

Commitment: what does it mean?

Teacher guidance and lesson plan



Teaching guidance

Introduction

These lessons were produced by Fastn, an organisation that championed the development of relationship skills in childhood that sustain positive relationships for life. The lessons are in line with The Principles of Excellence in Relationships Education, developed by Fastn in collaboration with Family Links, The Centre for Emotional Health, and a group of other relationship organisations and practising educators to identify what excellence in relationships education looks like. The Principles can be used by school senior leaders, RSE leads and teachers to identify what their school is already doing and what more they could do to be providing excellent relationships education. [Download the framework document.](#)

Feedback

We welcome feedback on this resource. If you are using these materials, please do let us know what you think of it by emailing us: info@familylinks.org.uk

Guidance for using this resource

Research has shown that developing positive relationship skills in children and young people can boost a host of outcomes, including academic performance, employability, physical and mental health, the ability to manage stress and conflict, and the opportunity to have fulfilling relationships throughout life. ¹

This lesson plan helps young people consider their perceptions of and values around commitment, both to themselves and others, to enable their own character development, and their development and maintenance of healthy and reliable relationships in the future.

Who is the resource for?

This lesson plan is aimed at pupils in Key stage 3 (years 7 to 8), but teachers can adapt it to use with different age groups if they wish.

How does the lesson fit into the curriculum?

The lesson has been designed to fit with the new statutory guidance for teaching Health and relationships education from September 2020. It can also be integrated into schools' existing provision for PSHE education. It should be used within a planned, progressive programme to support teaching about personal development and relationships as an introduction to the concept of commitment and how this can contribute to self-worth and forming and maintaining healthy relationships.

¹ From the Harvard Center on Early Childhood Development: [3 Principles to improve outcomes for children and families and How children and adults can build core capabilities for life](#)
From the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC): [What science tells us about supporting early childhood development](#)
Clarke, A. M., Morreale, S., Field, C. A., Hussein, Y. and Barry, M. (2015) [What works in enhancing social and emotional skills development during childhood and adolescence](#)
[A review of the evidence on the effectiveness of school-based and out-of school programmes in the UK](#)

The lesson takes approximately 45 minutes to one hour to deliver, but could be used flexibly across a number of lessons according to schools' timetabling, or if teachers wish to extend the learning further. Estimated timings for activities are given on the lesson plan.

The lesson contributes to the following aspects of the curriculum:

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Health and relationships education statutory guidance (secondary)</u></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>PSHE education programme of study (KS3)</u></p>
<p>Relationships and sex education</p> <p>69. The aim of RSE is to give young people the information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds, not just intimate relationships. It should enable them to know what a healthy relationship looks like and what makes a good friend, a good colleague and a successful marriage or other type of committed relationship.</p> <p>73. Pupils should understand the benefits of healthy relationships to their mental wellbeing and self-respect. Through gaining the knowledge of what a healthy relationship is like, they can be empowered to identify when relationships are unhealthy. They should be taught that unhealthy relationships can have a lasting, negative impact on mental wellbeing.</p> <p>74. Relationships Education can be underpinned by a wider, deliberate cultivation and practice of resilience and character in the individual. These should include character traits such as belief in achieving goals and persevering with tasks, as well as personal attributes such as honesty, integrity, courage, humility, kindness, generosity, trustworthiness and a sense of justice, underpinned by an understanding of the importance of self-respect and self-worth.</p> <p>78. Pupils should be well informed about the full range of perspectives and, within the law, should be well equipped to make decisions for themselves about how to live their own lives, whilst respecting the right of others to make their own decisions and hold their own beliefs.</p> <p>By the end of secondary school pupils should know:</p> <p><i>Families:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● that there are different kinds of committed, stable relationships. <p><i>Respectful relationships, including friendships:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the characteristics of positive and healthy friendships (in all contexts, including online) including: trust, respect, honesty, kindness, generosity, boundaries, privacy, consent and the management of conflict, reconciliation and ending relationships. 	<p>Core theme 2: Relationships</p> <p><i>Positive relationships</i></p> <p>R1: about different types of relationships, including those within families, friendships, romantic or intimate relationships and the factors that can affect them</p> <p>R2: indicators of positive, healthy relationships and unhealthy relationships, including online</p> <p><i>Relationship values</i></p> <p>R9: to clarify and develop personal values in friendships, love and sexual relationships</p> <p>R14: the qualities and behaviours they should expect and exhibit in a wide variety of positive relationships (including in school and wider society, family and friendships, including online)</p>

