



9. CARVING OUT YOUR PLACE!

Maintaining healthy friendships through prosocial behaviour

Targeted competencies (based on ÉKIP and the WHO)	Adopting prosocial behaviours Self-knowledge, self-understanding, and self-worth
Content for the development of personal and social competencies (MEQ)	Sheet 13 : Making friends and social network Sheet 14 : Inclusion and getting along Sheet 15 : Responsibilities, rules of conduct, the virtual world, and consequences
Cross-cutting competencies (QEP)	Cooperating with others Using creativity Achieving potential
General objectives of the workshop	By the end of the workshop, students will be able to: • Understand the importance of prosocial behaviour for getting along and finding one's rightful place in a group; • Recognize the importance of healthy friendships as a protective factor for tackling life's challenges; • Adopt new strategies for creating and maintaining healthy friendships and for leaving uncomfortable relationships.

Total duration

60- MINUTE version: follow ALL steps, including the ones marked with the clock icon



40- MINUTE version: DO NOT follow the steps marked with the clock icon



Materials and preparation

- Print three copies of the sheet [Secret missions](#) and cut them into six pieces.
- Print the *Friendships* poster, available on the [website](#) under the section: First cycle / Workshops and tools for students / Classroom posters to support your explanations and reinvest learning in class.
- Have one large sheet of paper per group of six students for exercise A: *Twelve skilled hands*.
- Have enough coloured felt-tip pens (for drawing) on hand.
- Have a chalkboard or interactive whiteboard (IWB) available.

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A. Twelve skilled hands (15–20 minutes)

1. Put the students in teams of six, and arrange the classroom so that each team has space to work.
2. Next, present the exercise to the students by giving them the following instructions:
 - Each team will have **eight minutes** to make a **group drawing** on the theme of their choice (e.g., friendship, justice, music, arts, sports, environment, travel, etc.).
 - Each student will have a **secret mission** to complete while making the group drawing.
 - During the activity, I **will not be answering any questions**. The only thing I will do is give a reminder when half of the time is up.
3. After this, give each team the six secret missions that have been cut out. Ask each student to pick one **at random**, reminding them **not to share it with others**.
4. Give each team the materials they need for their group drawing: a large white sheet of paper and colour pencils.
5. Give the signal to start the group drawing.
6. Keep track of the time and give a reminder when half of the time has elapsed.
7. Ask the students to stop what they're doing; then, ask them about their experience:
 - What did you think of this experience?
 - Were you able to find your place in the group and participate in the exercise, despite the obstacles you encountered? Why or why not?
 - How did your secret mission go?
 - Did you figure out what your team members' secret missions were?
8. Listen to a few answers, then reveal what the six secret missions were by reading them aloud one by one. For each, invite students to raise their hands when they hear you call out the secret mission that was assigned to them.



9. Continue the discussion, drawing inspiration from the following questions to allow students to share their experience:
 - What were your reactions (physical feelings, emotions, thoughts, behaviours) to the attitude of some of your teammates?
 - How did you determine roles (who does what and how)?
 - Did everyone on your team participate equally or fairly in the group drawing?
 - How did the strengths and skills of those on your team help complete the task?
 - How did you work as a team to resolve the challenges you faced?



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10. Conclude the activity by telling the students:



It's important to find a **comfortable place** among your peers. Even if you have different tastes, interests or opinions, or even if you sometimes have opposing goals and needs (like you saw with the group drawing exercise), you can still **get along** with each other by using **prosocial behaviour**. In a group, **each person has their own unique and important place to carve out** (Burger, 2022; Dirks et al., 2018; Rubin et al., 2018; Schacter et al., 2023). No more, no less!



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B. Educational clip – Part 1 (5 minutes)

1. Play the video clip *Carving out your place – Part 1* for your students.
[Video clip—Part 1](#)



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C. Real connections vs. virtual connections (10 min)

1. Connect the discussion to the clip by explaining that friendships are very important in adolescence. Expand the discussion with the following:



Friendships are **crucial to your emotional needs during adolescence**. They play a **very important role in adapting** to all the changes that occur during adolescence (e.g., puberty, first romantic relationships, relationships with family, social integration, academic success; Allen et al., 2022; Costello et al., 2024; Madsen & Collins, 2018).

