



Elementary Kindness Dilemmas

Discussion Guide

Every interaction is an opportunity to practice kindness. In some situations, the kind thing to do is obvious and easy, but in others it is not so clear. Use this guide to facilitate discussion among students about the different options we have when faced with a kindness dilemma.

Before you begin, enlarge and laminate the kindness dilemma process poster (or write out the steps on the board) to post in the classroom. Discuss what the word “dilemma” means as a class. Introduce each step of the kindness dilemma process, and then begin to work through each step as a class.

Discussion Guide Steps

Step 1: Choose a Kindness Dilemma

A dilemma features a main character who has encountered a situation that necessitates a choice. Choose a kindness dilemma from the samples provided, or create one that suits your classroom’s skill level. Invite students to share their own kindness dilemmas and keep an ongoing list to discuss.

Step 2: Present the Kindness Dilemma

Read the kindness dilemma aloud one time. Read it a second time and ask students to think about the steps listed. Work through the following prompts to help process the dilemma:

- Who are the main characters?
- What is the problem?
- What choices does ___ have?
- What are the possible outcomes?
- What choice(s) would you make?

Step 3: Brainstorm Possible Choices

There is more than one choice in every dilemma. Working as a group, encourage students to come up with as many choices as they can. Not all of these will be kind decisions, but will provide an opportunity for discussion on why they may or may not be the best choice. Use the Kind Choices Wheel as a problem-solving tool!

After discussing possible outcomes (how would the characters feel, what are the short/long term consequences?), ask the class to eliminate any choices that do not provide a kind result. Next, vote on the remaining choices to see what your class might decide to do if faced with this kindness dilemma. If desired, have students role-play the kindness dilemma with the choices they voted on as a class.

Step 4: Small Group Discussion (optional)

If time and setting allow, encourage students to pair off or form small groups to discuss the different choices suggested by the group, working to identify the kindest choice of action, or to rank their choices. (What is the kindest thing to do? What is the least kind thing to do?) Pairs/groups share their findings with the larger group.

Step 5: Large Group Discussion (optional)

Using the list of options developed, discuss the possible outcomes of each decision. Who is affected by this choice and how? What might the other people involved feel when different choices are made? What are the possible short-term and long-term outcomes from each decision?

Step 6: Conclusion

Reflect, would people make the same choice as before? Provide opportunities for students to share.



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Kindness Dilemmas

Sasha likes to pat Megan's curly hair when they stand in line to go inside the classroom. This really bothers Megan, but Sasha keeps doing it.

When Mrs. Thomas announced it was time for recess, Mackenzie leapt out of their seat with excitement. Their chair bumped into Omar's desk and caused him to mess up what he was writing. Omar was upset, because he had been working hard on his worksheet.

Mr. Rivera told his class that when they finished doing their worksheet they could go to an activity center of their choice. Juan sits next to Paul and sees that Paul didn't finish his worksheet, but Paul gets up to go to the reading center anyway. Juan doesn't think this is fair.

During recess, Hector always plays basketball with his friends. While heading out to the courts, he sees Oliver, his neighbor, being picked on by some older kids. Hector's friends shout to him to hurry up because they are going to start the game. Hector feels bad for Oliver but knows his friends are counting on him to start their game.

Lucy and Pearl are best friends. In art class one afternoon, their teacher instructs everyone to pick out three beads from a small box. She explains that they are special from a trip she took and that there is only enough for everyone to take three. While they are picking, Pearl sees Lucy take extra beads and put them in her pocket. She doesn't want her friend to get in trouble, but she knows it isn't fair.

Matt likes to chat during class. He talks to his best friend Carlos while his teacher is talking and during assignments. Their teacher has reprimanded them many times and Carlos does not want to get in trouble, but Matt continues chatting with him.

Imani is really excited for lunch because it's the Friday pizza special. They know the line will be really long so they're walking fast down the hall. As Imani hurries, they pass Tommy who is sitting against the wall with his head down. Iani thinks he might be crying.

Michelle is having a birthday pool party with all her friends. Her sister is 2 years younger than her and wants to join. Michelle doesn't want to have her sister tag along and is worried what her friends might think.

