

4.4

PROMOTING SOCIALLY INTERACTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS



2 hours 30 minutes



Markers and pens, flipchart, (optional: toy bricks), Handout 9: About the P.O.W.E.R. Game Bank or a printed copy of the P.O.W.E.R. Game Bank for each participant, Classroom Wellbeing Portfolios



By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Describe the importance of peer relationships in children's wellbeing
- Demonstrate strategies for building positive social interactions
- Develop a plan for creating positive and supportive social interactions in the classroom.



Introduction



30 minutes



Optional: toy bricks



Four groups

- ➔ Display the learning objectives for the session. Invite a participant to read them.
- ➔ Explain that to get into the session on promoting positive social interactions, they will play a game called “Build a...”, which can also be played with their students.
- ➔ Give instructions for the game “Build a...”. You’ll name an object, then, in small groups, they’ll re-create that object with their bodies. Note: If toy bricks are available, they can build it with those instead. All members of the group must be involved.
 - 💻 Using a virtual board, the participants can draw the object together. Make sure that this is set up with multiple “slides” so they can continue to use the same link but draw multiple times.
- ➔ Divide the participants into four groups. It’s important that there are four groups, since the groups will be coming together. If you have a very large group, you can divide them into eight groups and play an additional round (see below).

- ➔ Play one or two rounds in the small groups and, for each round, allow the groups at least two minutes to build the object.
 - For example, in the first round you could say “build a tree” (or substitute another object if you prefer). Then all groups should build a tree with their bodies. Remind them that each member of the group must be involved.



If groups are drawing virtually, invite them to draw a tree on the virtual board. Each member of the group must participate in the drawing.

- ➔ After two rounds, combine two groups so that there are now two larger groups. Play one or two rounds in these larger groups. Allow at least two minutes for each round.



If groups are drawing virtually, combine two groups or create half the number of groups (doubling the number of participants) and have them draw a new picture. Each member of the group must participate in the drawing.

- For example, in the second round, you can say “build a dog” (or substitute another object) and the two groups should build a dog with their bodies. Remind them that each member of the group must be involved. Once participants understand the game, they can call out things to build.



➔ For the final round, combine the two groups so that all the participants are in one group. Play one or two rounds as a whole group. Allow at least two minutes for each round.

- For example, you can say “build a flower crown” (or substitute another object that represents peace). The full group should build a flower crown with their bodies. Remind them that everyone must be involved.



If groups are drawing virtually, invite them to draw a flower crown on the Miro board (or whatever software is available). Remind them that every member of the group must participate in the drawing.

➔ After the full group has built their object, lead a reflection discussion using the following questions:

- How did everyone get along in your smaller groups?
- How did this change, or not, as you combined with other groups?
- What were some of the challenges you faced working together?
- How did you make sure that everyone was included and worked together well?
- What would the benefits be of doing this activity, or something like it, with your students?



Background / Theoretical Explanation



10 minutes



None



Facilitator explanation

- ➔ Explain that in this session they will learn more about the importance of promoting positive social interactions and strategies to use in the classroom.

Say, for example:

"Positive social interactions and strong peer relationships are an important part of student wellbeing. Peers become an increasingly important part of children's support systems as they move into adolescence. Additionally, many students' normal support systems will have been interrupted by the conflict. Positive social interactions with peers and adults can support emotional wellbeing and healing."

"Research also shows that peer relationships and peer classroom dynamics are an important part of students' academic achievement and wellbeing, in both the short and long term. Working as a teacher during a conflict, it's important to create a generally positive social environment in the classroom and foster strong relationships with and between students."

- ➔ Ask participants to say out loud (or write on a flipchart/board) some words or phrases that describe what a positive classroom social environment consists of.
 - Examples include: respect, trust, sharing, joyful, feeling of safety, collaboration, etc.
- ➔ Explain that, "We'll discuss and practise strategies that build a positive social environment in the classroom as well as those that foster deep, supportive relationships between students."