In fact, friendships act as **protective factors**. Just as an umbrella protects you from the rain, a good social support network protects you with **feelings of safety and well-being** that make it easier to overcome life's challenges (Claes et al., 2005; Graber et al., 2016; Shah et al., 2024).



For example, **having friends** you can **share fun and important experiences with** and **who you can confide in** helps you feel like you have **importance and value as a person**. This helps you have the **self-esteem, confidence, and courage** to face certain challenges (e.g., conflict with your parents, heartbreak, disappointing grades; Fritz et al., 2018; Madsen & Collins, 2018; Van Harmelen et al., 2021; Waldrup et al., 2008).

Conversely, if you **lack friendships**, if you **feel left out** in your friend group or you **feel like you don't belong**, that can affect your **self-esteem** and lead to **feelings of sadness, isolation, helplessness, and stress** when it comes to dealing with life's challenges (Burger, 2022; Dirks et al., 2018; Schacter et al., 2023; Schinka et al., 2013).



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2. Next, show the students the two images in the slideshow, then hold a discussion using the following reflective questions you read aloud:

- What do you see in these two images?
- Which of these images most closely resembles the way that you relate to others?
- What are the pros and cons of each form of interaction (virtual vs. in person)?
- Is it important for you to have a lot of friends? Why or why not?
- What does being a good friend mean to you?
- Which is more important in your opinion: the quantity of friendships or the quality? Why?

3. Listen to a few answers, then conclude the discussion by saying the following:



Whether you're connecting with others on social media or in person, it is the **quality of these relationships that matters most**, not the **quantity**. It's better to have **a few friends you can count on and have a sincere, fulfilling and mutual relationship with**, than to have **a bunch of superficial relationships** with people who don't care very much about you, or relationships where you don't feel that you've found your place or don't feel like you can be yourself (Claes, 2003; Shah et al., 2024; Waldrup et al., 2008).

And while social media and virtual spaces may be exciting and effective ways to communicate and stay in touch with friends and family, it's still essential that you **develop and nurture authentic and meaningful relationships with other people by sharing experiences in the real world, in person** (Blum et al., 2022; Steinsbekk et al., 2024; Yau & Reich, 2020).

D. Navigating troubled waters... (15 minutes)

1. Based on part 1 of the video clip, explain to the students that:



Friendships are bound to **grow** or even **change over time**. You may find during your adolescence that you no longer feel comfortable in your current circle of friends, especially if certain behaviours in that circle start to bother you or conflict with your values (Hutten et al., 2021; Meter & Card, 2016; Poulin & Chan, 2010; Schacter et al., 2023).

2. Ask the students to stand against the wall at the back of the classroom and then to take a step forward if they have ever experienced a situation similar to the ones you will read out. Read out the following statements:

- "Staying in a social group even if you don't feel fully like myself there."
- "Sometimes avoiding saying what you think because you're afraid you'll be judged."
- "Doing something that you were uncomfortable with in order not to lose friends."
- "Sometimes feeling like the odd one out in a group of peers."
- "Distancing yourself from someone because your interests and values drifted apart."
- "Having friends who asked you to lie for them."
- "Confiding in a friend, only for them to share your secrets with someone else."
- "No longer feeling comfortable in your group of friends, but being afraid of ending up alone."

3. Have students to return to their seats. Conclude the exercise by asking:
 - What did this exercise teach you about yourself or about others?
 - What emotions did you feel?
 - Have you ever been in a situation where you put aside some of your personal values in order to stay part of a group? How did that make you feel inside?
 - Why do you think someone might stay in a group of friends even when they start to feel uncomfortable or out of place there?
 - What advice would you give to a young person in this kind of situation to help them get out of it?
4. Listen to a few answers, then conclude the discussion by saying the following:



Fear of rejection, exclusion, loneliness, or judgment can lead you to adopt all kinds of strategies in an attempt to **avoid** experiencing these uncomfortable situations. That's only human! But these strategies of avoidance can trap you in relationships that are **harmful** or that **affect you negatively** (Burger, 2022; Dirks & al., 2018; Rahim & Katz, 2019). It's better to listen to yourself—to your values and your needs—so you can act in a way that's consistent with them and improve your relationships!

