



**KINDNESS
RETREAT**

youth frontiers kindness retreat

morning meeting/advisory time conversation starters
and follow-up activities

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The following questions or tasks correlate to the activity portion of Morning Meetings as described by The Responsive Classroom® protocols.** These questions and tasks seek to reinforce the areas of core learning from the Youth Frontiers **Kindness Retreat**, which are for students to:

1. Understand the difference between kind and unkind behaviors.
2. Act kindly toward others.
3. Understand how one's words and actions impact others positively or negatively.
4. Acquire conflict-resolution skills to reduce bullying incidents.
5. Deepen relationships with classmates.

The Social-Emotional Learning competencies enhanced by the retreat are:

1. Self-Awareness
2. Social Awareness
3. Responsible Decision-making

Directions for Classroom Teachers, Social Workers or Counselors:

The following activities are designed for students to write on individual white boards or journals. Students can share in small groups or with the whole group. If you jigsaw the activity, students could work in groups of two or three and then share their work back to the large group. If you have access to a SMART board, record their answers to refer back to. If you do not have a SMART board, put the results of each activity on chart paper or the white board to keep up in the room. Some activities have recommended facilitation instructions (listed in italics). The questions are grouped and ordered below. Feel free to engage in activities that best address your students' needs and issues as they arise.

***For more information on Responsive Classroom, please visit www.responsiveclassroom.org.*



Kindness

1. Write your definition of kindness.

2. What is a compliment?

Instruction option: Model and discuss the difference between real and artificial compliments. Help kids listen for tone of voice and sincerity on the part of the compliment-giver.

3. How might you respond to an authentic compliment?

4. Compliments, smiles and including others at recess are all examples of Kindness Boomerangs. What will probably happen if we throw out kindness boomerangs to others?

5. Write about two different times that you threw out Kindness Boomerangs yesterday. Can you plan to throw Kindness Boomerangs? What might a plan look like?



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6. What situations are happening in our class that we could work on by using the value of kindness?

Instruction option: Have your students write in a journal or on the white board. Pair and share. Have students come up with and write an idea on the SMART board or chart paper. As a class, decide which ideas you should begin to tackle first. Model the process of choosing either the most urgent, or possibly doing the ones that you feel you can accomplish in a short time and work on the others that will take longer.

7. What is one Act of Kindness you could do today at school?

Instruction option: Use one of the bulletin boards in the classroom as an "Acts of Kindness" posting board. Have colorful shapes for students to write an "Act of Kindness" they did or saw. Pin these shapes up on the board. You can use it as a discussion point, a reinforcement point, a modeling point, etc.

8. What does kindness look like?

Instruction option: Have the students create a visual representation of kindness. Work with the art teacher to provide students with choices of medium available to them. This could be a print or non-print representation. They could work in pairs or triads. You could use it as an informal assessment of the core learnings from their year's work with kindness.



Empathy and Respect

1. "You don't know until you've walked a mile in my shoes." What does this mean?

Instruction option: Listen to the song "Ruby's Shoes" by Lori McKenna about Ruby Bridges and school integration. This is especially pertinent during the MLK holiday. (See www.RubyBridges.com for a free download of the song and to read her story.)

2. What is empathy?

3. What is perspective?

Instruction option: Use one of Kris Van Alsberg's books ("Jumanji" works well). If you have a dock camera, put it up on the SMART board so students can study the illustrations. Or, if you do not have an overhead projector, pass around a number of Van Alsberg's books since all of them illustrate the power of perspective. Have students try to describe what is so magical about the illustrations. In the "Jumanji" example, the reader is a participant in the book. Have them identify where they are in the illustration. Perhaps work with the art teacher to assist in perspective awareness, especially how the still life on the page can be seen differently depending on where the reader is viewing it from. Relate these activities to a hypothetical argument that occurred in a game on the playground between five children. Try to do enough conversing about the incident to get responses that show realization that some of the five children saw it differently. How does this relate to solving a conflict in a logical and reasonable fashion? This is an activity that may last for longer than one day.

4. What does this mean? "You don't have to be everyone's friend, but you must respect everyone who is here."

5. What does respect mean?

6. How can we respectfully disagree with each other?

7. How does competition or jealousy interfere with respect?



Bullying

1. What is a bully? How does a bully act?
2. What are the three types of bullying? Do they happen in different places at school?

Instruction option: Review the three types of bullying introduced at the Kindness Retreat – physical (hitting, kicking, biting, etc.); verbal (teasing, name calling, gossip); and silent (exclusion from activities). Emphasize how much of bullying behavior happens where adults don't see it.

3. When is teasing fun and appropriate and when is it not fun or appropriate? When does teasing turn into bullying or harassment?
4. What can you do to protect yourself from a bully?
5. Is there sometimes a difference between girl bullies and boy bullies? Can you describe some of the differences?
6. If you witness a bullying situation, what are some strategies you can use to help?

*Instruction option: Review the technique of I.C.I. from the Kindness Retreat: **Interrupt, Compliment, Invite Away**. First, a student interrupts the situation by calling the name of his/her peer who is being hurt. Second, the student gives the victim of the bullying a compliment – in other words, throws out a Kindness Boomerang. Third, the student invites his/her peer away from the situation to a place that is safe.*



Relationships/Friendship

1. What is a friend? How is a person behaving when they are your friend?

2. What can you do if a friend, all of a sudden, decides you are not a friend?

3. What can you do if you don't care to be friends with someone in the same way that you have been?



Self-Awareness

1. Who in this room is responsible for your behavior?

Instruction option: Have students point to the person. If students point to the teacher or another adult in the room, have the discussion of how each of us is responsible for our own behavior.

2. If you're each responsible for your own behavior and you are supposed to be kind and help people out, why do you get in trouble when you hurt somebody who is picking on someone else on the playground?

Group Reflections

After participating in discussion of many of these questions, review the classroom norms. Do they still make sense to everyone? Is there anything to add or subtract? Are there any new awarenesses that can be posted in the room as reminders?