

LET US TALK ABOUT FEELINGS

advice for teachers, school social workers, and public health
nurses in lower- and upper secondary school



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ABOUT THE ADVICE COLLECTION

Background and themes

For a long time, Norway has had a lot of focus on mental health in schools. In the Norwegian curriculum called Knowledge Promotion from 2020, "health and life skills" was introduced as an interdisciplinary theme. The Norwegian Directorate of Education says that this theme should "give the pupils competence which promotes sound physical and mental health" and that the theme should "help the pupils learn to deal with success and failure, and personal and practical challenges in the best possible way". In order for these lessons to be useful for the pupils, adults in school need to know what the pupils want to learn and talk about, and how it can be done in good ways.

Participants

In this advice collection, advice from 232 pupils aged 16-23 is presented. The advice was collected during school visits to 5 upper secondary schools around the country - in Bærum, Tønsberg, Grimstad, Voss and Trondheim, in February-March 2023. The pupils attended education programs such as specialisation in general studies, technology and industrial subjects, sales, service and tourism, and health and childhood studies.

The pupils gave advice to teachers, public health nurses, and school social workers, and advice on how to work with different themes within mental health.

After the advice from the school visits was thematically organised and summarised, 27 Pros worked on further elaborating and explaining the advice. This was done during sessions in May-June 2023. In this advice collection, a distinction is made between advice from pupils, and quotes and explanations from the Pros.

The pupils were invited, and the sessions were conducted through the schools, and the Pros have consented to participation. The young people in the photos are over 16 years old and have given written consent to the photos.

Information

Before the visit, the pupils were informed that two adults from Changefactory would be visiting, and that they wanted to hear the pupils' advice for adults in school, and how to work with different themes within mental health. At the start of the school visit, the pupils were told that they could choose how much or little they wanted to tell, and what their answers would be used for. They were informed that all answers were anonymised and summarised together with answers from other pupils, and that no one would know what exactly they had said. The pupils were also shown a film of young people in Changefactory, who told them about the importance of the visit.

Conducting the sessions

The school visits consisted of a digital quantitative questionnaire and three different assignments. All the young people answered the digital quantitative questionnaire and took part in the first assignment. The assignment was to explain what young people in Norway might struggle with today. Afterwards, the pupils themselves chose whether they wanted to give advice to different adult roles in school (teachers, public health nurses, and school social workers), or whether they wanted to give advice on how to work with different themes within mental health in a class. In the first and third assignments, the pupils worked in groups of 2 to 5 people. For the second assignment, the pupils gave advice individually.

Feedback from the pupils was that it was good to participate in giving advice on this theme and that it was nice to have a practical session where they could "get out" things they were thinking about. Several said it was unusual to be asked about and talk about mental health, but that they wished there were more talks about feelings in school.

About the method

The advice collection was conducted using the Changemethod. This is a participatory research method used to collect in-depth knowledge for use in change work and equal collaboration with children and young people. It has been developed based on Participatory Learning and Action (PLA), and builds on responses from children and young people about how participating in research can feel safe. The Changemethod consists of a set of core values, working principles, and a number of specific tools, to collect experiences and advice directly from children and young people. The tools are creative and visual, to help make it safe, fun, and useful for many different children and young people.

Tools used

Digital quantitative questionnaire: The pupils scanned a QR code which sent them to an anonymous, digital quantitative survey with four questions with different options.

Posters: The pupils were divided into groups and given A3 posters, markers, and stickers. On the posters, the pupils could write and draw what young people might struggle with in Norway today.

Post-it notes on posters: The pupils could write advice on post-it notes, and hang them on posters representing different adult roles in school. The posters were hung around the classroom or auditorium used during the school visit.

Tool-making: The pupils could answer questions by filling out a piece of paper with everything needed to be able to work on a theme within mental health in a class.

Summarising the knowledge

The advice that was collected is sorted thematically. Explanations that were repeated the most by the young people are summarised in this advice collection as knowledge from children and young people. The language used is as similar as possible to the language the young people have used. The knowledge from children and young people is not linked to theory.

THANK YOU TO THE PUPILS

A THOUSAND THANKS TO ALL THE PUPILS WHO HAVE GIVEN ADVICE IN THIS PROJECT. THANK YOU FOR TAKING IT SO SERIOUSLY AND FOR GIVING YOUR WISE ADVICE FOR ADULTS AND HOW TO WORK WITH MENTAL HEALTH IN SCHOOL. WE HOPE YOUR ADVICE WILL BE USED BY ALL LOWER- AND UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOLS ACROSS NORWAY.

THANK YOU TO THE PROS

THANK YOU TO YOU WISE YOUNG PEOPLE WHO WORKED ON FURTHER EXPLAINING THE IMPORTANT ADVICE FROM PUPILS ACROSS NORWAY.

TO THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE ADULTS IN SCHOOL

Those of you who work in schools have an important opportunity to talk to all young people about their feelings. You can talk about things that young people can feel, painful and difficult things before it builds up inside young people. When you take the time to talk to pupils about this, it can make it easier for pupils in school and in life.

