating their relative strength of feeling about each one.

No two scenarios may be on the same step; students must choose between the various alternatives. Crossings out and changing of decisions is allowed as the activity progresses.

Remind students that they must not make decisions based on whether they agree or disagree with the actions taken, but on how strongly they feel about this issue. This may be quite difficult to do, so give plenty of time and as much explanatory support as is needed.

Examples of scenarios for older students could include: (NOTE: some alternative and more child-centred scenarios are provided on the following page for use with younger students)

1. Tom, a building contractor, is very strict about his workers following building and site rules and regulations, but is quite happy to break the rules when it comes to paying taxes, driving at speed, and offering special favours to building site inspectors (**Tom: rules and regulations**).
2. Mrs Smith, a year ten tutor, is a successful and popular teacher. Knowing that some of the girls in her class are involved in pre-marital sex, she provides them with birth control pills (**Mrs Smith: birth control**).
3. Mr Slim, a PE teacher, regularly scolds pupils for not exercising enough, but parks his car as close to school as possible to avoid a long walk (**Mr Slim: exercise**).
4. Colin, father of two, is concerned about population explosion, so arranges a vasectomy through his GP, but without informing his wife, who is keen on having more children (**Colin: vasectomy**).
5. Simon cheats on his income tax each year, and then donates all of the money saved to the local children's hospice (**Simon: income tax**).
6. A primary school teacher demands high performance from her pupils and gets excellent end of year SAT scores, so is admired by the Headteacher and by parents. However, she motivates by fear, and several pupils are literally sick at the thought of going to school each day (**Primary teacher: standards**).
7. A teenage boy decides to play a Hallowe'en prank on a neighbour who was mean to him: he leans a bottle of cola against the door, rings the doorbell and hides. When the door is opened the bottle falls and spills over her feet and her wall-to-wall carpet (**Hallowe'en prank**).
8. Alan discovers that he has advanced prostate cancer and probably only has months to live. He decides to keep it from his family so as not to upset them, inventing stories to explain his deteriorating health as the cancer takes its toll (**Alan: cancer**).
9. Lillian falls in love with an Afro-Caribbean boy in her class at university, and they continue the relationship at distance after graduation. A year later they decide to get married secretly because both know that their parents disapprove of mixed marriages (**Lillian: secret marriage**).
10. 16 year old Maria unexpectedly finds herself pregnant after a drunken sexual encounter at a music festival. She decides to keep it quiet with friends and family, arranging to abort the foetus rather than face the impact on her future studies and career (**Maria: abortion**).

Once you have read through the complete list once, go through it slowly again, asking students to place the scenario (using the bracketed tag-line for each) into rank order on the steps indicating their strength of feeling about each of the scenarios. (Strongest feelings on top steps; weakest feelings on bottom steps)

When completed you may wish to focus on a few specific scenarios, for example asking how many had a given scenario on the top rung (or on the top two/three etc) how many had it at the bottom, and how many somewhere in the middle. Pupils should be asked to explain their decisions, possibly encouraging classroom debate about differences between students in their hierarchical ranking.

Possible scenarios for use with younger students:

Which are the most objectionable and least objectional classmates:

1. **Cheat:** always cheats in games.
2. **Litter-bug:** drops litter in the class and in the playground.
3. **Back-talker:** argues with his teacher and parents.
4. **Borrower:** borrows things but doesn't return them.
5. **Bully:** picks on and bullies younger children.
6. **Shoplifter:** steals from the school tuck shop.
7. **Fire-bug:** sets fire to a school building.
8. **Smoker:** smokes cigarettes behind the bicycle shed.
9. **Ratter:** rats on a friend.
10. **Chewer:** puts chewing gum on the seat of a chair.

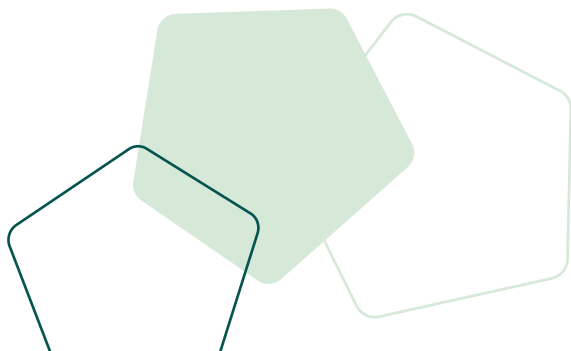
To the teacher

Don't forget that pupils may need to be regularly reminded that they are not selecting scenarios on the basis of whether they agree or disagree with the decisions made, but on how strongly they feel about these issues. For instance, they may strongly agree with one of the actions, but feel that there is little significance to the issue itself. In this case, the scenario should receive a low score.

Additional suggestions

If you wish to present the scenarios visually (e.g. with images as well as words) they could be presented using PowerPoint slides, allowing you to then run through the slides as many times as needed until all pupils had finished with their choices.

Also, if you wanted to have a more physical engagement, after having determined their choices on paper, pupils could be asked to stand on 10 literal steps or a chalked ladder on the floor indicating their choices for each of the items in turn. This would allow the group to see how others had chosen and to discuss their choices in situ, possibly encouraging some lively debate.



Strategy 8: Rank order choices

Possible curriculum links: introduction to any moral or social issue (e.g. crime & punishment, sex and relationships, environmental concerns); personal and community decision-making; personal and group values.

Purpose

In all aspects of life we are required to make choices, and often between things that are equally good or worthwhile. This activity requires students to identify their own thinking about selected topics and to provide a rationale for those decisions.

Procedure

Explain to the group that you will be asking them to think deeply and to make choices about which of three of the alternatives they consider to be the most and least important, thus placing the options in rank order.

Then give an example: e.g. Where would you rather be right now: on the beach; in a forest; in a gym? (For younger student you might need to choose more appropriate choices, suitable to their interests and level of their understanding.)

Ask them to write the three in order of importance for them, using the words, beach, forest, gym. Once completed, ask 4-5 students to list their choice order as written down, but with the option to 'pass' if uncomfortable in doing so. This could then lead into a discussion with students providing explanations for their choices.

You might do 2-3 examples of such 'introductory' lists before then providing options which relate directly to the focus and intention of the lesson [e.g. for a lesson on Crime & Punishment, What should be done to stop criminal behaviour in society: eradicate poverty, increase community policing, or make tougher punishments? (poverty, policing, punishment)]

Further introductory suggestions:

- *Do you learn best from:* seminar discussions, TV or lecture input, independent study?
- *Which is your favourite time of year:* summer, spring, autumn, winter?
- *Which is your favourite food:* Chinese, Italian, Indian?
- *Where would you prefer to spend an evening:* in your bedroom, in front of the TV, out with friends?

Some examples of focussed questions:

- *Finances/possessions:* *If you won £500 would you:* save it, give some to charity, spend it?
- *Health/substance abuse:* *Which is most harmful:* smoking, taking drugs, alcohol?

