



Play Is The Way®

Let's Talk: **Pathway To Empathy Lanyards**

AN OVERVIEW

They are shiny, they're plastic, they're small, they're colourful and you can remove them from the lanyard. Children like to flip, flap, flick and fan them and that is exactly what they should do as you put the *Let's Talk* cards into their hands and ask them to think about their behaviour in reference to the *Life Raft Concepts* and *Pathway To Empathy Virtues*.

Of course, it is important to have them think more often about their behaviour when it is being effective than when it is not. The *Let's Talk* cards can help students make helpful suggestions to their peers and improve the impact of student with student as well as, teacher with student conversations.

They serve to prompt and remind, guide and reinforce and will, when used meaningfully and creatively, deepen the all important connection between children and the adults committed to guiding them.

Further, the more they are committed to memory the more chance they have of being a lifelong influence.

SOME ACTIVITIES FOR THE, LET'S TALK LANYARD

The following ideas are best used irregularly and sparingly to avoid them becoming predictable and dull. There is always a tendency to overuse an idea if students have an early enthusiastic response.

Sparingly might mean, used frequently for a week and then left for several or many weeks. Irregularly might mean, a handful of students in a row in a short period of time and only two over a long period of time.

In essence, the trick is to maintain interest in the activity and to use it as a dip-stick test of the degree to which *Life Raft Concepts* and *Pathway To Empathy Virtues* are guiding and influencing the behaviour of students. The activities will strengthen student awareness of the concepts and virtues. They will certainly assist in improving the depth and content of conversations and it is this capacity that judicious use will preserve.

We strongly recommend that teachers notate and share with their colleagues, self or student generated ideas and activities for the *Let's Talk Lanyard*.

NOTE: *The activities for the Life Raft Concepts can, with a little creativity, be adapted, adjusted and applied to the Pathway to Empathy Virtues and vice versa. Please tweak these ideas in whatever way makes them more effective and appealing to your class.*



GUARDIAN OF THE COMMUNITY

Guardian *n.* keeper, defender, protector.

ACTIVITY

Fan out the *Let's Talk* cards with the Life Raft concepts face up and ask a student to pick a card, declare the colour to the class and inform them of the text.

This student's task is to be observant of others while they work and name 1 to 3 students whose behaviour exemplifies the concept over an allocated period of time or by the end of a given period or project, etc. The student must be able to give reasons for his or her decisions. This can be done one Life Raft concept at a time or to involve more students, some or all of the concepts can simultaneously be given guardians.

Variation 1:

Fan out the *Let's Talk* cards with the Life Raft concepts face up and ask a student to pick a card, declare the colour to the class and inform them of the text.

The student who has selected the concept accepts the challenge of being its guardian and spends the given time period being an exemplary role model of the chosen concept. The class maintains an awareness of the guardian throughout this period of time and attempts to give detailed feedback when the guardian's turn is over and their role modeling is assessed.

NOTE 1: *A guardian can be asked to model a concept for a challenging length of time.*

VARIATIONS:

- (a) A particular concept can be highlighted by having more than one student acting as guardian.
- (b) More than one concept can be chosen with the whole class observing the guardians of those concepts or specific students asked to observe specific guardians.

NOTE 2: *In all cases it is the quality of feedback and the detailed observations that further embed the concept in both the guardians and the observers. Insightful questioning can ensure that students look beyond personality traits.*

Variation 2:

This variation is a good one to start the day with. Break the class into 5 randomly selected teams, matching the 5 colours of the Life Raft posters. Each team is named by the colour of the concept they are given and are its guardian. (i.e. red team is the guardian of "Pursue Your Personal Best."). Ask each team to stand up and give the class time to see who is in that team. All students must also know the members of their own team.



NOTE 1: *Teacher should write a list of team members. At any given time in the day the teacher will go through the following process with the aim of ensuring that everyone has a go before the end of the day.*

Invite a student to stand up and close his or her eyes (this is to ensure they do not see any Life Raft posters displayed in the room). Now, select a colour and ask the student to name any member of that team. The nominated student stands and confirms or denies the call. If the call is correct the student's team gets 1 point. If not, no point is awarded. The student can now go onto earning 2 more points by reciting the text of the poster exactly. An approximation that nevertheless captures the meaning of the poster gets 1 point. The total score, (maximum of 3 points), and the student's name is noted by the teacher and that student cannot be called again. However, the student maybe nominated by another participating in the memory challenge. At the end of the day, tally the scores, acknowledge the winners, have a talk about reactions, responses and observations and thank everyone for their participation.