Knowledge from children and young people shows that when young people experience difficult, painful, scary, or hurtful feelings, it can be difficult to keep up in school and be present. When adults take the time to talk to pupils about their feelings, it can contribute to the pupils learning more in school.

KNOWLEDGE FROM
CHILDREN AND
YOUNG PEOPLE



KNOWLEDGE FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Which of these themes are most important for the school to dedicate time to talk about and work on?

- 153 Respect other people's boundaries and feelings
- 139 Feeling like you can't accomplish things
- 119 That everyone can experience and feel good and bad things
- 97 Setting boundaries for yourself
- 84 Recognising and putting feelings into words
- 43 Love and heartache

Which of these themes are most important for the school to dedicate time to talk about and work on?

- 147 Taking care of yourself even when life is difficult
- 130 Self-confidence and self-esteem
- 97 How to treat someone who is hurting
- 91 Loving and being proud of yourself
- 89 What to do when you're hurting inside
- 81 How to tell others when you're hurting inside

Which of these themes are most important that adults at school give pupils information about?

- 147 Help you can get if subjects in school are easy/difficult (extra help)
- 123 Who you can talk to if you have experienced something hurtful
- 112 Who AT school you can talk to about mental health
- 111 Who you can talk to about sexuality and gender
- 93 Who OUTSIDE school you can talk to about mental health
- 58 Who you can talk to about education and work

How do adults have to give this information?

- 141 Someone from outside the school comes to visit
- 136 Show films
- 131 Give a presentation
- 89 Hang posters around the school
- 79 Adults and pupils present together

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE IN NORWAY MIGHT STRUGGLE WITH

232 pupils made posters to explain what young people in Norway might struggle with today. They wrote words or sentences about different themes and could elaborate if they wished to.

The headlines here are the themes that were repeated on the posters. The bullet points under each headline are repeated explanations for why young people might struggle with this specifically.

Pressure

- pressure to do well in school
- pressure to drink alcohol
- pressure to sleep with someone
- body image pressure
- peer pressure

Stress

- a lot to do and lots of things happening
- school, work, family, friends

School

- the absence limit
- learning difficulties and joy of learning, difficult to find one's own way of learning
- overwhelming because of the pressure, expectations, and assessments
- bad grades make you feel stupid

Anxiety and fear

- social anxiety
- being afraid of what others think
- being afraid of not fitting in

Body and appearance

- insecurity and easy to compare yourself to others
- pressure to look good

Friends

- to make friends
- to keep in touch with friends
- to choose the "right" friends
- not having any friends

Sleep

- getting enough sleep and rest
- to wake up on time and getting to school

Self-esteem and confidence

- feeling that you are not good enough
- feeling that you do not look good enough
- feeling that you do not look the same
- feeling that you cannot accomplish things others can
- feeling that everything you do is wrong
- not being able to trust yourself

Depression

- stress and little sleep
- negative thoughts
- suicidal thoughts

Family and home

- having a good relationship with family
- arguing and conflict
- high expectations from family
- disappointment and scolding from adults at home

Loneliness

- feeling alone
- to feel left out
- to feel that you do not fit in
- to feel that you are different
- to feel that you are not accepted
- not being included or invited
- not having anyone to talk to

Money

- that things are too expensive
- that it is difficult to find a job

Feelings

- to talk about feelings
- to put feelings into words
- to deal with feelings

Food and eating

- eating too much
- eating too little
- body image pressure

Love

- to feel heartache
- not experiencing love in the same way as others
- to like and love yourself
- to have love for friends, partners, and family
- to be in a relationship

Social Media

- comparison
- FOMO (fear of missing out)
- pressure and influence
- mean comments
- addiction
- false expectations
- having thoughts that you are not good enough

Drugs

- someone around you who is abusing drugs
- overdoses/excessive consumption
- strict drug policies
- addicted to drugs to feel better or to forget

Sexuality

- not being able to express and be yourself
- feeling insecure and taboo
- being afraid that others will judge you
- to find out who you are

The future

- not knowing if there will be a planet anymore
- to know what you are going to/want to do after upper secondary school

SENTENCES FROM THE POSTERS

A lot of expectations and pressure. This can affect our mental health.

School can become overwhelming because of pressure, expectations, and assessments.

Negative thoughts can quickly get in the way of everyday life.

Overthinking - other people's thoughts about you, situations or something you have done, afraid of making mistakes or messing up, the future, life, clothes, when you are talking.

A lot of talk about love, hormones, and first crushes.

Fear in everyday life about fitting in and coping with everything that happens in life.

Dreading tests, presentations.

Talk about how you feel.

It is easy to compare yourself to others and have a bad self-image.

Boys "shouldn't" show weakness.

Not allowed to be yourself/different without being judged for being different from the "normal".

Afraid to be yourself because you are afraid of what others think and you are not good enough, not making friends and feeling lonely.

