

## Safe teaching and learning guidance

As with any PSHE or other lesson which includes reflection on and consideration of behaviours, it is essential to establish and maintain a safe environment for learning that:

- enables students to share ideas and absorb information without judgement
- sets an expectation for mature responses
- helps teachers confidently manage activities and discussion.

This can all be achieved by using the guidelines below.

### 1. Create and revisit guidelines for a safe and respectful space

Each lesson starts with a slide outlining suggestions for how students can contribute to a safe and respectful learning environment:



## Guidelines for a safe and respectful space

<b>Be kind</b> Respect everyone's views and perspectives. Show appreciation and support.	<b>Ask questions</b> Be curious. Can you expand on someone else's point? What questions would you ask?
<b>Contribute</b> Be brave and ready to answer or have a go. Everyone has a chance to speak.	<b>No judgement</b> We don't judge or put anyone down, either verbally or nonverbally.
<b>Listen</b> Be respectful and listen to others. When one person is speaking, everyone should listen.	<b>Remember</b> You don't have to say anything if you don't want to and you don't have to talk about yourself.

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It is suggested that you review these guidelines with students in detail at the start of the first BrainWaves lesson you teach, then revisit/reinforce these guidelines for each subsequent lesson. These guidelines should be discussed collaboratively with students – this will help them feel ownership and make them more likely to abide by them.

### 2. Encourage questions and respond to them safely

Encouraging questions should be integral to PSHE lessons: this helps provide unknown information and also helps challenge or dispel misinformation or preconceptions. Some students may not feel confident asking questions in front of others, so use techniques such as an anonymous question box or post-it notes, as well as welcoming questions within the class. This can also help you prepare responses to more challenging or sensitive questions, but also to identify any potential safeguarding issues or disclosures if they occur. If



possible, have the question box or a post-it note 'wall' available at all times in the classroom, so students can add to it out of lesson time, or without others' knowledge.

At times you may need to think about the best time to respond to particular questions, whether this is in front of the whole class, or separately on a 1:1 basis. In addition you should consider your own reactions and responses to students' questions, ensuring that these don't devalue or imply judgement (act on the basis of 'there is no such thing as a stupid question').

### **3. Be sensitive to personal background and lived experiences**

There may be students in your class who are currently experiencing distressing mental health situations, who are triggered by the discussion of sensitive topics, or have living situations that are less than ideal. Sensitivity is important even if you are not aware of students' personal circumstances: working on the basis that there is at least one person who may be vulnerable ensures safe delivery for all.

In addition, students should not feel under any pressure or expectation to discuss their own circumstances or experiences or be judged for their behaviours or choices. Reiterate to your class that they can choose to share personal experiences if they want, but no-one should feel under pressure to do so.

### **4. Using scenarios**

Asking students to consider scenarios or case studies, rather than their own situations, allows them to consider issues objectively, even if they have experienced or are experiencing something similar. It also helps them to consider the advice they could give someone else in a particular situation, which they may then feel able to apply to themselves. The activities in these lessons all distance situations from students, but you can adjust the scenarios to make them more relevant or applicable to your own cohort if necessary.

### **5. Work within your school's safeguarding and confidentiality policies and procedures**

This is especially important if a student makes a disclosure to you about their mental health. If you are not sure of or need an update on procedures, seek advice from your Designated Safeguarding Lead, or contact the NSPCC on 0808 800 5000.

### **6. Signposting to information and support**

Each lesson includes signposts to external information and support, but you should also include some way to direct students to sources of additional information or support (including named adults) specifically within your school.

You can also encourage students to share any additional information or reading they might have found for themselves, if they think it will support and be of interest to others.