In addition, the lesson can also contribute to the Department of Education's non-statutory [Character Education guidance](#), in particular the following aspect which is one of the four identified as contributing to character development:

an appreciation of the importance of long-term commitments which frame the successful and fulfilled life, for example to spouse, partner, role or vocation, the local community, to faith or world view. This helps individuals to put down deep roots and gives stability and longevity to lifetime endeavours.

Ensuring a safe teaching and learning environment

A safe learning environment establishes an atmosphere of trust that frees up pupils to share ideas and information, sets an expectation for a mature response and increases teacher confidence in delivery and in managing discussion. Use the guidance below to help establish a safe learning environment before delivering lessons about relationships, including this one.

1. Create or revisit ground rules.

Remind pupils of any existing ground rules you might have, or agree ground rules with them before the lesson (and revisit them at the beginning of subsequent lessons). Examples could include:

- listen to others and show respect for their views
- judge and comment what someone says, not who they are
- do not share others' experiences unless they say you can.

2. **Distance learning** to enable pupils to consider issues objectively. Examples of distancing include using case studies, images, film clips, or stories etc. The poem used in this lesson distances learning for pupils.

3. Encourage and respond to questions safely.

Use techniques such as an anonymous question box or post-its to enable pupils to ask questions without having to ask in front of the class if they feel uncomfortable. This can also inform your planning, and help you prepare responses to any more challenging questions.

4. **Be sensitive** to individual pupils who may be living in vulnerable family situations, are being cared for or who have negative relationship experiences. Sensitivity is important even if you are not aware of any personal experiences in the class – working on the basis that there is at least one person who may be vulnerable ensures safe delivery for all. No pupil should feel under any pressure to discuss their own circumstances or experiences, however positive these may be. Any discussion should show respect for different personal (including family) circumstances, and not imply that these are 'wrong'.

5. **Always work within your school's safeguarding and confidentiality policies and procedures;** this is especially important if a pupil makes a disclosure. If you are unsure of the procedures, seek advice from your Designated Safeguarding Lead, or contact the NSPCC on 0808 800 5000.

6. **Signpost** pupils to sources of additional information or support if they need it, both in and out of school. Links to the following sources can also be found on the final lesson slide:

- [Relate](#): offer relationships support and counselling, including for children and young people. Branches operate across the UK.
- [Brook](#): provide advice on relationships, and sexual health and wellbeing for young people.
- [Young Minds](#): for young people who need information or guidance on mental health and wellbeing.
- [Childline](#): a free, confidential service for children and young people under 19 to talk about any issue they need to

Lesson plan

<p>Summary</p>	<p>This lesson encourages pupils to start thinking about commitment, what it means and what it might look like. Using the stimulus of a poem by rapper and spoken word artist Nick Brewer, pupils consider their own values and commitments, the benefits of those commitments, and what they would like to commit to in the future.</p> <p><i>Note: Teachers should consider the needs and requirements of their pupils when delivering this lesson. Groupings can be adapted if necessary, for example creating smaller groupings or pairs where a pupil may need more support, or using additional staff (such as a TA) to facilitate discussion.</i></p> <p><i>Where particular activities can be adapted to offer either additional support or increased challenge, suggestions are given on the relevant slide notes in the accompanying presentation.</i></p>
<p>Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lesson slides ● Nick Brewer poem video: https://vimeo.com/365778323 ● Poem transcript (if required) ● Resources for activities e.g. A4/A3 paper; flipchart paper; marker pens; post-its etc. ● <i>Case studies</i> worksheet ● <i>My commitments</i> worksheet ● Anonymous question box/post-its for anonymous questions
<p>Learning objectives</p>	<p>We will learn about commitment, its meanings, features and benefits, and how it relates to personal values.</p>
<p>Learning outcomes</p>	<p>I will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● describe what commitment means and looks like; ● explain why commitment is important for people’s health, wellbeing and relationships; ● reflect on what commitment means for me, and on my own commitments, now and in the future.
<p>Slide 2</p>	<p>To create a climate of trust for safe and effective learning, ensure that ground rules are established or revisited with pupils first.</p>
<p>Essential teaching guidance</p> <p>Slide 3</p>	<p>Please refer to ‘Ensure a safe teaching and learning environment’ in the teaching guidance for more details.</p>
<p>Starter/baseline activity</p> <p>This brief activity gets pupils thinking about the focus of the lesson and discussing and sharing ideas. It will be revisited at the end of the lesson as a way to reflect on and assess progress in understanding. It enables the teacher to assess pupils’ understanding of their starting points, allowing them to amend their teaching if necessary, re-confirm accurate knowledge or fill gaps, and address any misconceptions.</p>	