Pressure to do "good" in life: pressure from others to be "good enough" and have a "successful" life, but what really is a "good" life and a "successful" life?

Difficulty talking to others about how you feel.

QUOTES FROM THE PROS

There's so much school. I can't think about myself, I can't think about my friends. It becomes a lot. So I sleep little, get depressed, and argue with my mum.

I don't know what teachers are like in other places, but they stand like a shadow behind you all the time. If you ask for a postponement, you have to have a very good reason. You can't just get sick the day before.

There's a lot of stress at school. And the absence limit and that stress. I'm over the absence limit and there's nothing I can do about it.

FOR ADULTS IN SCHOOL

163 pupils chose to give advice to different adults in school: public health nurses, school social workers, and teachers. Pupils were asked what can make it safe to talk with public health nurses and school social workers, advice on what public health nurses and school social workers can do so they can help pupils the best way possible, and which sentences teachers can say that can make it more or less safe for pupils.

Posters were hung around the classroom or auditorium used for the school visit. The pupils wrote advice on post-it notes and hung them on posters with advice for different adult roles in school.

The pupils were also asked who are good role models in mental health today and why, as inspiration for teachers and other adults in school.

Summarised answers from the pupils were that good mental health role models:

- talk about things that are difficult
- inspire, motivate, and are engaged
- are themselves, are open
- seem kind
- spread joy and a good mood
- give advice that helps

In this part of the advice collection, advice is presented to public health nurses, school social workers, and teachers. The advice is answers that were repeated by pupils in the classes. Beneath the advice, groups of Pros explain why they think the advice is important, and what the difference can be if adults use this advice.

Advice for public health nurses

What public health nurses can do to make it safe to talk to them

- do not share with others anything the pupil has said or done, without having spoken to the pupil about it first
- show that they want to understand
- listen and show interest in what the pupil says
- be open, do not judge what the pupil says
- smile and be in a good mood
- be nice to the pupils
- give advice and help

Why it is important that public health nurses do these things

If public health nurses share any information with others without having spoken to the pupils about it first, pupils may lose trust in the public health nurse and other adults. This can lead to pupils not being able to tell the most important things. If pupils notice that public health nurses want to understand, it becomes easier to explain and talk about the painful and difficult things. Then they can find out more. If public health nurses listen and show interest in what the pupil is saying, it is easier for the pupils to tell more and talk to them multiple times. It is important that public health nurses are friendly to pupils so that pupils can feel that they can go to them.

What public health nurses can do to make it unsafe to talk to them

- do not take what the pupil says seriously
- judge what the pupil says
- share information from the pupil with others, without talking to the pupil about it first
- not understanding the pupil, or not seeming to care
- appearing angry, serious, or strict
- not showing that they are listening or seeming uninterested

Why it is important that public health nurses do NOT do these things

If pupils feel that the public health nurse does not take what pupils say seriously or judges them, it can feel unsafe to go to and talk to the public health nurse. If public health nurses seem angry, serious, or strict, pupils might think that they are the ones who have done something wrong, and it can be scary to talk to public health nurses.

What public health nurses can do to help pupils the best way possible

- be easy to get in contact with
- talk to the pupils often
- show that they listen to the pupils when they talk
- appear open and non-judgemental
- adapt the help to each individual pupil
- say that they will help the pupil
- ask the pupil questions
- spend a good amount of time with each pupil

Why it is important that public health nurses do these things

If public health nurses are easy to get hold of, pupils know who they can go to if they need to talk, and more people may dare to go to the public health nurse. If the public health nurse talks to the pupils often and says they want to help, the pupils can feel that the public health nurse cares and wants to help. It can make it easier to go to them. All pupils are different and need different things. It is therefore important that public health nurses adapt to each pupil.

Advice for school social workers

What school social workers can do to make it safe to talk to them

- smile, be positive, and be in a good mood
- be curious about the pupil and interested in talking to them
- show that they listen when the pupil talks
- show that they care about the pupil
- be open and respect the pupils for who they are
- relate to young people and be laid-back
- get to know the pupils, talk to them

Why it is important that school social workers do these things

If school social workers are smiling, positive and in a good mood, it is easier to talk to them and it feels safer to do so. If pupils feel that school social workers care and are interested in talking to them, it is easier to talk about things that are difficult. It is important that school social workers are laid-back so that the pupils do not feel stressed when talking to them. Pupils can see from their body language whether school social workers are interested and care, when they smile and are engaged. If school social workers get to know the pupils and talk to them often, for example during breaks, the pupils know they have someone to talk to if they need to.

