



Social Emotional Skills Activity Toolkit

Example Stories 3

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.

The story of Matt, Farook and Alex

Imagine a school. It is rather like this one where children run around the playground, laughing and having fun. But then imagine that over in the corner of the playground, a boy is standing, angrily rubbing tears away with his hand. This is Alex. The bell has gone, but Alex does not want to go into class where Matt and Farook are. He's seen enough of them for one day. He's seen enough of them forever. Every day he tries to hide but they always find him. Today they wiped their muddy shoes on his trousers.

Alex follows the other children slowly, miserably into class. Mr Butler, the teacher, looks at his smudged face and muddy trousers.

'Good heavens, Alex, whatever happened to you?' he asks, kindly. Alex can see Matt and Farook watching him.

'I fell in a puddle,' he said. He can see the two boys sniggering to each other. Mr Butler sends him to wipe his face and trousers.

looking at him so he would pretend to be busy reading his book. One day, Farook came over and started calling him names. Alex didn't know what to say so he just looked blank. Then Farook had picked up Alex's book, deliberately ripped it and thrown it on the ground and Matt had stamped on it, and pretended it was an accident. Then they had laughed at him. After that it got worse. Every day they did something to him. Sometimes they hurt him, sometimes they pulled his clothes. Sometimes they made him give them his crisps. They called him names and laughed at him. When he cried, they sniggered.

But, what about all the other children in Alex's class? Where were they when this was going on? Did nobody see what Matt and Farook were doing? Of course they did. Most of the children saw some of what was happening, but some of them were friends of Matt and Farook and didn't want to fall out with them by saying anything. Others thought it was best to just keep out of the way or that it was none of their business. One or two of them joined in when Matt and Farook laughed at Alex.

But now, Kelly and Sherona have seen how unhappy Alex is. They have seen what Matt and Farook are doing, and they know they have to do something. They know that if they don't try and stop the bullying it will be almost as bad as doing the bullying themselves. At dinnertime they go to find Alex. He is sitting by himself in the playground. He isn't reading his book because he knows Farook will spoil it. The two girls sit down next to him and tell him they



know some of the things that Matt and Farook do to him. They say he should tell Mr Butler about it. Alex looks frightened.

He looks around to see where Matt and Farook are.

'If you don't tell someone,' says Kelly, 'it will just go on getting worse. You have to tell.'

But Alex just shakes his head. He wants the girls to leave him alone in case Matt or Farook find out what they are saying. But they won't go away.

'If you won't tell,' says Sherona, 'then we'll have to.'

'No,' says Alex, 'you mustn't. It will only make it worse.'

'It won't make it worse. Doing nothing will make it worse,' says Kelly. 'If you won't tell, we have to.'

Now ask the children whether they think Kelly and Sherona should tell the teacher, even though

Alex says he doesn't want them to. Then say this is what happens next ...

Kelly and Sherona don't like telling about Alex when he has told them not to, but they know it is the best way to stop what is happening.



That afternoon, Alex sees them talking to Mr Butler. Nobody can hear what they are saying. At playtime, when the other children go outside, Mr Butler says, 'I'd like you to help me with something, Alex, instead of going out to play.' Alex can see Matt and Farook glaring at him from the cloakroom. He wishes he could go home and never come back to school ever again.

Then Mr Butler says, 'I want you to help me, Alex, by telling me how you are feeling. I know now that some children have been unkind and bullying to you, and I want you to tell me how it makes you feel. I want to help you.' Mr Butler's voice is very kind.

Alex looks up at him. Perhaps he could tell after all, he thinks. Perhaps it might make it better. He takes a deep breath, and trying very hard not to cry, he says, **'I feel like nobody likes me and I feel so alone when I am at school. I feel different from all the others. I feel very unhappy. I hate coming to school because I am alone in the playground and I am scared of Matt and Farook. They take my crisps, tore my book and they put mud all over my trousers.'**

Mr Butler is quiet for a minute. Then he picks up Alex's hand and shakes it. 'Well done, Alex,' he says. 'That was a very brave thing to do, and now you've done it we can make sure things get better for you, starting right now.'

Ask the children to think for a while about what Mr

Butler should do. You might like to remind them of what might happen in your school and refer to the anti-bullying charter. If parents are present you might like to say how the school is ready to listen to parents too. Then say ...

Matt and Farook didn't hurt Alex any more. Each day Kelly and Sherona and their friends checked that he was all right and asked him to join their games. It took him a while to feel part of the class again but after a few weeks, when Mr Butler asked him how he was feeling, he said, 'I feel much better.'

Now you can explore with the children some of their thoughts and feelings about the story. • Matt and Farook bullied Alex by hurting him, taking his crisps and making him cry. What other sorts of bullying are there?



- Matt and Farook said they were only messing about and did not know that Alex felt so bad. Whose feelings are the most important ones in deciding how serious bullying is?
- Why do you think Alex didn't tell anybody about the bullying and didn't want Kelly and Sherona to tell? Was he right?
- Would you have done what Kelly and Sherona did? Why might it have been a difficult thing to do?

Now show the children the **Say no to bullying** poem on the flipchart and ask them all to read it out loud together. Ask the children why telling is the best thing to do if someone is being bullied.

Now remind the children that there are many people they can tell if they are being bullied. There are their parents and carers and lots of people in the school who care about them and want them to be happy. Ask the children who those people are (including each other) and remind them if they miss anyone out. Remind them to use worry boxes if you have them. Say that whoever they tell, that person will always tell someone who will help them.



Conclusion

Say that every child in the school can help other children to be happier. Some children are unhappy because they are being bullied. Others are unhappy for different reasons. Ask the children to find a still, quiet place inside them and think about Alex and how unhappy he was. Then ask them to think about how they could make someone in their own school happier, even if it is only by giving them a smile. Play the music and ask the children to take their kind thoughts into the classroom and playground with them.

You may want to have a meeting with parents and all the children to show what everyone in the school is doing to make the school a safe, happy place. The children will be showing what they have learned about bullying and how they can help to stop it.

Remind the children about the story of Alex, Matt and Farook. Say that even though Matt and Farook bullied Alex, they didn't bully other children all of the time. They had lots of friends who they played happily with. A lot of children sometimes bully other children. Sometimes those children who do the bullying have been bullied themselves. It makes them feel powerful to bully other children instead of feeling lonely and ashamed.

But this assembly is about how to help children stop bullying because children who are being bullied are usually desperately unhappy like Alex was. Ask a child to read out what Alex told Mr Butler about how he was feeling.

'I feel like nobody likes me and I feel so alone when I am at school. I feel different from all the others. I feel very unhappy. I hate coming to school because I am alone in the playground and I am scared of Matt and Farook. They take my crisps, tore my book and they put mud all over my trousers.'

Say that nobody wants any child in the school to feel like that and everybody is going to try and make sure that they don't.

Remind the children that it was because Kelly and Sherona told someone about the bullying that it stopped. Then ask them all to read the Say no to bullying poem out loud.

Now a number of children from each year group should show some of the work they have covered in class

Finish the assembly by asking the children and adults to think quietly about what they have learned. They should then think about what they can do to try and make sure that no one in the school feels bullied, lonely or sad. Ask them to think about what each one of them could do to help someone else feel happier. Play the music and ask the children to leave, taking their thoughts with them.