E. Your turn! (5 minutes)

1. Tell students that there are many **prosocial attitudes and behaviours** that will help them build fulfilling and harmonious relationships with others.
2. You present them with a list of **strategies for building friendships, maintaining positive relationships, and getting out of uncomfortable relationships** (inspired by Copeland, 2002; D'Ansembourg, 2020; Jeunesse, J'écoute, 2018; Motoi & Villeneuve, 2006).

Building friendships:

- Take the first steps to talk to someone;
- Show interest and ask questions;
- Use non-verbal cues to show openness (e.g., smiling, making eye contact, nodding, speaking with a calm and composed tone of voice, etc.);
- Make eye contact with the person you're talking with;
- Take the time to listen attentively to the other person before resuming the discussion;
- Participate in the discussion;
- Use humour;
- Recognize the other person's value and highlight their achievements and skills;
- Identify your shared interests.

Maintaining positive relationships:

- Be involved in the relationship and check in on the other person;
- Listen attentively to the other person;
- Be sensitive to the other person (including their emotions and needs);
- Respect the other person's values and point of view;
- Be tolerant of differences, including differences of opinion;
- Open up and learn to talk about yourself;

- Express yourself clearly and honestly;
- Take initiative and talk about your ideas and projects;
- Be critical of the other person's behaviour and ideas, but without judging them as a person;
- Accept and welcome criticism directed at you;
- Be able to apologize;
- Encourage, help, and compliment others;
- Have a sense of humour.

Getting out of uncomfortable relationships:

- Discuss the discomfort you feel in a respectful manner;
- Identify and express your own emotions and needs;
- Actively look for solutions;
- Choose activities where you feel more comfortable;
- Develop other friendships at the same time;
- Find an ally;
- Gradually distance yourself from harmful relationships;
- Leave the group if behaviour goes over the line or no longer aligns with your values;
- Choose yourself, despite your fears and doubts;
- Ask for help.



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F. Educational clip – Part 2 (5 minutes)

1. Play the video clip *Carving out your place – Part 2* for your students.
[Video clip – Part 2](#)



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G. OFF-TRAIL Challenge

This week, ask the students to reflect on their friendships: How do you feel about your friendships or friend group (do you feel good, comfortable, uncomfortable, etc.)? Ask the students to look at the list of strategies and to choose two to apply during the week to improve the quality of their friendships.



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PRINTABLE WORKSHEET

Secret missions

SECRET MISSION 1 Distract your team from the task (for example, talk about other topics, make irrelevant comments, drop materials, point out something going on elsewhere, etc.).	SECRET MISSION 2 Choose one COLOUR and insist on using that colour in as many ways possible in the group drawing, to the point that it becomes over-the-top.
SECRET MISSION 3 Have a NEGATIVE attitude all throughout the exercise (for example, look discouraged, sigh, stop working on the group drawing, leave the group to sit somewhere else, criticize your group's drawing, refuse to keep participating, etc.)	SECRET MISSION 4 Insist that your team choose the "ENVIRONMENT" theme for the group drawing. You must act convincing and provide arguments in favour of this theme.
SECRET MISSION 5 Have a POSITIVE attitude all throughout the exercise (for example, act enthusiastic, cry out with joy, smile and laugh, encourage everyone to get along, try to find compromises, etc.)	SECRET MISSION 6 Insist that your team choose the "SPORTS" theme for the group drawing. You must act convincing and provide arguments in favour of this theme.

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SECRET MISSION 3 Have a NEGATIVE attitude all throughout the exercise (for example, look discouraged, sigh, stop working on the group drawing, leave the group to sit somewhere else, criticize your group's drawing, refuse to keep participating, etc.)	SECRET MISSION 4 Insist that your team choose the "ARTS" theme for the group drawing. You must act convincing and provide arguments in favour of this theme.
SECRET MISSION 5 Have a POSITIVE attitude all throughout the exercise (for example, act enthusiastic, cry out with joy, smile and laugh, encourage everyone to get along, try to find compromises, etc.)	SECRET MISSION 6 Insist that your team choose the "TRAVEL" theme for the group drawing. You must act convincing and provide arguments in favour of this theme.