- *Family/relationships:* *Which would you rather be:* an oldest child, an only child, the youngest child?
- *Sex/relationships:* *What is most important in a marriage partner:* sex appeal, intelligence, humour?
- *Population:* *How should we prevent overpopulation:* educate and provide free birth control; charge financial penalties for large families; trust people to decide for themselves?
- *War/violence:* *Which is the worst job:* a hangman, member of a firing squad, lethal injection provider?
- *Crime/punishment:* *Should a convicted murderer be:* hanged, imprisoned for life, reformed for reintroduction in society?
- *Environmental:* *What should be done about global warming:* increase taxes on fossil fuel use, subsidise 'green' energy, charge industry for carbon emissions?
- *Sources of guidance:* *What is the best source of wisdom for life:* friends and family, religious scriptures, scientific evidence?

To the teacher

Explain that students must place the three in hierarchical order; they may not have any in equal places. Where students are finding the decision difficult, suggest that they go with their gut instinct and don't think too deeply about it just yet. Explain that they can always change their minds later if they feel that they have made the wrong choices. This activity might open up strongly held but very different views between students, having the potential to provoke heated debate. Do not allow personal attacks on fellow students however: debate must be about the relative merits of the ideas or actions, not about the backgrounds or personalities of the individuals who support them. State this explicitly at the start of discussion, and immediately challenge inappropriate behaviour or comments.

Additional suggestions

After discussion you might ask students if they would make any changes to their ordering and to explain their reasons for doing so. This might also be done at the end of the lesson, allowing you to see what impact the lesson has had on the thinking and level of discussion of students.

Strategy 9: Control Continuum

Possible curriculum links: rules and rule-making; freewill and democracy; political parties and systems; right and wrong; crime and punishment; monetary systems; freedom and authority.

Purpose

The degree and extent of freedom or control that should be exercised by individuals and authorities evokes strong viewpoints between people. Some find too much freedom to be unsettling, while others can never get enough of it. This activity encourages students to recognise shades of grey rather than being trapped in black and white thinking about such issues.

Procedure

An issue is identified (see examples below) by the teacher, who presents it to the class as two optional extremes, e.g. school students should be given complete freedom to do as they want, and/or, school students should be given clearly structured rules and systems for all aspects of the school's community life.

Then, one corner of the classroom is identified with one of the extremes, and the opposite corner identified with the other. (Perhaps a poster stating each position could be blu-tacked at the two opposite extremes.)

If it was considered helpful, the teacher might then identify one or two in-between points along the continuum: for instance, a third of the way in from 'complete freedom' becomes identified as, Some rules and systems are provided but only to keep everyone safe, and then another third along, Rules and systems are provided to help create a sense of community.

Students are then asked to get up and place themselves somewhere along the continuum between the two extremes that best expresses their viewpoint on the issue. (Alternatively, an imaginary line is produced, numbered one to ten, with midway points of three and seven, allowing students to identify the number that best represents their position.)

Once student positions have all been determined, individuals are asked to identify and explain their positions, or the teacher could ask all those at a certain number to identify and comment on their choices, etc. Once viewpoints have been expressed, others might be asked to comment on those choices or to say why they have chosen different positions, leading in to a wider-ranging discussion of the issues. In the course of that discussion students could be invited to reposition themselves if they felt that their opinion had changed, and they might be invited to explain what had brought about their change of viewpoint.

To the teacher

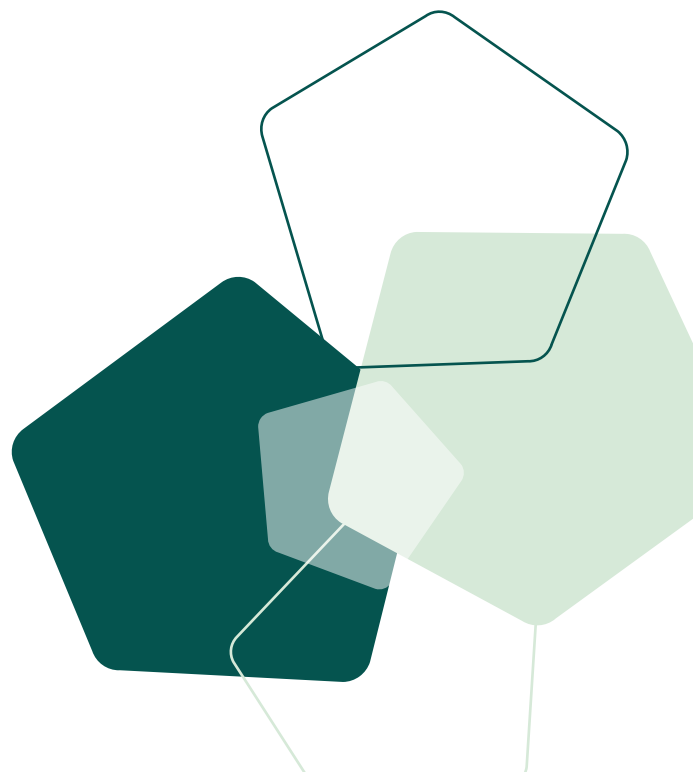
It is possible that students might cluster together along the line because of peer pressure, indecision, or fear of disapproval, especially if not used to sharing opinions openly in this way. To respond to this, students could be asked to go back to their desks, draw a line, and then confidentially to place themselves somewhere along the line that best fitted their 'position'. They should be advised that they will not be required to share their decisions but allowed to 'pass' in any further group discussion. There are bound to be some students within the class however who are willing to share their decisions and it might be thought-provoking enough for the others to just to listen in and to reflect internally on the viewpoints being expressed.

Try not to influence student choices by your verbal or nonverbal language of approval or disapproval. Students holding even extreme views will have reasons for doing so, and your role in the exercise is to uncover their rationale and thinking processes rather than to bring about any particular set of responses from the group.

Additional suggestions

Further examples of continuum options for use with students:

1. Fashion/what you wear: Are you Holey Harry, who doesn't care what he looks like, or, Wrinkle-free Walt, who is always meticulously dressed?
2. Your decision-making: Are you unable to decide what to eat, or, a lightning-fast decision maker?
3. You and competition: Do you avoid every situation where you might win or lose, or, trample everyone around in order to be first?
4. Personal freedom: Do you prefer complete freedom to choose for yourself, or, like most decisions to be made for you?
5. You and your family: Are you completely dependent on family, or, totally indifferent to them: would you happily be rid of them?
6. Conversation with others: Are you a tight-lipped Timmy, or, a blabber-mouthed Bertha?
7. Food: Are you a picky Paul, or, an eat-anything Eloise?
8. Money: Are you a hoarding Hannah, who won't spend a penny, or, hand-out Helen, who spend it all as soon as she gets it?
9. Cleanliness: Are you an eat-off-the-floor Ellen, or, a garbage-dump Greta?
10. Following rules: Are you do-as-you're-told Toby, or, disobedient Doris?



Strategy 10: I wonder statements

Possible curriculum links: scientific experiments; mathematical calculations; science fiction or mystery literature; God, death, mystery and the unknown; geographical or historical studies.

Purpose

This activity is designed to explore and verbalise issues and questions about life in general and to encourage curiosity and wonder about the world around us.

Procedure

The teacher asks students to respond orally or in writing to a starter sentence, always beginning with, I wonder...

I wonder if...

I wonder why....

I wonder how come...

I wonder whether...

I wonder about...

I wonder when....

It is good if the teacher can begin by offering their own response, both providing an example to get students going, but also to model active participation and engagement. Then quickly go around the room asking students to finish off the sentence with their own wonderings.

In this activity there is no need to engage in discussion about the responses. Rather, the purpose is to stimulate inquiry and to engage students' curiosity.

