



Social Emotional Skills Activity Toolkit

Example Stories: 2

To read and adapt for different needs and then create new stories to be shared

These stories have been 'acquired' from the wonderful **UK Social Emotional Aspects of Learning pack** and that is a story in itself. We thank the authors and teachers who helped to develop these resources originally and hope that they agree that the best thing to do with a good story is 'pass it on'.

Introduction:

These stories may be about places and things that might be strange to you but they are about children just like you. In these stories the children find ways to solve problems and sometimes they will ask for your help. You might find that they have similar problems to you or their problems may be completely different from the ones you have. We hope you can think of things that they could that would help them.

These are stories from around the world and they are intended to help children and young people to find your way through difficult times. Perhaps you have your own story to tell ? If so you might want to share it and add to the stories to this collection.

If you do not want to share your story that is okay too. Remember, you can always talk to an adult **you can trust** if you need help or are unhappy.

Say No to Bullying: Laura's Story

Imagine a school rather like this one. Imagine it has a playground where the children are chasing and running around, laughing. Try and see it in your mind. It looks like a really good place to be. But now imagine that you can see a child who is not laughing

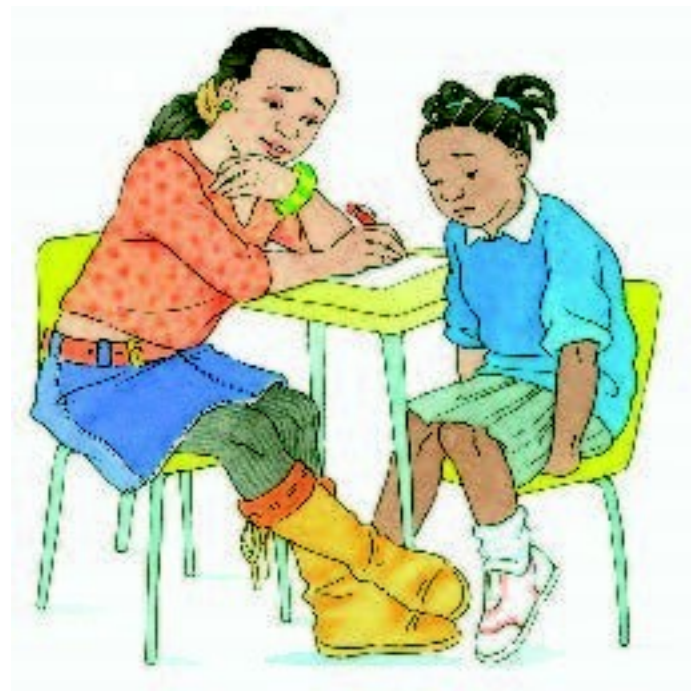
and is sitting against a wall, trying to make herself as small as possible, trying to be invisible. But it's no use. They have seen her. Natasha and her friends move slowly and deliberately towards her. When they are close, but not too close, they start. They say things about Laura, about her clothes and her hair, about her mum and her home. 'We'd better not get too near to her,' says Natasha. 'We might catch something.' Natasha does most of the talking. The others just copy her, or giggle and pretend to hold their noses. Laura pushes herself back against the wall. She tries not to listen, but she's heard it all a hundred times before. It's not just in the playground that they do it to her. They whisper and sneer about her in class.

They move away if they have to stand or sit by her. Sometimes they just look at her and she knows what they are thinking. They make her feel ashamed. The bell goes. Natasha and the others saunter into the classroom. Laura follows miserably behind.

For days and weeks, even months, Laura does not tell anybody what Natasha and her friends are doing. She is too frightened to tell. She thinks that it will only make things worse. Sometimes she thinks it must be her own fault. But she is wrong.

So, let us imagine that, one day, Laura is so unhappy that she decides she must tell someone about it. It is very hard for her to do this, and she is frightened. She doesn't know yet that it is the very best thing in the world that she can do.

The teacher that Laura talks to listens to her very carefully. Then she says, 'It is really brave of you, Laura, to come and tell me how unhappy you are. Now we can start to make things better. But I want you to do one more brave thing; I want you to tell Natasha and her friends how you are feeling.'



But Laura shakes her head. She is much too frightened to do that.

'Alright then,' says the teacher, 'will you let me tell them everything that you have told me? You don't have to be there.' Laura nods. 'That's brilliant, Laura,' says the teacher. 'Now we can start to make things better. Well done.' Laura suddenly somehow feels a little less frightened. The teacher smiles at her and Laura smiles back.

