

Lesson Plan

NEUROHEADWAY

Neuroscience Into Education

The Art of Making Conversation

Materials:

Paper, pens, Activity Cards (attached), worksheet (attached).

Today we are going to learn about a CONVERSATION!! What do you think 'conversation' is (elicit answers)? Yes, *talking* (and other suggestions). But conversation is about more than just talking. It is about *connecting* with others. If I sit here and talk *at* you for half an hour, without hearing your response – is it a conversation? No – of course not.

I want you, on your own, to imagine you have just met a new friend who has moved into your street. You see them one day riding their bike. I want you to write down five things you could talk to them about.

Now, I want you to get into pairs. One of you will play the new friend. Using your list, decide HOW you will start the conversation. Then, have a chat!

What did you notice about your chat? Was it a conversation? Why? Did the person playing the new friend ask questions about you too?

In order for a conversation to be interesting and balanced, we need to take an active interest in the other person. Can you think of any skills you would use to make this work? Here are some ideas (write on board/hand out sheet).

Be a good **LISTENER**

Look for things you might have in **COMMON**

Take a genuine **INTEREST** in the other person

Make the conversation **EQUAL**

Develop **EMPATHY** – put yourself in the other person's place

Be **POLITE** – even if you aren't very interested in what the other person is saying

Ask **QUESTIONS** – it shows you are genuinely interested

Be sure to **PAUSE** occasionally to give the other person a chance to speak

Make **EYE CONTACT** – it shows you are genuinely engaged

Don't just use one-word answers like YES and NO - **ELABORATE**

Sometimes, when we get into the flow of talking, we can forget there is someone else involved! Without thinking too hard (because this will take away a natural conversation), be sure to listen to what the other person is saying and refer to it later on. For example, if you ask someone what they did yesterday and they say they went to the cinema, maybe you can ask them which film they went to see. Then, later on, refer back to the film and say you heard it was good (or bad!). This shows the other person that you were truly listening, not just nodding your head, but thinking about something else.

Why do you think conversation is important? Now you have learned about the important skills, we are going to do another activity – called 'speed conversation'. I want everyone to take an activity card out of the bag. Pick a person to spend one minute with, making conversation about the subject on your cards. Then, they will do the same with you. Be sure to ask the other person questions about their activity. But there is a catch – NO interrupting/talking over the other person. Look and listen for signs that they have finished speaking. It is more difficult than it sounds!

For example:

Person A (has a card which says Riding a Bike): I like riding my bike.

Person B: Oh, what colour is it?

A: It is blue

B: That's a good colour, where do you ride it? Etc etc.

Then switch places. You only have one minute each, so you have to think fast! This is great practice in listening and taking an interest in the other person – and although a good conversation is rarely rushed – this is a good way to take in information and show interest – but also, very importantly, to make your conversation interesting to someone else!

It is important not to think too hard about conversation in general. If it is flowing and you are both (or if more than two, all) of you are happy and getting a chance to speak, then your conversation is successful. Enjoy!

QUIZ SHEET

1. What are some of the most important skills in a good conversation?
2. How challenging did you find the 'speed chatting'?
3. In the first activity, how did you feel being asked to be the person to 'strike up' the conversation – did it feel awkward or natural?
4. Why is it important to listen to others?
5. If someone keeps interrupting you, how does it make you feel?
6. Why do you think good listeners tend to have a lot of friends?

Key Points for Good Conversation

- Be a good **LISTENER**
- Look for things you might have in **COMMON**
- Take a genuine **INTEREST** in the other person
 - Make the conversation **EQUAL**
- Develop **EMPATHY** – put yourself in the other person's place
- Be **POLITE** – even if you aren't very interested in what the other person is saying
 - Ask **QUESTIONS** – it shows you are genuinely interested
- Be sure to **PAUSE** occasionally to give the other person a chance to speak
 - Make **EYE CONTACT** – it shows you are genuinely engaged
- Don't just use one-word answers like YES and NO - **ELABORATE**

ACTIVITY CARDS

BIKE RIDING	HORSE RIDING	CINEMA
BASKETBALL	FOOTBALL	HOCKEY
WALKING MY DOG	VIDEO GAMES	GOING TO THE PARK
CAMPING	READING	TAKING PHOTOS
WATCHING TV	GARDENING	MAKING THINGS
ROCK CLIMBING	TRAMPOLINING	ARCHERY
WRITING	DRAWING	PAINTING
THE ZOO	MODEL MAKING	TEXTING
EATING OUT	COOKING	ASTRONOMY
SEWING	GYMNASTICS	HOLIDAYS