To the teacher

If using this as a stimulus to a specific topic (e.g. learning about the origins of the universe, the Big Bang), you might begin with oral responses to a more general lead (e.g. I wonder why...), and then finish with written responses to something like, I wonder how...

Experience suggests that the first responses are often more superficial and that they become more reflective and compelling as successive rounds unfold.

Strategy 11: Identity tags

Possible curriculum links: personal identity; labels and labelling; groups and belonging.

Purpose

This strategy enables groups to become acquainted, and so can be good at the start of a year. It also allows individuals think carefully about what they value and to identify and publicly affirm aspects of themselves to others.

Procedure

Each student is given an index card (5x7 inch postcard), a felt tip pen and a safety pin. They each write their name in large, bold letters on one side of the card, and then on the same side add 5-6 smaller words to describe aspects of who they are, all ending with 'ist' (e.g. optimist, cyclist, music specialist) [or an alternative e.g. 'able'- reasonable, lovable; 'ful' -beautiful, wasteful; 'ing' -reading, fun-loving; 'less' - careless, penniless; etc.].

On the second side they again write their name, and this time add 5-6 additional facts or statistics about themselves (e.g. address, phone number, height, weight, number of siblings, family name, etc.).

They then choose one side to display openly, attaching the card to their clothes with that side showing. Once completed, everyone moves around the room to view each other's cards, but without anyone speaking. Students may gesticulate, mime and point, but must refrain from making any oral noises. Once returned to their seats, individuals are invited to comment on anything that they have discovered or to ask specific questions of individuals, although anyone is free to 'pass' if they would rather not answer personal questions.

To the teacher

Encourage students to be as creative and engaging as they wish, using humour or cryptic words if desired, but no tactless or vulgar language.

It is best if you join in with the activity as well, showing willingness to engage, and allowing students to discover things about you too.

Additional suggestions

Instead of the 5-6 additional facts on side two, students could be asked to list people they admire, or things they like to spend their time on, or music they like, etc.

HELLO, I am a

*scientist, pianist,
absurdist, gymnast,
philanthropist*

Strategy 12: An event that shaped me.

Possible curriculum links: lives of famous people; exploring literary characters; aspects of personal identity; causes and consequences.

Purpose

Past experiences often shape our future lives in significant ways. This activity explores such activities and invites students to consider the impact that specific experiences have had on them.

Procedure

Explain that sometimes seemingly small past events can have a profound effect on how we see ourselves or how we act in the world, perhaps offering an example of this. For example, having a frightening encounter with a dog leaves us wary of dogs for the rest of our life....

Ask students to think of an experience that they might have had as a young child, and which they can still remember vividly. Give them a few minutes to think about it, and then invite them to share their stories with a partner and to explain how the incident/event has affected them today.

They could then be asked if any of them wished to share their story with the whole group.

To the teacher

It is quite possible that some students might identify an event which they then feel uncomfortable sharing with others. In this

instance they should be given permission not to share the details with others. Perhaps they could be asked to identify a different story and to share that one instead. However, no pressure should be placed on students to share with others what they do not feel comfortable in sharing.

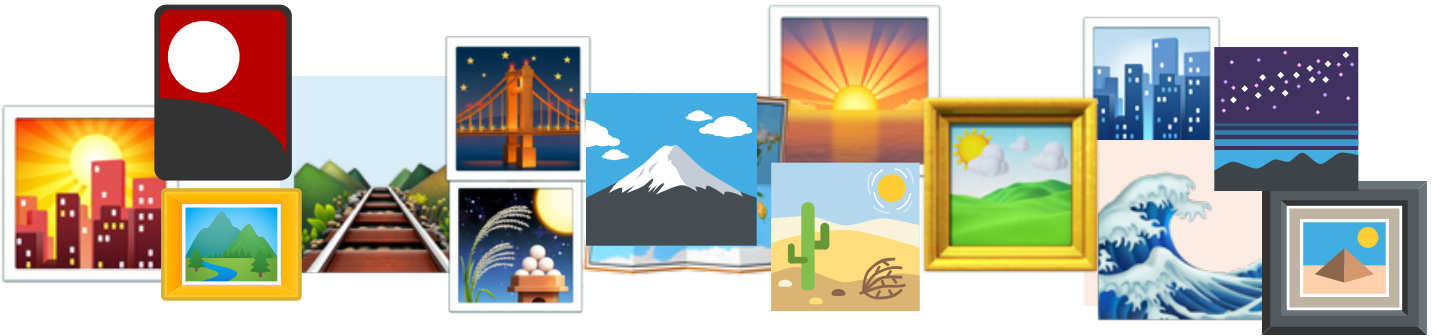
In the unlikely event that a student shares an incident or event which raises potential child protection concerns, try to deal with the scenario as easily and naturally as you can within the moment and without highlighting or drawing attention to your concerns right then. However, you must follow up the concern at the end of the lesson by speaking privately with the student concerned and/or by taking the matter up with your institution's child protection (or Prevent, if appropriate) officer.

Additional suggestions

Instead of simply recalling stories, students could be given ten minutes to write a summary of the incident/event, perhaps using a starter sentence such as, "An event from my childhood that stands out in my memory is...."

Strategy 13: Postcards and images

Possible curriculum links: exploring significant images and stories; metaphors and symbols; things that matter or are significant; personal memories; the conscious and unconscious.



Purpose

Visual images and symbols are always approached from the context of our own experience and worldview, and different elements within those images will evoke or stimulate things that are significant to our own experience and world-perspective.

This activity works at both a conscious and unconscious level, allowing students to be drawn to particular images, colours and symbols unconsciously, and then to consciously try to rationalise and explain the decisions that they have made. It will sometimes enable students to identify things about themselves that they wouldn't have immediately thought about.

Procedure

A variety of postcards or other images are laid out on a table or placed around the room. Try to include a wide range of different kinds of images, artwork and real life scenes. Pupils are invited to select one of the cards/images that is meaningful to them.

If the cards are laid out on a table, and there is a wide enough variety of options available (at least twice as many as the number of students), individuals could be asked to actually take a card and to return with it to their seats.

Once everyone has made their choice, in pairs get students to explain why they chose that particular image.

If there is time, students could be asked to share some of their choices to the whole group.

To the teacher

Keep the atmosphere for this activity as light and relaxed as possible. If any students are struggling to make a decision, just get them to choose one that they like or feel drawn to. Emphasise that it is not required that the image is deeply meaningful, just that something about it draws or attracts them.

Additional suggestions

After returning their cards, students could be asked to select a second one and to explain that decision in the same way. They could then consider whether there was anything in common between their two choices or whether these represent totally different aspects of themselves.

Strategy 14: The most important question

Possible curriculum links: exploring/making difficult decisions; emphases/commitments of famous people; differences between religions/political or philosophical systems; personal values.

Purpose

Philosophers and theologians have grappled with big questions since time immemorial, and every culture and society has sought to provide answers to such basic questions. This activity does not engage directly with the content of the questions themselves, but asks, which of these issues is of most significance? In other words, are some of the questions more important than others? The answer to this question is likely to be determined by which religion, philosophy or other outlook we are most attached to or shaped by. For instance, many religious people may place an emphasis on #6, whereas Confucianism emphasises #4 and contemporary consumerist culture may emphasise #2 or 3.