Key Points



Positive social interactions and relationships are a key component of supporting children's wellbeing, and necessary to support children experiencing conflict or facing another crisis. These relationships can help them cope with the adversity and violence around them. Peer relationships can help children regain a sense of normality and support them to heal.



Teachers can help to create a positive social environment in the classroom through groupwork, setting the tone for a positive and respectful classroom, and relating the classroom content to the students' lived realities. Teachers can also help foster strong relationships between students, which can help them to cope with and heal from the conflict.



Practice: Building a Positive Social Environment




50 minutes



Flipchart, markers



Small groups, whole group

- ➔ Explain that participants will divide into groups, with each group having a slightly different topic to brainstorm. Each member of the group will have a specific role. This is a model for building a positive social environment through group work that they can bring into their classroom.
- ➔ Ask them what roles they might have in a group and write all the roles on a flipchart or slide.
- ➔ First, as an example with the whole group, assign one participant to be the timekeeper, another to be the scribe and a third to be the presenter. Explain that you will model facilitating the discussion. Explain the roles:
 - **Facilitator:** asks questions, calls on group members
 - **Timekeeper:** provides time checks and reminders and ensures the task is done in the allotted time
 - **Scribe:** writes down notes recording the discussion
 - **Presenter:** shares the group's ideas with the larger group.
- ➔ Allow two to five minutes of discussion once everyone is in their roles.
- ➔ Ask the group: *"What strategies have we used throughout the training to build a positive social environment?"*
- ➔ When time is up (after two to five minutes), have the presenter share what they brainstormed.
- ➔ Divide the participants into equal groups and give each a piece of flipchart paper and marker. Each group should have approximately three to four participants. If there are more than four per group, invite them to come up with creative roles for the remaining participants. Assign each group a topic to brainstorm and ask the group to distribute the roles between them. Allocate five minutes to brainstorming in their small groups.
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 - Divide groups into virtual breakout rooms. Provide them with a virtual board or invite each group to create a shared slide and then share their screen when they present back.
- ➔ Topics for brainstorming (if there are more than four groups, teachers can divide by age or duplicate questions). Ask in-service teachers to use their own experience and expertise in the classroom to answer the questions.
 - What different ways are there of using group work in the classroom?
 - What different ways are there to build a positive social environment through academic instruction?
 - What different ways are there to build a positive social environment through free time or non-academic time in the classroom?
 - What challenges are there to building a positive social environment?



- ➔ After five minutes, bring all groups back together.
- ➔ Allow each group to present what they discussed, one by one. After each group's presentation, invite everyone else to add other ideas to the flip chart.
- ➔ After all groups have presented, lead a plenary discussion and reflection using these questions:
 - First, reflect on how they did the group work:
 - What was effective about how the trainer facilitated the group work?
Examples: everyone had a role, expectations/instructions were clear, facilitator checked in with each group, participants worked with different people
 - What wasn't effective?
Examples: not enough time, not enough instruction, different group sizes
 - How might you adapt this strategy for different age groups?
Examples: Younger children could have different roles like picking up materials, and you may need to assign them roles instead of letting them choose. Allow older children more autonomy and more complex roles.
 - Then reflect on how the strategies they brainstormed could be applied in the classroom:
 - Why is it important to create a positive social environment in the classroom?
 - What strategies might you use in your classroom?
 - How might you address some of the challenges you anticipate in building a positive social environment?

- ➔ Part of a teacher's role in facilitating group work is to model how to work well in groups, both in a specific activity and throughout their teaching. This is particularly important for younger children and older children without much experience of group work. For example, a teacher should demonstrate giving everyone a turn, expressing disagreement respectfully, etc.

- ➔ Link this back to learning through play.

Ask:

"How does group work help facilitate learning through play? Which of the five characteristics of play (meaningful, joyful, socially interactive, actively engaging and iterative) does group work promote and how?"

Explain that while group work is socially interactive, it can also support the other characteristics of play. For example, it can make the activity and learning process more joyful or meaningful. Group work can both help to build a positive social environment and support deeper learning.