Now let's imagine the teacher talking to Natasha and her friends. The teacher says:

'Thank you for coming to this meeting – I really do need your help. I am worried about a child in this school. She seems to be very unhappy and she has worried about it for a long time. All that time she did not tell anyone, but now she feels she can't keep it to herself any longer and so she has told me. I am talking to you because I think that you can help me to make things better for her. She thinks that nobody likes her and that she hasn't got anyone to play with or be her friend.'



Natasha's friends begin to look uncomfortable, but Natasha tosses her hair and looks away.

'This unhappy child is Laura,' says the teacher, 'and I am going to tell you just how bad she is feeling. This is what Laura said.'

A child reads:

'Every day when I wake up I feel sick and have a bad pain in my tummy. I never want to go to school but mum always makes me. When I walk in the playground I can hear my

heart thumping. It hurts me in my throat. They say things about me and my mum that are horrible and nobody ever tells them to stop. At night I lie awake and think about what the children will say to me. Then, when I do fall asleep, I dream that I am in the playground and everyone is saying nasty things about me, and sometimes I cry out. Then I wake up and lie in the dark again. I wish I didn't ever have to go to school again!

The children look shocked and uncomfortable – one of them seems to be crying. At first they look at the floor and wriggle on their chairs. They don't know what to say.

'I didn't realise she felt that bad – she never said anything!' says Darren.

The teacher says, 'Well, she has told us now, and we know how she feels, so we can do something about it. Can you think of anything you can do to help her feel better?'

'I can make sure she joins in our games at breaktime,' offers Charmaine.

'We were only messing around,' Yangsook says. 'I will tell her I am sorry and invite her home for tea.'

Dionne says, 'I'm going to choose her for my partner next time we work in pairs.'

One by one each of the children says what they will do to help Laura to feel better.

'And what about you, Natasha? Can you think of anything you can do?'

There is a long pause. 'I'll let her play with me sometimes,' Natasha says.

The teacher is smiling now and everyone is looking much happier. 'It's up to you now to

make sure that Laura feels safe and happy. Do you understand?' The children nod their heads.

Imagine it is now two months later in that same school playground. Imagine that most of the children are running around happily. Imagine that you can see Laura laughing as she plays with the children who used to

be unkind to her. Imagine Natasha coming up to Laura. 'Do you want to play?' says Natasha. 'No thanks,' says Laura. 'I'm fine.'



But over in the corner of the playground, imagine a boy is standing, angrily rubbing tears away with his hand. This is Alex. Alex does not want to go into class where Farook and Matt are. He's seen enough of them for one day. He's seen enough of them forever. Every day he tries to hide but Matt and Farook always find him. Often they hurt him. Usually they take his tuck money. Today they wiped their muddy feet on his trousers.

Imagine you are in that playground and you see what is going on. What are you going to do?

Let the children answer your last question. Encourage them to say that they would either tell Alex to tell an adult, or that they would tell an adult themselves. Point out that if they do nothing, they are helping Matt and Farook to carry on bullying Alex.

Now you can explore with the children some of their thoughts and feelings about the story. Chart their responses under the appropriate question on the flipchart. Some of these questions are very complex and the children may need further prompting, as suggested below.

- 'There are lots of different sorts of bullying. What sort of bullying happens in the story? For example, the children bullied Alex by hurting him and stealing from him. What other sorts of bullying are there?'
- 'Laura said that nobody ever tried to stop the bullying. Why do you think that children watch other children being bullied and don't tell?'
- 'Laura felt sick, couldn't sleep and hated coming to school, while one of the children who had been involved in the bullying said they were "only messing around". Whose feelings are the important ones in deciding how serious the bullying is?'

You may want to keep these flipcharts displayed as part of the open discussion about bullying.

Conclusion

Say that there is a simple, word which will help all the children in this school to stop bullying. It starts with 't' and ends with 'l'. What is it? Ask the children to say 'tell' really loudly, then ask them to whisper it. Write the word in large letters on the flipchart with the heading 'What can we do about bullying?' Then ask them to put it away in their heads and remember it.

Remind the children that there are many people that they can tell if they are being bullied. There are lots of people in the school who care about them and want them to be happy. Ask the children to say who those people are and remind them if they miss anyone out. Say that whoever they tell, that person will always tell someone who can help them.

Then say that every child in the school can help other children to be happier. Some children hurt because they are being bullied. Others hurt for different reasons. Ask the children to find a still space inside themselves and think about Laura and how she was hurting. Then ask them to think about something kind they could do to one or more children in the school, even if it's only giving them a smile.