Procedure

Explain that there are some questions which are so big and basic that some have called them Ultimate questions. These could then be listed as:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------|
| 1. Where did I come from? | (Origin) |
| 2. Who am I? | (Identity) |
| 3. What is my purpose? | (Meaning) |
| 4. How should I live? | (Morality) |
| 5. What happens when I die? | (Destiny) |
| 6. Is there an ultimate life force beyond what I can see and know? | (God/Significant Other) |

Ask the students, Which is the most important question? Get them to put them in order of significance on a piece of paper or in their class books.

In groups, ask students to share their results and to explain their decisions.

As a final activity, get students to repeat the ordering task, and to explain any changes made to their original ordering sequence as a result of their discussions.

To the teacher

Note that students are not being asked which is the most interesting question, but which is the most significant. In other words, which question matters most?

Additional suggestions

Rather than displaying the six questions, they could be printed onto packs of separate cards and students asked to order the questions either individually or in pairs or triplets.

A final written task could be, "I believe that number [?] is the most important question because...".



Strategy 15: My 'river' story

Possible curriculum links: influences in the lives of famous people; historical events and influences; cause and effect in various contexts; sequences of events in literature, history, etc.

Purpose

Life is complex, and we are shaped by all kinds of experiences, events and influences. This activity gets students to explore the story of their life so far by looking at all aspects of their personal story: the obvious key marker events, but also the below surface and surrounding environmental influences that have played a significant part in their developing life. All of these things are part of their individual story and are key elements which have helped to shape their personal identity.

Procedure

Students are provided with a sheet of poster paper and 2-3 felt tip pens. Ask them to draw a meandering river, allowing us to see above, below and along the sides of the river. This could literally be just a straight line going across the page, or it could be a more elaborate drawing, as they wish... They are then asked to draw or write into the drawing key events and milestones in their life's journey so far, from left to right. These can include things on the surface (e.g. being born, going to school, learning to cycle, etc.), things under the surface (i.e. things that aren't obvious for everyone to see - maybe personal embarrassments, hopes, intentions, fears, etc.), and things along the sides of the river (various influences and events in our environment - like our family,

friends, social media, events like Covid, etc.), all of which are significant in the life of the individual.

Get students to explain their river in pairs or small groups.

To the teacher

Some students may take to this task with creativity and artistic flair, while others may feel uncomfortable about their technical skills in presenting such ideas visually. Reassure them that it doesn't have to be a work of art; they just need to get the ideas and information down on the paper as best they can. They can always explain what they mean at a later time. Also, if there are concerns about where particular elements should belong (e.g. below or above the water), reassure them that this is not important; the main thing is to include the ideas in some kind of recognisable form somewhere on the page.

Additional suggestions

If you felt that the overall task might be too challenging for your students, then it could also be done in stages: getting them to jot down/ create images of key milestones (on the surface), then to think of additional environmental factors that have shaped their lives, and then finally, to add in any additional 'under the surface' factors that have shaped them into the kind of person that they are.

Strategy 16: Who would you trust

Possible curriculum links: evaluation of sources in history, literature, etc.; moral education; sources of expertise in all fields of life.

Purpose

Our communities are built on trust. Indeed, we could not live together in communities without it. However, differences develop between people over who and what we can trust. We see this in politics, religion, media choices, consumer choices, etc. In this activity we explore who and what individual students choose to trust, and begin to examine what is behind those choices.

Procedure

This is a bit like the rank order activity outlined above (Strategy 5), where students are offered three options and must then choose between them (or else place them in rank order), although here, the options relate to sources of authority for decision-making.

On a page in their books they list numbers one to six down the page. They must then write their choice (or rank order of choices) against each number. In turn, go through the following list, waiting each time for students to complete the task before moving on to the next set:

1. You aren't sure whether to watch a particular film which is showing in the local cinema...
Who's advice would you be most convinced by: *an advert on your social media feed; your older sister; your Media teacher.*
2. You are out picking wild mushrooms...
Who would you most trust to confirm if a particular plant was safe to eat? *a greengrocer (fruit & veg. shop keeper); a butcher; a chef.*
3. You are in a strange city and lost...
Who would you ask for directions? *a well dressed businessman who is passing by; some children who are playing across the street; a local shop keeper.*
4. You aren't sure if you've done your Maths homework right...
Who would you ask for advice? *your best friend; your parents; your older sibling (brother or sister).*
5. You've been attending a sports club which is good fun but someone has advised you that the group is part of a religious cult...
Who do you turn to for advice? *your mum; the police; the local vicar.*
6. Your electric bike is playing up...
Who do you ask for advice about it? *your dad; your sister's boyfriend who is an apprentice mechanic; the local bike shop (although you are convinced that they overcharged you last time you went there).*

Once all of the responses are complete, ask how many voted for each option on a given question. E.g. on question one, Hands up who put 'social media feed' top? Who went for 'older sister'? And who chose 'Media teacher'? Invite them to explain their choice if you wish to explore the reasoning further, and, after exploring responses to 2-3 of the questions, try to summarise the different explanations that students give for their decisions.

If you think that your students are up to it, you might encourage them to draw their own generalisations on authority figures: On what basis are some people assumed to have more authority than others? Why do we trust some people and not others?

To the teacher

If students offer unconventional or unexpected responses, do not belittle them, but try to find out what is the reasoning behind their choices. Very often they might have very good reasons for that choice based on their own experience even though it is idiosyncratic to them.

Also, some students may feel that there is inadequate detail to be able to make a reasonable selection from the options given. In such a scenario, encourage them to play along with the task anyway, and make it clear that opportunity will be provided for students to explain their responses and to highlight any inadequacies that they might perceive in the information at a later stage.

Additional suggestions

If the lesson is designed to go on to explore sources of authority in a particular field, you could continue with the following (or similar but more relevant) scenarios:

1. To discover the answer to a question about a bright light in the sky... would you turn to a biologist; an astronomer; a vicar?
2. To answer a question about the Bible... would you ask a scientist; a lawyer; a theologian?
3. To resolve a financial query... would you seek help from a solicitor; an accountant; a doctor?
4. If you had a back pain... would you go to a mechanic; an astrologer; an osteopath?

You could then explore: On what basis are people considered to be 'experts' in their field? Why do we turn to experts? Are there any circumstances in which an expert might be biased, and therefore unreliable?

Strategy 17: Sharing personal stories

Possible curriculum links: autobiography & fiction writing; risk & trust; likes and dislikes; memory; history.

Purpose

The details and events that we remember are all part of 'our' story, the story of our unique identity and our assumptions about the world, our worldview. Sharing those stories can be fun, but also risky, since we don't necessarily know how they'll be understood and perceived. This activity invites students to share a personal story and then to reflect on how it was understood and received by peers.

Procedure

Ask students to pair up into self-selected pairs, ideally with someone that they know well and feel comfortable with.

For 3 minutes each student shares a high or low point in their life from the past week (or month). They are then asked to share for 3 minutes each on one of the following:

- a) Tell about someone who has had a big impact on your life: your ideas or beliefs or thinking...
- b) Describe an aspect of yourself that you consider to be distinct or unusual.
- c) Share a special experience you have had which was or unusual or spiritual.
- d) Tell about a situation in which you felt very embarrassed.
- e) Share a superstition that you hold.
- f) Tell about a time when you felt left out of a group.