What school social workers can do to make it unsafe to talk to them

- sharing information that the pupil has told, without having spoken to the pupil about it first
- ask too many questions or take up too much space
- do not get to know the pupil well enough
- seem upset or angry
- interrupt the pupil
- come up with answers to things they know nothing about
- ignore the pupils, make the pupils not feel seen
- not showing that they are listening, or not seeming to care

Why it is important that school social workers do NOT do these things

If school social workers share information without talking to the pupil first, it can break the pupils trust. It can also make it unsafe to talk to and going to, the school social worker again. If school social workers ask too many questions or take up too much space, the pupil might feel pressured or unsafe. This might prevent them from being able to tell honestly. It can also be unsafe to approach the school social worker if they seem upset or angry. If they do not show that they are listening or do not seem to care, the pupil might feel like they are not important or have nothing to say.

What school social workers can do to help pupils the best way possible

- talk to all pupils
- be available and present
- listen to the pupil
- show that they are interested and take initiative
- help the pupil, make suggestions for solutions
- tell them who they are and what they can help with
- include pupils and create a good atmosphere

Why it is important that school social workers do these things

If school social workers talk to all pupils and are available, pupils can more easily go to them to talk and tell, if they want to. When pupils see that they are trying to come up with solutions and suggestions as well, pupils can sense that the school social worker wants to help. It is important to include everyone and create a good atmosphere so that all pupils can feel seen and welcomed.

Advice for teachers

Talk nicely about mistakes

Sentences teachers can say that can make it safer

"It's okay to make mistakes"

"Nothing is incorrect"

"You can learn from your mistakes"

"You're allowed to make mistakes"

"It's okay to say the wrong thing"

Quotes:

It might make it easier to answer, even if you're unsure.

Then it's ok to make mistakes, that mistakes happen, but that it becomes easier to correct mistakes.

It's good to say because it can create safety and room for error.

It becomes easier to say things in the classroom then, because you aren't afraid of saying the wrong thing.

People can dare to talk in front of the class.

Say kind things

Sentences teachers can say that can make it safer

"You do this well"

"You're good, and good enough as you are"

"You are all good enough"

"How clever you are"

"Good work"

"I see that you are doing your best"

"You've worked very well today"

"You've done really well"

Quotes:

Feel seen, you feel unique and like an individual, not "one of many".

It becomes safer when the teacher sees that each pupil is doing the best they can.

You feel you can accomplish things in the lessons.

It can be safer in class when teachers see the pupil for who they are.

They can be more involved in the lessons because the pupils feel that they're managing it in a good way.

You get a better learning environment where pupils want to learn and you get a sense of achievement.

Give motivation

Sentences teachers can say that can make it safer

"You don't have to figure out everything in life now, you have plenty of time"

"Believe in yourselves"

"Have faith that you can do it"

"It's the effort that counts, not grades"

"You don't have to, but you should try"

Quotes:

Because they see you as a person and you can feel seen. One can feel a bit of the opposite of what is being said.

You feel that there is not as much pressure at school.

Everyone can perceive it differently, but it can have a positive effect.

Greet each pupil

Sentences teachers can say that can make it safer

"Hello, good morning, nice to see you"

"Good morning, nice pupils"

Quotes:

Then you feel that the teacher cares about you and is looking forward to seeing us.

You feel welcome in the classroom and if they have inspections you feel welcome in the school.

There will be more of a good feeling and you will smile more and the pupils will be happier.

The class can get in a better mood.

See the pupils

Sentences teachers can say that can make it safer

"I'm here if you need to talk"

"Glad you came today"

"How are you?"

Quotes:

You feel safer because you feel that the teacher sees you as an individual.

You feel more welcome, a positive thing to come.

You feel seen by the teacher when the teacher says that to each individual pupil and it can help the teacher to help the pupil when they show that they're present.

You feel seen and wanted in the classroom.

If this is said 1 to 1, this can feel safe, but if it's said out loud, you can feel very unsafe.

Pupils can dare to talk to the teacher about things that are difficult or that bother them.

They can feel safe that there's someone you can talk to.

Tests/grades

Sentences teachers say that can make it UNSAFE

"Many did very well on these tests, others did not"

"You all got bad grades and need to improve"

"A few did well"

"You did poorly on the test"

"I expect a lot from everyone on this test"

Quotes:

They set too high expectations.

It becomes stressful and you feel really pressured.

Then you feel that you're not good enough, it's easier if the teacher sees that you've done the best you can.

It increases pressure and makes it unsafe for pupils.

You can lose motivation and feel absolutely terrible.

It becomes unsafe and you don't tell the teacher if you struggle in the subject.

The pupils begin to compare themselves to each other.

Pressure

Sentences teachers say that can make it UNSAFE

"You need to pay more attention in class"

"You need to work better in class"

"You need to try harder"

Quotes:

You feel like you're not accomplishing anything.

Feedback is nice, but it feels wrong when you do the best you can. I start to wonder if there's something wrong with me when I don't get it right.

You feel you can't accomplish anything in class.

You may lose motivation and feel attacked.

You can start to dislike the teacher or the subjects.

The pupils start to bully the pupil that the teacher talks about because they think of them as bad at something.

Wrong or stupid

Sentences teachers say that can make it UNSAFE

"That's wrong"

"That's not right"

"You're stupid"

"Are you stupid?"