NOTE 2: *The game can be made harder by asking the nominated student to name one or more members from two or more colours you select and follow through by reciting the text related to each colour. Adjust the scoring to match.*

NOTE 3: *It can be fun to call the nominated player's own colour and ask them to name every member in their team and then recite the text. If there are 5 members in the team (other than the nominated player) the player can only name 5 people. Calling members who are not in their team means they cannot get the full 5 points. If this variation is done to one team it is only fair, from a scoring point-of-view, that it is done to all teams.*

VIRTUES VANGUARD

Vanguard *n.* foremost group; leaders of movement, opinion, etc.

ACTIVITY

Fan out the ***Let's Talk*** cards with the virtues face up and ask a student to pick a card, declare the virtue to the class and read out the habits of action that define that virtue. If necessary, the teacher can do the reading.

The nominated student is invited to sit in an isolated part of the room where they can conduct 1 to 2 minute interviews with fellow students. The purpose of these interviews is to find out if the interviewee can identify a class member who has modeled the selected virtue, in recent times, in an actual situation or event that the interviewee can describe to the nominated student (the interviewer). If the interviewee can, the nominated student must try to remember the story to share with the class at a later time. If the interviewee can't or if the nominated student thinks the chosen situation or event is not a clear enough example of the virtue, he or she calls up another class member to be interviewed.



NOTE 1: *set a limit on the number of students that can be interviewed. If the nominated student cannot find the required evidence of the virtue after 3 or 4 interviews, indicate that to the class and propose that it warrants thinking about.*

NOTE 2: *The teacher will obviously choose the best time to run this activity as the nominated student and the interviewees will have to put the class lesson aside for a few minutes.*

NOTE 3: *Any number of students can be nominated in a day or week depending on the flexibility of the classroom timetable. Remember, that time must be given to the sharing of the story. Teachers can decide whether to repeat or not repeat virtues with each nominated student. To involve as many students as possible simply stipulate that students cannot be interviewed twice until all students have either played the role of nominated student or interviewee.*

NOTE 4: *There are two ways that nominated students can share their story/evidence. The first is to simply retell it the way it was told to them and have the interviewee verify the facts followed by a quick class Q&A of the students who were the subjects of the story. The second, which requires some control and creativity on the part of the nominated student, is to ask those who believe it is about them not to give themselves away while the story is told without using any names. Then ask the class to propose who the students might be. Follow this with a quick class Q&A.*

NOTE 5: *Asking the nominated student to remember the story, until the required time to share it, is important because retention forces greater concentration on the characters and details of the story and greater attachment to the virtue.*

Variation 1:

Fan out the *Let's Talk* cards with the virtues face up and ask a student to pick a card, declare the virtue to the class and read out the habits of action that define that virtue. If necessary, the teacher can do the reading.

The nominated student is given a picture book and asked to randomly select a page, study the picture and show it to the class. The student can use any text on the page to assist in their challenge or dismiss the text.

NOTE: *The picture book can be for any age. It should be one where the character/s (human or animal) are obviously going through something.*

The challenge of the nominated student is to explain to the class what is happening in the picture (some back story to the picture invariably helps) and how the selected virtue is or is not being expressed. The class is invited to ask questions or make remarks that support the nominated student's point-of-view or challenge it; at which point the nominated student must try to defend their belief that the virtue is or is not being expressed.



Variation 2:

Disconnect the cards and place them on the table in front of the student with Play Is The Way on top. The teacher will need the *Pathway To Empathy* poster to work with. Selecting any virtue, the teacher picks a habit of that virtue and reads it aloud, stopping a few words short of the complete sentence. Immediately the teacher begins the count to five. (How fast to count is up to the teacher and the age and skills of the student.) During the count the student picks up the cards and tries to find the virtue being described. He or she must display the card while calling out the virtue before the time runs out. Then, he or she reads all the habits of the given virtue if his or her abilities permit. With that try over, the student returns the cards to the table and has two more turns before the cards are given immediately, or at a later time, to someone else.