<p>Slide 4 (5 mins)</p>	<p>Ask pupils to individually create a mindmap by writing the word <i>Commitment</i> in the middle of a piece of paper. Ask them to consider any thoughts or ideas they have about commitment and to write down their responses. (They will not be asked to share these).</p> <p>Tell pupils to put their mindmap aside as they will come back to it later in the lesson.</p>
<p>Core activities</p> <p>Using the Nick Brewer video as a stimulus, these activities extend and develop pupils' understanding of commitment, and how it is different for different people. They will think about their own values around commitment, their commitments now, and what they might want to commit to in the future.</p>	
<p>Slide 5 (10 mins)</p>	<p>Create an imaginary line across the room with 'Agree strongly' at one end and 'Disagree strongly' at the other. Read out the statements on the slide one at a time, and ask pupils to stand on the line according to what they think (statements are also included below). Ask pupils to consider their reasons for standing where they are (they do not have to share these reasons).</p> <p>After the activity, discuss using questions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Why might people be standing in different places on the line? (e.g. <i>they have different beliefs/values/ideas</i>) ● How might people develop different ideas? (e.g. <i>education, media, religion, culture, family, role models</i>) ● How might beliefs be influenced by someone's background? (e.g. <i>religious or cultural beliefs</i>) ● Why might some people be standing in the same place for some of the statements? (e.g. <i>agreement due to similar backgrounds, or agreement despite diversity of backgrounds/influences</i>) <p>Emphasise that there are no right or wrong answers in this activity – it is about personal beliefs. Ask pupils to agree on a class definition of commitment and write this somewhere everyone can see it (e.g. <i>being fully dedicated to someone or something</i>).</p> <p>Statements (also on slide notes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Commitment is not just about relationships</i> • <i>Commitment is needed in any kind of relationship</i> • <i>Marriage is the only way to show commitment to someone</i> • <i>Committing to someone means forever</i> • <i>Commitment to anything means hard work</i> • <i>If someone doesn't really believe in what they're doing it's harder to commit to it</i> • <i>Being committed to something means never giving up on it</i> • <i>If a person doesn't commit to something they won't get better at it</i> • <i>Being committed can help someone become a better person</i> • <i>Commitment to someone works both ways</i>
<p>Slide 6 (5 mins)</p>	<p>Make a class list of everything someone might commit to in their lives. Try to encourage pupils to widen their thinking about commitment beyond long-term relationships e.g. to friendships, skills, work etc. Highlight with pupils that commitment can mean different things to different people.</p>