[etc. you could create your own examples, which fit well with the topic being studied, or which you know the group might respond to well.]

Continue with 2-3 more topics if you have time.

When completed and students have returned to their original places, ask them to reflect in silence:

- i. How did you find that experience? Did you feel comfortable sharing honestly or did you screen your real feelings?
- ii. Do you feel your partner is like you or quite different? Do you feel that they really understood you? Does that matter to you, or are you Ok about their similarity or difference?
- iii. Do you wish your partner could have some of your experiences? Do you wish you could have some of theirs?

To the teacher

Be sensitive to any students holding back from pairing up, either because of insecurity or because they are natural loners.

Try to offer pairing suggestions, but don't force them into a partnership.

If a student can think of nothing to say on a particular topic let them 'pass' or else invent their own topic to talk about.

Additional suggestions

After sharing with their original selected partner, students could then move on to share the same topic with someone they know less well, and then on to a third partner, etc. If this was done, in the post-activity reflection students might be asked to consider, Did it feel different sharing with your first partner and then the others? Did you feel listened to equally by all partners? Did you tend to pick a partner or wait to be picked? Were you aware of talking too much or too little? Etc.

Strategy 18: Internal dialogue

Possible curriculum links: decision making; literary styles; good and evil; devils and angels; dialogue and negotiated settlements; solving problems.

Purpose

When confronted with difficult choices we might often debate the pros and cons of the situation in our heads, or even in conversation with others, before coming to a final decision. This activity exemplifies the complexity of such decision making and helps students to grapple with everyday real life concerns.

Procedure

Introduce the activity by stating that we often have difficult decisions to make, with different voices in our heads telling us to go one way or another. Give an example from your own experience if you can.

Then invite students to choose a conflict they have faced, or one they are presently facing, and to create a dialogue of the different voices that might contribute advice about what to do. It could be something simple, like whether to buy a particular gift for someone, or something more significant, like whether to tell your parents about a particular secret. Get students to write a short script, starting with the 'issue' and then continuing with the different voices of advice and direction.

Once completed, students could be invited to go to the front and to act out their script, switching from one seat to another as they present the various arguments about how to proceed. Once finished, the student could be asked to continue acting out the various voices until a natural resolution is achieved. Alternatively, other students might ask questions or even suggest alternative advice until a natural point is reached to conclude the dialogue.

To the teacher

Avoid either you or the other students trying to be a psychotherapist. Focus on the conscious choices and feelings that the student expresses, encouraging them to express these as fully as possible, exploring all of the conceivable options before them.

Additional suggestions

Instead of asking students to act out their scripts in front of the whole class, students might be broken down into small groups and asked to share their dialogues with each other.

Strategy 19 : Character choices

Possible curriculum links: characters in literature; heroes and villains; personality and personality types; choices.

Purpose

This activity draws attention to personal goals and ambitions by focussing on people that students would like to emulate.

Procedure

Ask the students, "If you could be someone else instead of yourself, who would you most like to be?" Explain that this could be someone real and living, someone historical, someone from real life or fiction, or even a cartoon character. Get them to write down the name of the character.

Then ask them to write down the name of the character they would least like to be.

Finally, they write down the name of a character who is most like them.

Once the three names are written down, get students to break out into pairs or small groups and to take turns sharing their selections and the reasons for their choices.

Finally, once students have returned to their seats, get them to reflect on questions such as: Would you change any of your choices now that you've had further time to think about them? Were your characters the same or a different

gender from you? Can you think of anyone who might have included you on their list? Would your choices have been different three years ago? Would anyone have been able to guess any of your choices? Etc.

To the teacher

Because this might be embarrassing for some students it is best to let them choose their own pairs/ groups. They should also be allowed to 'pass' on any choices that they feel uncomfortable sharing with others.

In advance, point out that because people are sharing potentially sensitive information about themselves, it is important to be sensitive and kind in our responses to them. Under no circumstances should anyone ridicule or challenge other people's choices. To do so is to ridicule them.

Additional suggestions

If you felt that open sharing of choices might be inappropriate for your group, the activity might be done instead as a written exercise, perhaps using a writing frame: I would most like to be.... Because... etc.



Strategy 20: Percentage questions

Possible curriculum links: mathematical percentages; choices and decision-making; personal viewpoints and perspectives.

Purpose

Sometimes decision making is much more complex than simple either-or choices. This activity allows students to think more subtly, examining priorities as part of the thinking process.

Procedure

First, check that students understand percentages: i.e. that 25% is the same as a quarter, 50% equals half, etc. Suggest that if they aren't too sure, then they can use half, quarter, one third, etc instead.

Get them to jot down the percentages in response to set questions such as:

- i. What percentage of your free time do you spend alone, with friends, with family?
- ii. What percentage of your money do you spend on clothes, food, music, etc.? (i.e. which are the 4-5 main things that you spend money on, and how is it distributed?)
- iii. What percentage of your income would you expect to give to charity?
- iv. What percentage of your acquaintances would you call real friends?
- v. What percentage of your life would you describe as being really happy?
- vi. What percentage of your real feelings do you share with others?
- vii. What percentage of black, white, coloured, Asian, Irish etc. make for an ideal society?
- viii. What percentage of your school/college study do you really enjoy?
- ix. What percentage of your time are you doing things that you really want to do?
- x. What percentage of poorer people deserve what they get in life?

Once completed, students are divided into groups and share their responses to the various questions. Alternatively, the whole class could be asked to give their responses to particular questions. E.g. "Hands up if your largest percentage in question 1 was for alone /friends/ family". "Let's see what our class average % was in Q3 for giving to charity" [add together all of their scores, and divide by the number of students], etc.

To the teacher

This might be a good Mathematics activity for consolidating learning about percentages. It is also opportunity for enabling students to examine the weight or significance of their viewpoints rather than just to express those perspectives.

Additional suggestions

Instead of asking students to share their responses with others, you could finish with some reflection questions: Which question was the most difficult one to answer as a percentage? Were there any responses that you would feel uncomfortable sharing with others? If so, why? To which of the questions would you most like to know how other people in your class have responded?



Strategy 21: Sources of ethical wisdom

Possible curriculum links: religious holy books; personal guides and influencers; sources of wisdom and guidance; non/religious teachers and gurus; models, visions and ideals.

Purpose

Each of us holds some sources of guidance as of more value or trustworthiness than other sources. We likely model aspects of ourselves on particular people or seek inspiration from people and sources that we trust or are impressed by. Some people will have committed themselves to a particular group, religion or cause, and in doing so give special credence to the ordinances and traditions of that particular group.

Procedure

Ask students to write numbers 1 to 10 across the top of a page, with 1=low score and 10-high score.

Anywhere in the space below the numbers they should write the following words at the point where they best belong (e.g. if they feel that the Bible is 100% trustworthy, this should be placed under the #10 score). In other words, the students should grade each item on the basis of how much they feel they can trust them/ how trustworthy and reliable they are:

My best friends;	my guru/guide;	God/Allah/etc.;
my conscience;	a Holy book (e.g. Qur'an, Bible, Tao te Ching, etc);	
logic;	social media influencer;	my peer group;
politicians;	school/college teachers;	my GP/doctor;
scientists;	my family and its traditions;	(other)



If students wish to add any further sources of trust or inspiration they may do so- either positive or negative sources.