Quotes:

You might feel misunderstood and bullied.

You can start to feel stupid. Because then you go around feeling stupid, when teachers say it, it becomes uncomfortable to trust them when they say that.

You don't feel like talking in class for fear of saying something wrong.

The class might lose trust in the teacher.

Then you start behaving like that.

The class might start laughing at the pupil who said the wrong thing.

Threats

Sentences teachers say that can make it UNSAFE

"If you don't behave, we won't do this"

"You can't leave until you've finished everything"

"You have to answer this, otherwise you'll fail"

"Do better or fail"

Quotes:

Can create pressure on their own work and feel bad about it.

Everyone can feel unsafe around the teacher.

People might start laughing and bully the pupil because the teacher says they are bad at something.

Presentation

Sentences teachers say that can make it UNSAFE

"You have to give a presentation in front of the class"

"You have to give a presentation in front of everyone"

"It isn't dangerous"

"Why don't you dare to present in front of the class?"

Quotes:

Because you feel pressure.

You might feel weak for not daring to do it.

You might feel pressured to do something you don't want to do.

The class might start to pressure you into doing things.

it becomes safer
when the teacher
sees that each pupil
is doing the best
they can



TOOLS: PUPILS' SUGGESTIONS FOR HOW TO WORK WITH MENTAL HEALTH

How the tools were made

69 of the pupils chose to make suggestions for how to work with different themes within mental health in school. In groups of between 2 and 5, they first selected a theme and then made suggestions for how the theme could be worked with.

The pupils were asked questions about:

- what the most important thing about the tools is
- what pupils need to know in advance
- how the tools can be introduced
- what kind of equipment is needed
- what the tools are about
- how the tools are to be conducted
- advice to the adult who will use the tool

After summarising the suggestions, Pros in Changefactory gave input and further developed the suggestions into finished tools.

Safety is essential

The tools can be used directly in classrooms across Norway. They can also be used by teachers and other adults in school, as inspiration for asking their own classes or groups of pupils, about how they want to work with mental health.

The adult who is going to facilitate the tools has to have a good view of children and have worked on making it safe in the class first. This will determine whether it feels safe for the pupils to use the tools.

Here follows:

- view of children and values
- advice for safety
- four tools

View of children, values, and advice for safety are taken from the tool booklet LIFE SKILLS (Changefactory, 2019).

View of children and values

Experiences and advice collected from several thousand children across the country over the past decade have been summarised in the surveys into a view of children and some values. Children ask that all adults who work with children are trained to meet them with these. Many pupils in schools have expressed that they quickly know how the adults view them and meet them and this is crucial for learning, safety and thriving in the classroom. For children to experience the adults as professionals in a good way, the school management has to set aside time for the adults to practise common child views and values.

View of children

Children and young people have a lot of knowledge about their lives and are just as valuable as adults. They do the best they can, based on how they're doing. They need love, they need to be believed in and taken seriously.

Children have suggested these four values as the most important

Openness

Here, openness is about how the adults at school share about themselves and their lives. This is important so that as many of the pupils as possible can feel safe with the adults and then can talk about themselves more easily. The adults are honest about what will happen at school. They're also honest and direct with each pupil about what they think are the pupil's strengths and challenges - and about the adults' opportunities to help. Honesty and love are connected, even bad news has to be given with a lot of warmth and kindness. If an adult thinks about telling parents or other professionals something a pupil has said or done, this can never be done without the adult first talking to the pupil about this and making an agreement about how it can be done.

Collaboration

Here, collaboration is about how the adults at school consciously collaborate closely with their pupils. They know that each of the pupils has a lot of knowledge about how they can learn and thrive. The adults invite pupils to talk about things that are important for the pupils. They understand the importance of making it safe enough for pupils to dare to tell what's important. The pupils get real responsibility and influence when the adults dare to include them in decisions. The pupils have a say in deciding working methods and topics they think are important to learn about and how adults and pupils can give feedback to each other in good ways.

Love

Here, love is about how the adults meet the pupils with human warmth, through friendly and warm body language, warm eyes and with a tone of voice and words that are perceived as safe. A main piece of advice from pupils is that if adults have a lot of warmth "at their core", being firm and setting boundaries will feel more safe and effective. Not all children experience enough human warmth at home. Schools can contribute here. The adults show that they can tolerate the pupils even when they're uncertain, scared or sad and show this through restlessness, rudeness or anger. A main piece of advice from pupils, is that the wisest way to stop what is often called bad behaviour, is with love.

Humility

Here, humility is about how the adults listen both with their heart and head, and with depth in order to understand the pupils. When pupils open up about something bad, they need adults to react naturally, with honest words about how the pupil shouldn't have experienced this or felt that way - or with tears. Natural reactions can help the pupil understand that they have experienced something very wrong and that they are now being taken very seriously. Being humble towards children also means being able to admit it when you, as an adult, have said or done something wrong. It can contribute to a lot of safety within the pupil and regain respect for the adult. Humble adults can both thank children and apologise to children.