NOTE 1: *The more familiar students become with the descriptors of each virtue the fewer words the teacher needs to deliver before starting the count. Eventually, only key words will be needed before starting the count.*

SEEKER OF SELF-MASTERY

ACTIVITY

This activity is best suited to middle and upper primary and will take some guidance and practice before it becomes comfortable. The effort will be worth it as it will help students to look beyond the obvious and more fully analyse their own behavior and that of others.

Call a pair of students to the front of the class and give them the *Let's Talk* cards. The pair looks at the Self-Mastery Checklist and secretly chooses the question that will be their focus.

Their task is to investigate the behavior of a classmate they select, by asking questions that will allow them to determine if the student's behaviour answers their selected question in the affirmative.

It is a combined investigation so both students share the questions and when they believe they have enough evidence they make their declaration. They are investigating the behavior of the selected student during a particular activity or period.

NOTE 1: *The selected student should be encouraged where possible to avoid one word answers just as the pair should be encouraged to ask more open questions than closed.*

EXAMPLE:

Although students in the pair will ask individual questions, for ease I have termed them *The Pair* (TP).



TP: Mark would you stand up please. Could you please tell us about some tricky moments you had during the activity.

M: (Replies)

TP: What were you saying to yourself when those things were happening?

M: (Replies)

TP: Can you tell us about some of the feelings you were going through?

M: (Replies)

TP: Tell us about another time you had the same kind of experience?

M: (Replies)

TP: How did that experience help you in this experience?

M: (Replies)

TP: What advice would you give someone facing this sort of challenge?

M: (Replies)

(The pair makes their announcement)

TP: Mark has shown self-mastery by dealing with the problem and not running away from it.

TEACHER: Thank you TP for your questions and thank you Mark. You have role modeled the bravery it takes to face problems and deal with them.

NOTE 2: *To familiarise students with this activity it is best to do some preparatory work by acting through imaginary situations. Encourage the class to propose possible questions and answers and guide them in the content of both. This will build up their knowledge, awareness and skills, which can only help in your pursuit of improved behaviour education and their pursuit of self-mastery.*

Variation 1:

With more or less teacher assistance this activity will work with most ages.

You will need 6 envelopes with one question from the *Self-Mastery Checklist* written on each. You will also need a handful of little pieces of paper on which numbers will be written.

This activity is best done a few minutes before morning recess, the lunch break or afternoon recess.

A member of the class comes forward and drapes the Let's talk Lanyard around his or her neck.



They proceed to read out the first question on the Self Mastery Checklist and then ask the class who thinks this question has been strongly guiding their behavior in the time up till now, to stand up. They count the number standing, include themselves in the count if applicable, write that on a piece of paper and place the paper in the corresponding envelope.

This process is repeated for each of the questions.

The next time the questions are asked (a few minutes before a break) a different student is selected. The choice of student should not be seen as a reward. Hence, it helps to ask for a volunteer now and then.

NOTE 1: *Advise students that they can stand more than once and up to a maximum of 3 times. This means that they must think carefully about which question had the strongest influence on them over the given period of time. Of course students can choose not to stand at all and a wise teacher might want to track these students to see if a personal conversation is warranted. It might help to engage these students by inviting them to ask the questions.*

At the end of the day, ask all students to write the down the order from most to least influential and wait to see if their prediction is right. Get students to tally the numbers in the envelopes and call the order of influence. It obviously helps to order the questions on the checklist from 1 to 6. A general discussion about the outcome to see what influencing factors prompted the order on this occasion is a good way to round off the activity. There is certainly no need to reward the students who got the order right. Simply enjoying the process is enough.

NOTE 2: *Some students will try to calculate the order by remembering the tally at each point and adding them up as the day progresses. There are only positives in this strategy, as the students will remain conscious of the questions for a considerable period of time. Encourage them not to write the numbers down but to rely on their memories.*