[they can either just write the given word, or write the name of a specific book/teacher/etc if preferred. Each one is written somewhere in the space below the numbers 1-10, according to how much they can be trusted]

Ask students to pair up and share their responses together, and if appropriate finish by asking the group to share any insights or issues they experienced in completing the activity.

To the teacher

Encourage students not to worry too much about placing any of the sources in exactly the right spot on the page. If it's easier, get them to think in terms of three or four sections going down the page (left=very low trust; middle=so-so; right=very high trust; etc.) rather than needing to get the exact right score for each of the listed people/sources. Also, if they don't have any views on a particular option (e.g. my guru/guide), then it is OK just to leave that one out.

At the end of the list, when inviting them to add any other sources of inspiration and guidance that have not been included, you could ask them to call these out as well as writing them on their sheet, thus inspiring others to think of other people or sources that they trust and/or see as sources of guidance and inspiration.

Additional suggestions

Instead of pairing up students to share and compare their responses, students could simply reflect quietly on their decisions in response to some questions that you then present slowly, giving them time to think about each one: How challenging was that task? Were there particular people/influences that you had difficulty placing? Who, of all those listed, would you be most comfortable to share a personal secret with? Are there any that you have placed on the basis of what you thought you 'should' trust rather than how you actually feel? If so, why do you think you did that? As a final activity, do you wish to change the position of any of your placements? (if so, draw an arrow showing where you would move it to)

Strategy 22: I urge you text messages

Possible curriculum links: any moral, social or political issues, such as might be included in a history, literature, or Religious Education lesson; issues related to sport, leisure, health, etc.

Purpose

This activity allows students to summarise and present their ideas in a concise and urgent manner. Sometimes such precision of thought can forefront issues in a matter that highlights their urgency so that something can be done to address the concern.

Procedure

The teacher gives each student a 4x6 card, and asks them to choose someone to send an urgent mobile text message beginning with the words, 'I urge you to...'. The message must not exceed 50 words (the shorter the better!), and finishes with the name of the sender.

The texts could be sent to nationally known politicians, local officials, or people of significance in the entertainment or sports world, or even to relatives or friends. The text should reflect something that the student feels is important, or that needs changing.

When completed students can be called on to read out their texts, or they can be fixed to the walls to create a gallery of issues for general browsing. The teacher may wish to allow discussions to break out in response to the texts, or they may save this for a later date.

To the teacher

If teaching a specific topic, students could be asked to make their messages relate more specifically to that theme, providing a helpful snapshot of students' interests, concerns and level of engagement with the topic under investigation.

Additional suggestions

Instead of written texts, if students had access to mobile phones, they might be invited to send real-time text messages to a given phone number, perhaps with these messages being displayed online in real time as they come through.

Students could also be invited to write several such text messages over time, say for a whole half term, keeping the cards together in a classroom collecting box. At the end of the time period, the cards could be spread out, allowing students to sort them into key topics or themes, and to see if there were common messages coming through.



Strategy 23: Unfinished business

Possible curriculum links: this is especially relevant in relationships education. However, the strategy is useful for all teachers in promoting positive general classroom management and effective learning pedagogy.

Purpose

Most of us have concerns that we feel are bugging us at one time or another: things that we have not had time to adequately talk through; concerns which just feel overwhelming; issues that we or others feel uncomfortable addressing. There are also occasions when we feel we should have said something, but we missed our moment. This strategy provides an opportunity to address such issues and to settle concerns that may lie dormant but do really need addressing.

Procedure

Introduce the notion of unfinished business and suggest that students could choose an appropriate time to approach the relevant person/people, stating, 'I think we have some unfinished business concerning X; do you have time to talk?' You could perhaps then discuss when might be appropriate and inappropriate times to do this.

Unfinished business might include: a. questions about an aspect of the subject content being studied; b. compliments or personal praise for attitudes or behaviour of others; c. criticism or negative feedback about attitudes or behaviour; d. resumption of a discussion that was interrupted or terminated before completion; e. clarification of an idea or further information about a topic.

Some examples could include: activity or behaviour that was noticed at a distance but never mentioned; a word or phrase that was used on a previous occasion, the meaning of which was ambiguous; a facial gesture used by someone that did not fit with what they were saying; a statement that someone had previously said that seemed inaccurate or biased; etc.

To the teacher

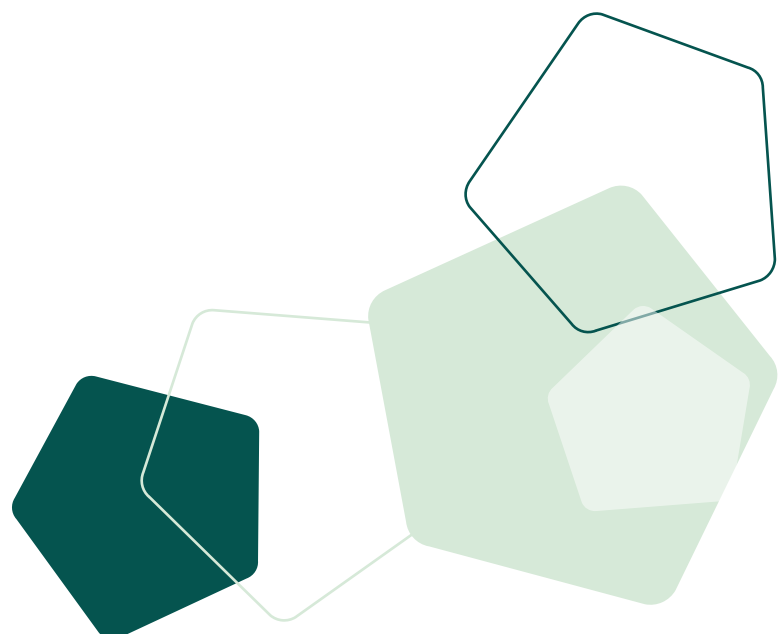
Students might feel uncomfortable or threatened by this activity if it is presented as only dealing with negative issues and encounters. Try to begin therefore with more positive or even neutral examples, but do make sure that the activity does not consist only of such positive examples.

Once students get used to the idea, the phrase 'I have some unfinished business...' can be dispensed with. However, this might help when first introducing the practice, since it legitimises the process, allowing even difficult confrontations to be presented in a dignified manner.

Additional suggestions

The teacher could also approach this on a more formal basis, by making this statement to the class as a way of introducing a matter of concern for discussion: for instance, about work patterns, or student behaviour, etc.

Another possibility is for the creation of a regular allocation of time (say, at the end of the week) for anyone- teacher or student -to draw the classes' attention to any unfinished business that they have with any individual or the larger group.



Strategy 24: Miracle workers

Possible curriculum links: values, purpose and personal preferences; historical or literary studies of the good life; in Religious Education, the study of salvation and purpose in life.

Purpose

This activity confronts students with various attractive alternatives, inviting them to select those which most attract and repel, and then to explore underlying values or assumptions which may have shaped their decision-making.

Procedure

Students are provided with a worksheet (see overleaf) listing fifteen miracle workers. They must choose five which they consider the most valuable to themselves, i.e. five gifts that they would most like to receive. They then select the five least desirable from the alternatives.