Advice for making it feel safe

The teacher puts words to their own feelings

Pupils may have bad habits where they whisper or give each other mean looks. Some people may have a body language when they're insecure that makes others laugh. If looks are sent around the circle or someone laughs or is agitated while someone else is talking, it can quickly become very unsafe. The adult then has to, in a nice and warm way, stop for a bit and pause the room. With a warm voice and without wanting to accuse anyone, the adult can say that they feel a little uneasy or insecure in the circle now and can ask what it's about. The adult can for instance say: "I feel that it's becoming unsafe here now, can you tell me what's happening?" or "I don't think anyone wants anything bad, but I think it's a little uncomfortable when someone whispers."

When the adult uses "I-language" and tells what noise and whispering does to them, it can be easier for pupils to understand how it can feel to others, and it can help them put into words how things feel for themselves. When this is put into words, many pupils become more focused. If the pupils know that if someone starts laughing, this will be stopped, the pupils become both safer and braver. There may then be more people who dare to share more than they usually do.

When feelings come out

No one can know how a child feels inside by looking at what children do or how they behave. If adults focus on the child's actions, the important questions about what children feel inside may not be asked. Knowledge from children tells us that the important thing is to get to the feelings children carry, and not to focus on getting rid of unwanted behaviour.

In conversations with each other, adults may talk about children who do bad things, are rude or bully others, as bullies or children with behavioural problems. Pupils' behaviour can be given the wrong attention and reactions. Children are also often told off, reprimanded, expelled, given consequences or punished for their behaviour. Children can also be rewarded for quitting.

Behaviour is a language

If children feel uneasy, insecurity, sadness, fear, inadequacy, alienation or other difficult feelings, they can express themselves with different types of "language" or expressions. Emotions can be expressed in many not so charming ways. Children can say things and do actions that can be perceived as unsafe, hurtful or scary both to other children and to adults in school. Some may also try to become "invisible", pretend that everything is fine, be extra cheerful or extra clever. All of these can be signs that children are feeling difficult emotions. Pupils want adults to think that behaviour is a language, that adults become curious about what children are trying to say rather than focusing on the action itself.

Children want to be understood and stopped

A main piece of advice from children is that children WANT help to stop them from saying or doing mean things, being rude or bully others. BUT it has to be done with warmth and understanding that the child actually doesn't want to do this. Children have to be helped to find out what the difficult feelings are about and solutions to how they can feel better.

Safe beginnings

The class LIFE SKILLS should take place in a circle, where all the pupils see each other and talk in turn. This is a main piece of advice from the qualitative surveys and also from testing in different classrooms. No one sits behind anyone, everyone can see everyone, and it becomes safer. It's usually a good idea to start the class LIFE SKILLS with an "easy" round in the circle, where everyone shares something about themselves, something they're involved in, something they like, favourite food or something they like to do, etc. Remember to not ask about things that can create envy or competition, like: "What did you do during the weekend?". Instead, ask about something nice from the weekend. Going around the circle like this regularly can become a good routine that creates positive expectations and provides safety and a sense of community. When everyone has heard their own voice out loud, early in the class, it becomes easier to participate further in the conversation and easier to avoid restlessness and uncertainty.

Safe endings

It may be a good idea to set aside some time at the end for something fun or nice, so the pupils can leave the class LIFE SKILLS with good feelings. But it may be important to check with the pupils whether this is appropriate. If feelings or memories and things that are painful have come up, the focus at the end shouldn't necessarily be on something fun. But in any case, the end needs to give the pupils strength.

Crying and sadness can be contagious. Therefore it's advisable for the adult to have a little plan for how the pupils can recover. If many are crying, the adult could say that now many need to be comforted and perhaps we need a while for comforting each other? Those who aren't crying can help comfort those who are.

Something fun or nice at the end could be:

- A little game that creates smiles and/or energy
- Class hug (everyone gets a hug from everyone)
- Squeeze snake (stand in a circle, close your eyes, hold hands, send a squeeze via your hands)
- Chinese Whispers
- A good warm song
- Go around the circle and say something that was good/instructive

At the end, the adult can ask if anyone wants to chat for a bit after the class. Children may have thoughts and feelings that it would be nice and necessary to talk about further. This can be checked with the pupils at the end. There may also be something that has come up, that adults need to address further. In that case, it may be safest for the adult to make an agreement directly with the person or persons involved.