Practice: Fostering strong relationships



50 minutes



Handout 9: About the P.O.W.E.R. Game Bank or a printed copy of the P.O.W.E.R. Game Bank for each participant



Individual, small group, whole group

- ➔ While participants are seated or in a relaxed position, invite them to close their eyes, or relax their gaze. Read the following and pause for 30 seconds after each paragraph.

“Think about a moment when you were happy and relaxed. Notice what you feel. How does your body feel?”

“When you feel happy and relaxed, who is with you? Is this someone you feel close to? What does it feel like to be with the person or people you feel closest to?”

“Now that you’ve thought about how they make you feel, think about what that person or those people mean to you. What makes you feel close to them? How are they or what do they do that makes you feel close to them? What do you do that makes you feel close to them?”

“Now that you’ve thought about how they make you feel and what they mean to you, think about how you developed your relationship with them. What has made you feel close to this person or these people? What experiences, activities or conversations made you feel close?”

- ➔ Invite participants to open their eyes and lead a discussion with the following questions:

- How do your close relationships make you feel?
- What makes you feel close to someone?
- How did you build these strong relationships?
- How can you help your students to build strong, positive relationships?

- ➔ Explain that a strong relationship (between children, an adult and a child, or between adults) can make people feel secure and safe, so they are especially important in times of crisis. Going through something big or challenging with someone else can help to bring people closer. These bonds can be strengthened or developed by putting in an effort.

- ➔ Display the four components of strong relationships:

- **Trust** – the knowledge that the other person is there for you and has your best interests in mind
- **Communication** – understanding one another’s needs and wants, and the ability to ask and accept each other’s needs
- **Compromise** – although common goals, interests and experiences help us build strong relationships, when we have different ideas or priorities it’s important to compromise so that the needs and wants of both people are met
- **Respect** – valuing each other’s uniqueness and strengths is important to ensure that both people feel important and worthwhile.



- ➔ Explain that there are many activities teachers can facilitate in the classroom that build these components of strong, positive relationships.
- ➔ Give out Handout 9: About the P.O.W.E.R. Game Bank and direct participants to the digital version of the P.O.W.E.R. Game Bank or hand out the printed P.O.W.E.R. Game Bank. Explain that there are many games that promote positive social interactions, as well as games that build other social and emotional skills. Each game has many social and emotional (and other) learning outcomes, which are referred to as “key learning” in the manual. Even when only one key learning is identified, children practise and build other social and emotional skills when they play the activities. Explain that in the next session, they will have the opportunity to lead and participate in many games.

Now, in small groups, participants will review a game of their choice from the P.O.W.E.R. Game Bank.

- ➔ In groups, they should:
 - Discuss how the game helps to build the four components of positive relationships (trust, communication, compromise and respect).
 - Suggest how the game could be adapted to help build better, stronger, more positive relationships, and how the game could be played virtually.
- ➔ Bring the full group back together and discuss what aspects of the games build trust, communication, compromise and respect. Allow groups to share how they adapted the games.

Key Points

- 🔑 Strong, healthy relationships are an important part of a healthy response to a crisis. Positive relationships with others can help people to share and cope with their feelings and feel supported.
- 🔑 Trust, communication, compromise and respect are four important components of strong, healthy relationships.
- 🔑 Activities in the classroom can support students to develop strong relationships, especially if they include these four components.
- 🔑 Play Opportunities for Wellness and Education Resource (P.O.W.E.R.) is a collection of 100 gender-responsive play-based learning activities. The games are available as animated videos and PDFs in English, French and Arabic through the Right to Play website: www.righttoplay.com



Conclusion



10 minutes



Classroom Wellbeing Portfolios, markers and pens



Whole group review, individual drawing/writing

➔ Recap what you've discussed (ask questions of the group or invite one or two participants to provide a recap).

- Building a positive social environment: strategies for productive group work include including everyone and giving people roles.
- Fostering strong relationships: activities in the classroom can build healthy relationships based on trust, communication, compromise and respect.

➔ Invite participants to take five minutes to add notes in their Classroom Wellbeing Portfolio.

- What will they do to build a positive social environment in their classroom?
- How will they foster strong relationships among classmates?