In small groups of three, students are then invited to discuss their choices, seeking to observe patterns and to identify underlying preferences. They might be given questions such as: What links together the five top/bottom choices? What values were you upholding in your choices? Do any of the choices seem out of place compared with the others?

Students could then be asked to select one miracle worker and argue a case for them to be the most useful for humankind.

Worksheet

Fifteen experts, considered miracle workers, are offering their services to the class. Their skills have been confirmed by previous scientific studies, and are available at no cost to you.

1. Dr Dorian Grey: a plastic surgeon, who can make you look exactly as you wish, using a new painless surgical technique. He can also use hormones to alter body structures, offering an ideal physical appearance.
2. Baron von Barrons: a careers and job-placement expert, who can set you up with training and skills to guarantee your ideal career prospects, and in the location of your choice.
3. Jedadiah Methuselah: can extend your life by slowing down the aging process and improving life expectancy up to 200 years of age. Miraculously, aging is adapted proportionately, so that for instance, at the age of sixty you feel like a thirty year old.
4. Drs Johnson and Hill: experts in sexual relations, they guarantee that you will both become and discover a perfect mate, enabling you to enjoy lifelong sexual pleasure for yourself and your partner.
5. Dr Yang: a body and health expert, he will ensure that you enjoy perfect health and protection from physical sickness or injury throughout your life.
6. Dr Knott Ginott: an expert in family relations, guarantees that you will never have issues or upsets with your parents. His interventions ensure that parents value and accept their children and that they do not engage in any form of control or manipulation.
7. Stu Denpower: an expert on social structures, he guarantees that you will never be troubled by authority figures or structures. His training and support ensures that you become immune to unfair treatment by any authorities, including teachers, police, and local and national government controls.
8. 'Pop' Larity: a psychologist, he guarantees to solve all of your friendship problems, enabling you to become more friendly and approachable, and totally confident in relating to others.
9. Charlie Smart: a renowned psychologist, who has devised an approach which develops your common sense and increases your intelligence, enabling you able to pass exams and master amazing memory feats.

10. Rocky Fella: a successful entrepreneur, who has devised a strategy to make you a millionaire in months. He has a proven track record for identifying gaps in the market and creating money-making approaches that leave others gob-smacked!
11. Daisy DeGawl: a world famous leadership expert, whose training programme has enabled countless men and women to become business and community leaders in both advanced and developing countries. Her programme guarantees that you will be looked up to and admired by those around you.
12. Dr Carengy: a psycho-therapist and personality psychologist, who can teach you how to always be loved and never be lonely or rejected. She guarantees a life of love and friendship.
13. Dr Claire Voyant: an experienced and qualified futurist, Dr Claire is able to see things that are hidden to others, enabling her to 'read' the future. Scientific studies show that her predictions can be trusted, although even she cannot explain the source of her abilities.
14. Dr Self: a psycho-therapist, has devised a therapeutic approach which embeds self-knowledge, self-confidence, and self-respect in participants. His work shows that confidence and self-assurance is possible for everyone, and he guarantees that this can be yours.
15. Prof. Clear: with her help you can always know your own mind and sort out the right way forward, even when situations are confusing and contentious. Prof. Clear's approach has been validated by thousands of course participants, and has been the subject of several radio and TV chat shows.

Top 5 choices (most desired):

.....

.....

.....

.....

Bottom 5 choice (least desired):

.....

.....

.....

.....

To the teacher

This is a very simple, and straight-forward introduction for identifying student values, and so could be used as an early example of this approach to worldviews clarification. Discussion on students' choices could become very lively and contentious, but don't worry too much about that: beneath the noise and bombast it is likely that they are trying very hard to make sense of themselves and of life.

Additional suggestions

After the above discussions, students could be asked, What are you doing to achieve for yourself what your top five miracle workers could do for you? Or, what could you do to achieve these things? Students might then be asked to write Self-Contracts based on such responses. In other words, they could become their own miracle workers!

If appropriate this might lead into a discussion on the nature of the miracles we wish for, how we could help each other to achieve our aims, and what society needs from us to become a better place.

Strategy 25: Ways to live

Possible curriculum links: literary characters; Citizenship studies about personal lifestyles; aspects of moral education; cultural differences and nationality traits.

Purpose

This activity helps students to recognise that there are many ways to live life, and to consider what are their own leanings and preferences- and why.

Procedure

Hand out the worksheet overleaf, Ways to live, and ask students to rank order them from their first to last according to their own preferences.

Then ask students to discuss their responses in pairs, particularly focussing on one or two examples where they had very different reactions/preferences. Each should try to understand and summarise the other person's viewpoint back to them.

Then then find a new partner and repeat the same process.

Students might then be asked to write out in 2-3 sentences a statement which best expresses their own philosophy of life at present. They may borrow ideas or phrases from the examples given or create their own form of words and ideas.

Student Worksheet, Ways to Live

Overleaf are thirteen different ways in which people might choose to live their lives. Grade each one using the following scale:

- 1= I like it a lot/ Yes, this is me...
- 2= I quite like it/ I am attracted by this...
- 3= I am indifferent to it/ I neither like nor dislike it
- 4= I find it unattractive/ This is not really me...
- 5= I dislike it intensely

Ways to Live: Best to Worst

1:

2:

3:

4:

5:

6:

7:

8:

9:

10:

11:

12:

13:

Grade

(1-5)

Way 1: this individual actively engages in the community, not so to change it, but to understand it, to appreciate and preserve the best in it. In this lifestyle excessive desires are avoided, and balance is sought. Good things are enjoyed, but in moderation. Life should have clarity, balance, refinement and control, not vulgarity, or over-enthusiasm, or irrational behaviour. Impatience and indulgence are to be avoided at all times. Friendship is regarded highly, but intimacy is kept to one's closest friends and family. Features of a good life include discipline, intelligence, good manners and predictability. Social changes should be developed gradually, so that what is good in life is not also lost or rejected. Each individual should be active both physically and socially, but not in a hectic or radical way; rather, restraint and order should shape one's life.

.....

Way 2: this individual prefers to go it alone, keeping privacy in their living quarters, protecting time to themselves, and maintaining control over their life. The emphasis is on self-sufficiency, personal reflection and knowledge of oneself. Intimate associations and relationships with social groups are avoided, as is over-manipulation of the physical environment. One's aim is to simplify, to moderate desires, and to retain self-dependence. Concentration is on refinement, clarification and self-direction, finding one's centre of meaning within oneself.

.....

Way 3: this individual makes concern for others the central emphasis of their life. Affection is their main driver, but affection which does not impose itself or seek to use others for their own benefit, but rather holds sympathetic concern for the other person as their main driving force. Greed for personal possessions, sexual passion, striving for power, over-emphasis on intellect, and undue concern for oneself are all to be avoided. These things are hindrances to true, sympathetic love among people, which alone gives true meaning to life. Aggression blocks receptivity to the positive forces which foster genuine personal growth; only by purifying oneself of such negative forces can one find wholeness and deep meaning in community living.

.....