4 tools created by pupils

1 LOVE AND BE PROUD OF YOURSELF

Goal: everyone is comfortable, loves themselves more, and gains better self-confidence

Equipment: notebook, drawing materials or pens, balls, popsicles

Implementation:

- Before themes are to be worked with, the adult can tell the pupils that it can be difficult to love and be proud of oneself and say that they can think about whether there is something they are proud of that they have done or managed to accomplish
- Pupils get something to write on. They can think by themselves or write down something they like about themselves
- The pupils sit in small groups and throw a ball between themselves. Each time the ball is thrown, the pupil that is throwing sends a compliment to the person they are throwing the ball to
- The pupils make a list of what can make them proud or what you can do to show yourself love. One, two, or three pupils can do this together
- The whole class finishes together. The pupils who want to can show their list to the rest of the class. In the end, everyone gets a popsicle

Tips for adults:

- Say that this is not something to make fun of. These are real feelings and people
- Encourage with positive words
- Do not hint that it is not okay to feel something
- Clearly communicate what is not okay to say, write, or do to each other
- Do not force someone who does not want to join, but inspire, give encouragement, and courage

2 SELF-CONFIDENCE AND SELF-ESTEEM

Goal: strengthen a sense of achievement and self-esteem

Equipment: pen and paper, screen to show a film

Implementation:

- Before starting, the adult can say something about the fact that it is very common to feel insecure sometimes. The adult can also say that it is important to not joke about insecurities or when someone is feeling insecure
- At the start, the adult can show a film about self-confidence and self-esteem, and/or ask everyone to think of something they like about themselves. If there is going to be talk about something that each person likes about themselves, it has to be explained that everyone takes this seriously
- Different suggestions for activities that can be done:
 - Attach a piece of paper or something like it to the back of all the pupils. Everyone has to write something positive on each others back. Encourage the pupils to write something unique about each person, and not superficial things. The other pupils should not know who writes what
 - The dance game, exercises that challenge your comfort zone so that you can also feel a sense of achievement and better self-confidence and self-esteem
 - The pupils write down what they are good at
 - Grab the mic, then you have to share of yourself and have a bit of fun with everyone and everything
 - Write down something that you like about yourself

- Everyone finishes together and make sure that you do something that creates a good atmosphere. Encourage pupils to say kind things to others for the rest of the day and think out loud together with them about what it will take to make this happen
- At the very end, you can have a team activity that everyone can help conducting, for example, the playground game tag

Tips for adults:

- Show openness to the themes
- Let the pupils talk openly
- Do not focus on individuals
- Be engaged
- Use humour, in a kind way
- Be on the pupils' team
- Do not be shy (then it gets awkward)
- Be energetic and know what you are talking about
- Do not take yourself too seriously
- Do not be judgmental

3 FEELING LIKE YOU CAN'T ACCOMPLISH SOMETHING

Goal: to awaken thoughts, feel a sense of achievement and talk about challenges

Equipment: -

Implementation:

- Before you are going to work on this theme, the adult can tell the pupils that feeling like they cannot accomplish something can have different reasons
- The adult can share a little about themselves in the beginning, both some nice things and something they did not do very well
- At the start, the adult can have a small presentation about feeling like you cannot accomplish things
- In groups of three to five, the pupils can talk about the feeling of not being able to accomplish something. Everyone should be in a group with someone they feel safe with. The groups have to feel as safe as possible, so that the pupils can talk about the theme, without being afraid that someone will judge them
- At the end, the adult can give information about the different types of help you can get if you feel you cannot accomplish something, who can help, and helplines you can call. The adult can say that they can help the pupils contact someone

Tips for adults:

- Show understanding for the pupils
- Speak in a natural way
- Do not force pupils to answer
- Do not laugh at, or make fun of pupils
- Share tips on how to feel a sense of achievement

4 LOVE AND HEARTACHE

Goal: respect, honesty and understanding

Equipment: a screen to watch a short film, chocolate or other sweets, candles, pillows and blankets

Implementation:

- Before the theme is going to be worked with, the adult can tell the pupils what the theme is, so the pupils can prepare questions
- At the start, the adult talks to the pupils and introduces the theme in a positive way. It is important that the adult says that everyone can feel heartache, that no feelings are wrong and that love is good, but it can also be painful. The adult has to say that it is nothing to joke about
- The pupils watch a short film about love and/or heartache. They sit on cushions or blankets and eat chocolate or some other sweets. The teacher can light candles if possible
- After the film, the adult and the pupils talk together about what they have seen. The pupils can give each other tips about heartache and what to do if a friend is going through it
- At the end, they can say goodbye in a nice way, maybe by giving each other a hug, for those who want to

Tips for adults:

- Listen carefully to the pupils
- Acknowledge, do not dig too deeply
- Have a relaxing tone
- Be kind, but fair and honest
- Remember that as an adult, you cannot know what is right from the pupils perspective
- Treat all questions with respect

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PUPILS HAVE
RIGHTS

PUPILS HAVE RIGHTS

Since 2015, Changefactory has carried out more than 10 qualitative surveys on the topic of school. Pupils across the country have shared experiences and advice. An answer that has been repeated is that when something is going to be decided for a pupil, it must be done in collaboration with the pupil. Then there is a much greater chance that what is decided will be right for them.

When asked what is needed for pupils to experience being collaborated with, many answer that they need to know enough, talk to someone they trust or bring someone they trust with them in conversations. Many also answer that they need to know what will happen next with the information they share with adults. Although many pupils do not know their rights, there is a great similarity between what the pupils think is important - and the rights they have, when something is going to be decided.