	<p>Introduce the video of rapper and spoken word artist Nick Brewer, performing his poem about what commitment means for him and show it to pupils, asking them initially to just listen to the words (a transcript is also available if teachers wish you use it with individuals or groups of pupils).</p>
<p>Slide 7/8 (10 mins)</p>	<p>Divide the class into small groups (e.g. of four) and show the video again. Give each group one aspect (below) on which to focus, and to note down anything Nick says – quotes, ideas or messages that they think are significant.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Definitions of commitment ● Commitment to someone else ● Commitment to oneself <p>Ask groups for feedback. Remind pupils that Nick’s definition of commitment is true for him, but that everyone has their own definitions of commitment and ways of showing it. They may agree with Nick, but they might also have their own ideas about what commitment means.</p> <p>Ask pupils to discuss the following questions, first in pairs, then within their small group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Are there any situations where committing isn’t the best option? ● When or why might this be? ● How can someone show their commitment to someone else in a safe and healthy way? <p>Ask groups for feedback, and remind them that if a relationship feels unhealthy or unsafe, then it is ok to end that relationship – that is also a commitment to oneself.</p>
<p>Slide 9/10 (5 mins)</p>	<p>Discuss Nick’s quote: “Before we commit to anyone else, it’s best we commit to ourselves.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What do pupils think he means? (e.g. <i>working at skills/learning/behaviour/character to be the best version of oneself</i>) ● Why is it important to commit to oneself? (e.g. <i>to build self-esteem; to be successful/meet personal goals</i>) ● How might it help someone’s relationships? (e.g. <i>treating oneself well means someone is more likely to have a healthy relationship with others</i>) <p>Ask the groups to make two lists (they could use the class list created above):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Examples of relationship commitments (e.g. <i>friendships, family, partnerships</i>) 2. Examples of committing to oneself (e.g. <i>working at skills, hobbies, learning</i>) <p>Ask groups to pick out any key words which they think are important to a definition of both aspects of commitment (e.g. <i>‘depend’; ‘qualities’</i>) then show them the examples on slide 10.</p>
<p>Slide 11/12 (10 mins)</p>	<p>In small groups, ask pupils to look at the case study images and captions. For each one, ask them to discuss the following, using the <i>Case studies</i> worksheet for information, and to record their responses if required (see <i>slide notes for examples of responses</i>):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What are they committed to (self, other, or both)?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How do they show their commitments? ● What are the benefits to them of their commitments? ● What might be the challenges of the commitments they have made? <p>Ask groups for feedback on different case studies. Discuss the different types of commitments demonstrated with questions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What differences are there between the different commitments? (e.g. <i>aspects in common, even if the circumstances or relationship types are different</i>) ● Are there similarities between making a commitment to oneself and committing to someone else? (e.g. <i>similarities in values or behaviour</i>) ● Does consideration of the case studies make anyone reflect differently on their own views and ideas from the continuum line activity (e.g. <i>marriage being the only way to show commitment; commitment not just being about relationships</i>). <p>Highlight with pupils that commitment in a relationship doesn't necessarily mean getting married or having children, and draw out the similarities between the different case studies to help demonstrate this (e.g. <i>the similarities in values or behaviour, whatever the commitment</i>).</p>
<p>Slide 13 (5 mins)</p>	<p>Remind pupils that at the end of his poem, Nick asks, "what does commitment mean to you?" Individually, ask pupils to consider their current and future commitments, using the <i>My commitments</i> worksheet to guide their thinking.</p> <p><i>Note: remind pupils that 'Relationships' can refer to any type of relationship(s) they have, not just a romantic one.</i></p> <p>Pupils do not have to share what they have written, but volunteers can do so if they wish.</p>
<p>Plenary</p> <p>This activity is a way to summarise and consolidate learning. It returns to the baseline activity from the beginning of the lesson to enable pupils to reflect on what they know now and add anything to the original mindmap. This can help teachers to review and assess progress, and plan for next steps.</p>	
<p>Slide 14 (5 mins)</p>	<p>Ask pupils to look back at their original mindmap. Is there anything else they would like to add to this, bearing in mind what they have learned in the lesson? Ask them to write additional ideas in a different-coloured marker (they will not need to share these).</p> <p>If time allows, go around the room and ask each pupil one thing they have learned about commitment, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● what it is ● what it looks like ● an example of commitment to something or someone ● the benefits ● ways to demonstrate it

Slide 15 (5 mins)	<p>This slide has links to organisations offering further information, guidance and advice about some of the issues covered in the lesson. Remind pupils of named pastoral care staff and structures in school.</p> <p>Ask pupils if they have any remaining questions about this lesson or any of the issues it raises. Remind them that they can ask anonymous questions, either by using post-its or the provided anonymous question box at any time.</p>
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Contact

Fastn's relationships education work has now become part of charity, Family Links The Centre for Emotional Health. To find out more and get in touch please visit the website <https://www.familylinks.org.uk/> or email info@familylinks.org.uk