Way 4: this person believes that life is to be enjoyed, savouring all that the senses provide with joy and abandonment. The aim of life is not to control others, or to change society, but to be open and receptive to all of the good things in life, delighting in and appreciating them. Life is a festival, not a workshop or school for moral discipline! Letting oneself go, and allowing oneself to be affected by life is more important than trying to be good. To be really free requires that you avoid entanglements, remaining self-focussed, and not allowing other people or things to be a distraction. Over-dependence or self-sacrifice to others are likely to distract from the main calling of life, which requires time for meditation and awareness, a balance of solitude and sociability.

.....

Way 5: this approach emphasises the community rather than the individual. People should not focus on themselves, by withdrawing or being self-centred, but should seek to merge with one's social group, enjoying cooperation and companionship, and working with others to bring about the realisation of common goals. People are social beings, and can gain so much more by active group engagement and cooperative group endeavours. Personalised meditation, individual restraint, and over concern for one's own self-sufficiency all cut the ties which bind us together. We should be outgoing, living with gusto, and working with others to secure a better future for us all. Those who can only think of themselves and actively oppose such endeavours are a curse on positive community growth.

.....

Way 6: this individual sees life as dynamic, demanding that we actively participate in living. If not, things will stagnate, become too comfortable, or else simply dry up through lack of momentum. To counter these tendencies, constant activity is necessary: physical action, adventure, realistic solving of specific problems, the regular application of techniques for managing people and society. The future of humanity depends on what we do, not our feelings or speculations. New problems arise constantly, and improvements and adjustments are continuously required if we are to progress. We can't just follow the past or dream of a better future: we need to work resolutely and continually to gain control over the forces that threaten. Technical advances demand scientific knowledge and creative ingenuity. The good is the enemy of the even better.

.....

Way 7: this approach asks us to always be willing to learn from other alternate paths, to never surrender exclusive allegiance to a particular philosophy or way of life. At one moment one particular way might be right for us, but at another a different approach is called for. Life should be a mix of joyful abandon, along with action and contemplation in equal measure. If any single path is carried to extreme, we lose something of the full texture of life, so we must cultivate flexibility, diversity, a dynamic integration of enjoyment, action, and an acceptance of the tension of opposite extremes. It is the dynamic interaction of all of these elements which brings about detachment within full engagement, and wholeness with the fleeting passage of time.

.....

Grade
(1-5)

..... **Way 8:** for this person, enjoyment is the keynote of life. However, not a hectic searching for intense and exciting pleasures, but a simple enjoyment of the ordinary, the simple, the everyday pleasures of life, finding joy in just existing, savouring food, in comfortable surroundings, meeting with friends, and enjoying times of rest and relaxation. True joy is a warm, comfortable home, relaxing chairs and a soft bed, a kitchen well stocked with good food, and a door which is always open to friends. This is the place to be! When the body is at ease, relaxed, calm, and the breath is slow and easy, with a willingness to let go and be grateful to the world, then one's body and mind are fed and refreshed, and life is at it should be. Driving ambition, or the fanaticism of ascetic ideals, are simply signs of discontented people who have lost the capacity to ride carefree in the joy of simple, wholesome existence.

..... **Way 9:** in this approach, receptivity is the keynote of life: the good things in life come of their own accord, not from struggle or resolute action. They can't be found by indulging the senses, or by giving way to the siren calls of tumultuous social demands. They can't be found in attempting to please others, or by thinking hard about life. Rather, they come unsought when we relax from all our effortfulness, when we cease from making demands and simply wait in quiet receptivity. In such a state, we become open to powers which can work on and nourish us, bringing joy and peace. It is in sitting under the trees and sky, open to nature, calm and receptive, that the wisdom from without can enter within.

..... **Way 10:** self-control is the hallmark of this approach; not the easy self-control which retreats from the world, but the vigilant, attentive, focussed control of one who lives confidently in the world, knowing both the full strength of human vitality and the limits of human power. For this person, the good life is rationally directed, firmly pursuing high ideals, and not distracted by the seductive voices of comfort or desire. It does not expect social utopias, and is distrustful of ultimate victories. It does not expect too much of life, but, with vigilance, will hold firm to the reins of self, controlling unruly impulses, and maintaining self-reliant independence, by humbly acknowledging one's place in the world, and being guided by reason. In this way, one retains dignity and respect, even in the face of death; thus they will be remembered as one who faced life with confidence, and lived with dignity and cosmic good manners.

..... **Way 11:** is the way of the contemplative life: for such an individual, the external world is not a fit habitat for us; it is too big, too cold, and too oppressive. A life turned inward is the most rewarding. This is a rich world of ideals, of feelings, of reverie and self-knowledge: one's true home. By cultivating the self within, one becomes truly human. Only then does there arise within, a deep sympathy for all that lives, an acknowledgement of the suffering inherent in life, and a realization of the futility of aggressive action. The contemplative life dissolves pretence, conceit and self-aggrandisement; in giving up the world one truly finds a bigger and greater, inner world.

..... **Way 12:** using the body's natural energies is the secret to a truly rewarding life. Our hands take material and make them into things that are practical and beautiful: wood and bricks for building, food for harvesting and clay for moulding. The muscles come alive when put into action, climbing, running, skiing, jumping. Life finds meaning in overcoming, completing, conquering obstacles. It is the active deed which is most satisfying, a deed that meets the challenge of the present, that faces fear, that rises to the challenge of adventure. Too much cautious fore-thought, or too much desire for ease, will never enhance life or lead to final completion. It is outward, energetic action, the excitement of power and adrenaline in the tangible present - that is the way to live!

..... **Way 13:** this is the way of confident submission, of allowing oneself to be an instrument for good in the world. We choose to allow ourselves to be used by others for the growth of humankind, used by the Ultimate to bring about some greater purpose of good in the universe, depended on by our loved ones to safeguard their greater health and happiness. The universal powers of good are dependable and can be trusted to ultimately defeat all powers of evil and destruction. One should therefore be humble, consistent, faithful, grateful for care and protection, close to people and nature, and willing to give ourselves willingly for others. We should content ourselves with the quiet confidence and serenity of knowing that we are vessels of a greater power which is quietly at work in restoring goodness and wholeness in a broken world.

5= I dislike it intensely | 4= I find it unattractive/ This is not really me... | 3= I am indifferent to it/ I neither like nor dislike it | 2= I quite like it/ I am attracted by this... | 1= I like it a lot/ Yes, this is me...

To the teacher

In the above form this activity is clearly designed for older children, who have confident reading ability and a significant level of self-reflection. A simplified version of the task could possibly be designed for younger children.

The task is a very demanding one though, and sufficient time needs to be allocated to allow time for changing and adjusting their preferences until some level of contentment with the final outcome is reached.

Sets of separate cards for each of the ways of life could be printed up and provided in place of the complete worksheets. This offers the additional benefit of allowing students to order and arrange the cards into a hierarchy on the desk in a much more flexible way than can be achieved with the worksheet.

Additional suggestions

As a final activity students could be asked to think of 5-6 things that they have done in the past week that are consistent with the stated philosophy of life that they have just outlined. They could then grade themselves 1-10 on how well they believe their actions are consistent their stated philosophy of life.

FEEDBACK: I would love to hear back from you about what you think of these ideas or how your use of them has impacted your teaching. Are there particular ones that you used and found helpful, or are there any that did not work for you? Also, if you have created your own additional tasks or activities and would like to share them with me, send me the details, and if I get enough, I can put them all together in a follow-up booklet. Please contact me at mark.plater@bishopg.ac.uk