Pupils under the age of 18 have rights according to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and according to Norwegian special laws.

Pupils over the age of 18 have rights according to other human rights conventions and according to Norwegian special laws.

The UNCRC applies to all children up to the age of 18, in all systems. The UNCRC was made Norwegian law in 2003, through section 2 of the Human Rights Act. Some of the rights in the UNCRC are included in Norwegian special laws and some are included in § 104 of the Norwegian Constitution. The UNCRC must be used together with the special laws. The Education Act is one of the important special laws for children. If the Education Act says something other than the UNCRC, what is stated in the UNCRC has the most weight.

Children have procedural rights according to the UNCRC

The UNCRC gives children procedural rights. In all actions and decisions affecting children, the best interests of the child must be a fundamental consideration. They describe how children should be met, in all actions and decisions concerning them, before assessing what is in the best interests of the child. The procedural rights are the consideration of the child's best interests, the right to information, the right to speak freely, and the right to respect for one's privacy.

The child's opinion must be a central factor in the assessment of what is in the child's best interest. In the new Education Act §10-1, the best interests of the pupil must be a fundamental consideration and the rule must be interpreted in accordance with the best interests of the child according to the UNCRC art. 3 and the Norwegian Constitution Section 104. The pupil must be given enough information, as a prerequisite for them to be able to express themselves freely and safely. An assessment of the pupil's best interests cannot be made without the pupil first having received sufficient and adapted information, and having freely and safely expressed their opinions.

In addition, pupils' right to privacy must be ensured by pupils, before conversations, receiving information about what information from the pupil can be used for, and who may have access to this information. If an adult considers sharing information about what the pupil has said or done, the pupil must, as a starting point, be given information about this and be allowed to express their views on this, in a way that is safe for the pupil. The adult must then assess whether it would be in the pupil's best interests to share the information.

The state has a duty to ensure that school staff and services that work with children and young people, know about children's procedural rights and know how to respect and secure them in practice.

CHANGEFACTORY

KNOWLEDGE CENTRE

Why knowledge directly from children?

Children and young people have to feel that school, kindergarten, support services, police and the legal system are safe and useful for them. Children and young people all across Norway have experiences from meeting these systems and advice on how they can be the best possible. Authorities, professionals and students often lack this knowledge from children and young people, when frameworks and what constitutes good practice are to be determined, nationally and locally. Therefore, it must be brought in to a much greater extent and, together with other knowledge, be part of the knowledge base, in order to develop and ensure the quality of good systems for children and young people.

More than 10 years of collecting knowledge

For more than 10 years, Changefactory (CF) has systematically collected experiences and advice from children and young people about how they experience school, kindergarten, support services, the police and the legal system. In 2017, the Prime Minister opened Changefactory Knowledge Centre, to collect knowledge from children and young people about the public systems. As far as we know, there are few knowledge centres in Europe whose main purpose is to gather and disseminate knowledge directly from children and young people about the systems they are in. CF seeks collaboration with similar organisations.

Participatory and practice-oriented method

In order to collect, systematise and disseminate summarised experiences and advice from children and young people, a participatory and practice-oriented method is used. CF has called it the Changemethod. The Changemethod has been developed in close collaboration with children and young people. It greatly considers that children have the right to express their opinion, in ways that feel safe for them. The method consists of process descriptions and tools that help many different children and young people participate. It builds closely on a participatory method used in action research, called Participatory Learning and Action (PLA).

Safety is most important

The experiences and advice are collected directly from children and young people in sessions or interviews. The sessions are organised with an emphasis on ensuring that they are experienced as safe as possible for the children and young people who participate. The adults who facilitate are, among other things, trained by children to meet children and young people with openness and human warmth. This is based on the main findings from children about what adults have to be like, in order for children to be able to tell honestly.

Experiences and advice are summarised

Experiences and advice from the sessions are documented in transcripts and other written and visual documentation. The data is summarised and systematised. No links are made to theory. Experiences and advice that are repeated by many children and young people in many places across the country, become the main answers. We call this knowledge directly from children.

Children and young people present

The knowledge from children is presented in reports, films, podcasts, books and online. Participants in the qualitative surveys can also be invited, as pros, in communication and professional development. The pros present knowledge directly from children to politicians, national authorities, professionals and students.

Selected publications



Life skills

Tools for the class LIFE SKILLS, a talking-class where children and young people get to practice putting feelings into words



Safe in class

Tools for a safe and good learning environment in grade 1.-10.



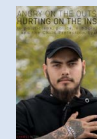
Talking safely in school

Advice from 1962 children on what has to be done for children to be able to tell what's most important



Talking kindly

Advice from 900 children on how public health nurses can make it safe for children to talk to them



Angry on the outside, hurting on the inside

Advice from 101 children on how to meet children and young people who are angry and use violence



Short way to friendships

Advice from 210 young people on how pupils and adults in school can meet children who are new in Norway in kind ways

