

Our class is on Whatsapp. And we write our own chat rules!

10-14

SUBJECT(S)

Civic education - Digital citizenship

KEY COMPETENCES

- Communication in mother tongue
- Digital competence
- Learning to learn
- Social and civic competences

TOPIC(S)

Simple rules for learning how to use smartphones, especially the class chat group, in a correct way: pupils will have to create their own rules in order to have a positive experience and avoid situations of cyber-bullying.

PRINCIPLE(S) OF THE MANIFESTO OF NON-HOSTILE COMMUNICATION

3. Words shape the way i think
6. Words have consequences
10. Silence says something too

KEY QUESTIONS

- What kind of language do we use in our chat group or in the classroom?
- How can we respect the different points of view?
- How can we respect the freedom, dignity and uniqueness of each person?
- How do we manage online and offline conflicts?
- Can rules be helpful? Which rules do we want to play by?

SOURCES

- » The Manifesto of non-hostile communication
- » The Manifesto of non-hostile and inclusive communication
- » Video "Cyberbullying - How to Avoid Cyber Abuse" (available on the Smile&Learn YouTube channel - English at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dMdKmHjpgFk&ab_channel=SmileandLearn-English)

MATERIALS

- Personal smartphones
- A digital device connected to the internet (preferably a computer) to access the materials and enter the dedicated Google Classroom

DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY

Introduction (20 minutes)

The teacher introduces the topic by reading the Manifesto of non-hostile communication, then shows the video "Cyberbullying - How to Avoid Cyber Abuse"* (listed in the sources section) to the class.

*(this video is also the object of the worksheet "A video to address cyber-bullying": if you already worked on it, you can move straight to the next activity or replay the video without further comment to take up the topic).

Once the introduction is over, there follows a moment of reflection about the Manifesto of non-hostile communication as a "compass".

Everything we write in a chat is just as if we said it in person: we should never forget that behind a mobile screen there is a person, who may feel happy -or sad- because of what we write.

The Internet is virtual, but the people that meet and communicate through the Internet are real. Everything you write, say or do on the Internet via your mobile phone, and reaches real people, is fully real. (Virtual is real)

Sometimes, though, we fail to realize that everything that we say has consequences. We almost forget it.

Whether we say or write them, our words affect others: they can make people smile, feel happy, or become sad or angry.

It is therefore important to reflect carefully on what we want to say, otherwise we can hurt other people. Even if you are joking, you might bring the person who reads your message down.

You have definitely heard the term "cyber-bullying" before.

But what does that mean? This term is used to describe a behaviour that hurts or offends someone through posting.

It may start as a joke or prank, but in the end it hurts anyway. This topic is very well conveyed in the video: think about everything Hannah read and saw in her chats! (Words have consequences)

Sometimes, silence is the best path to follow: it enables us to listen carefully, to take time before speaking our mind, to answer without saying anything. (Silence says something too).

Activity (40 minutes)

Discussion and brainstorming - Let's start working :-)

The teacher asks the class if it has its own chat group.

After the class has watched the video, the teacher leads the debate by suggesting that it would be important to observe some rules even in the class chat group, just like the ones that we observe while speaking in person (e.g. respecting turns to speak, not speaking over others, etc.).

Otherwise, conversations may become unpleasant and cause arguments.

The teacher asks the pupils by what means do they communicate: do they just text each other?

Do they send voice messages? Do they post photos or videos? How often? If there are any pupils who do not have WhatsApp, how are they involved in discussions?

It is important to start with rules which may help everyone to express themselves by respecting others.

The following questions serve to stimulate the discussion:

- Which kind of message can make us happy, angry, or sad?
- What can we do in order to avoid making someone uncomfortable for any reason?
- It is important to start with ourselves: what are, in my opinion, the characteristics of a correct/well-written message, both in terms of content and form?

Please note: it is important to define the concept of "correct", that is, it not only must respect everyone's individual sensitivity, but it must also allow to best express what one wants to say.

Here are some examples to stimulate reflection.

Writing everything in capital letters implies that the message is being "yelled"; do you really mean this?

Observe <<online silence>> hours: you are not allowed to write after half past 9 pm, until the next morning.

Writing down the rules

Each pupil will make their own contribution based on the following reference areas: each contribution will be included in a document shared on Google Drive.

These areas help focusing on the topics on which to base the activity:

- Hours

e.g. observe <<online silence>> hours (you are not allowed to write after half past 9 PM, until the next morning, etc.).

- Grammar of online conversations

e.g. writing everything in capital letters implies that the message is being "yelled".

- Using the chat for educational purposes

e.g. asking about homework.

- Sharing

e.g. one must post photos and videos only with the consent of the people involved.

- Tone of messages

e.g. inserting emojis to best express the emotions conveyed in the message (e.g. laughing emoji for a joke). They help conveying the non-verbal and paraverbal components of the messages.

- Judgments and insults

e.g. always keep in mind that "an insult is not an argument", and that "ideas can be discussed, people must be respected". ;-)

- Respecting and involving classmates who haven't WhatsApp

e.g. don't forget classmates who haven't WhatsApp, forward all the communication regarding the whole class, thus avoiding them to feel left out.

During this creative phase, the teacher remains available to the pupils for tips and suggestions, and, in case of remote classes, can be contacted via email, chat, or other forms of video conferencing.

The class is then divided into groups and each group will have the task of reformulating as rules the content of one of the aforementioned areas.

At the end of the sharing session, the teacher will read the rules and, after printing or transcribing them on a sheet of paper to be hung on the classroom wall, will ask each pupil to subscribe it formally with a signature or, in case of remote classes, with a digital signature attached to the document. The signature certifies the officiality of the rules and the commitment to observe them.

Each pupil in turn will be the communication supervisor in the chat group: s/he will ensure that all the rules are observed, and, in case the rules are not followed, will call the classmates to order.

If the time indicated for the activity is not enough, the class may continue writing down the rules during another hour of lesson.

TIPS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

The class may post a picture with the rules in the chat group, highlighting the main points in the description.