Jenny is in PE class and is picked to be captain for a game. One of Jenny's friends, Luke, isn't very good at sports and is always picked last to be on a team. Jenny knows this makes him feel sad, but she also really wants her team to win the game.

Jamie got to school early and is hanging out talking to their friends when they see one of their teachers struggling to carry books and papers to the classroom. Jamie thinks about going over to help their teacher, but remembers last year when their friends teased them for being the "teacher's pet."

Mallory is a new student at Green Tree Elementary. Since it's already October, everyone has already made friends to sit with at lunch. After she gets her tray of food she approaches a table where Eric, Julio, Lisette, and Tina are sitting. The four of them have been laughing at a joke, but get quiet when Mallory approaches. Mallory asks if she can sit down to eat with them. There is room at the table, but Eric says it wouldn't be fun for Mallory to eat with them because she won't know all of their jokes.

Sophie, Maddi, and Olivia are playing at recess and Olivia is talking about all of the presents her parents got for her birthday. Maddi was smiling thinking about the nice things her parents got for her birthday too, but as she looked, she saw Sophie looked like she was going to start crying. Maddi suddenly remembered overhearing Sophie telling some other girls that she had only gotten one small gift from her mom on her birthday.

Mary and David are neighbors who grew up playing soccer together. After starting 3rd grade, David begins to play soccer with the boys in his class during recess. He wants Mary to play, but the other boys insist, “no girls allowed.”

Max and their best friend Sam always sit next to each other on the school bus. Max feels uncomfortable when the other kids on the bus pick on Robby, a boy Max doesn't really know. Today Robby sits in front of Max and Sam on the bus, and as usual, the kids sitting near Robby start to tease him. Max begins to feel sad. He turns to Sam to tell him how they feel, but sees Sam throwing tiny paper wads into Robby's hair.

John's parents promised him a surprise if he gets a “B” on his math test. He has been studying very hard, but math is challenging for him. A week before the test, John asks Rachel, his friend who is really good at math, to sit next to him so he can copy her work. Rachel knows John has been struggling and that he wants to please his parents.

Joey just got braces yesterday, and while eating lunch a piece of lettuce got stuck in their teeth. Their friends started laughing without telling them why. Chris, their best friend, is sitting right next to them.

While Kenji was walking to class he saw that Nathan had accidentally put his shirt on inside out. He doesn't see anyone else around, but knows that a group of kids are about to get off the bus. Kenji thinks that some of his friends would find it funny and want to laugh at Nathan. He also knows that he would be embarrassed if he were in Nathan's position.

Lorenzo has been paired with Walter for the end of the year science fair. Walter was in his class last year and Lorenzo remembers his project from the science fair and thought it wasn't very good. Lorenzo really wants to get a good grade, so he does most of the project without involving Walter. When it comes time to present, Mrs. Olson asks Walter to explain the findings of their experiment, but Walter doesn't know any of the answers.

Cindy, Charlotte, and Priya are at the store. They each pick out a granola bar and a lemonade to buy. When they get to the checkout, Charlotte realizes that she does not have enough money to purchase her treats. Cindy has a little bit extra, but she wants to save her money for a new book she wants to buy.

At the big softball game on Saturday, the Panthers lost the game by 1 run! Rochelle threw the ball way over her teammate's head, so two runs scored in the final inning. Her teammate, Sierra, told Rochelle that it was all her fault for losing the game. Sierra went home and thought about what she had said. She started to feel horrible for blaming Rochelle and it made her sad to think about how Rochelle was feeling.

Kris has been telling Aubrey how excited they are for their mom to buy them a new pair of shoes that they have been wanting for so long. Their mom had promised Kris if they raised their grades that they would buy them, which was just the motivation they needed. When Kris showed up for school on Monday with their new shoes, they ran straight to Aubrey to show her, but Aubrey thought they were the ugliest shoes she had ever seen.





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Individual Practice: What is the kind thing to do?


Name: _____


Kindness Dilemma: _____

 Who are the main characters? _____

 What is the problem? _____

 What choices do they have? _____

 What are the possible outcomes? Think about how the main characters involved in the dilemma might react or feel as a result of each choice. Think about what might happen right away, and what may happen in the future. What might people observing these actions do or think?

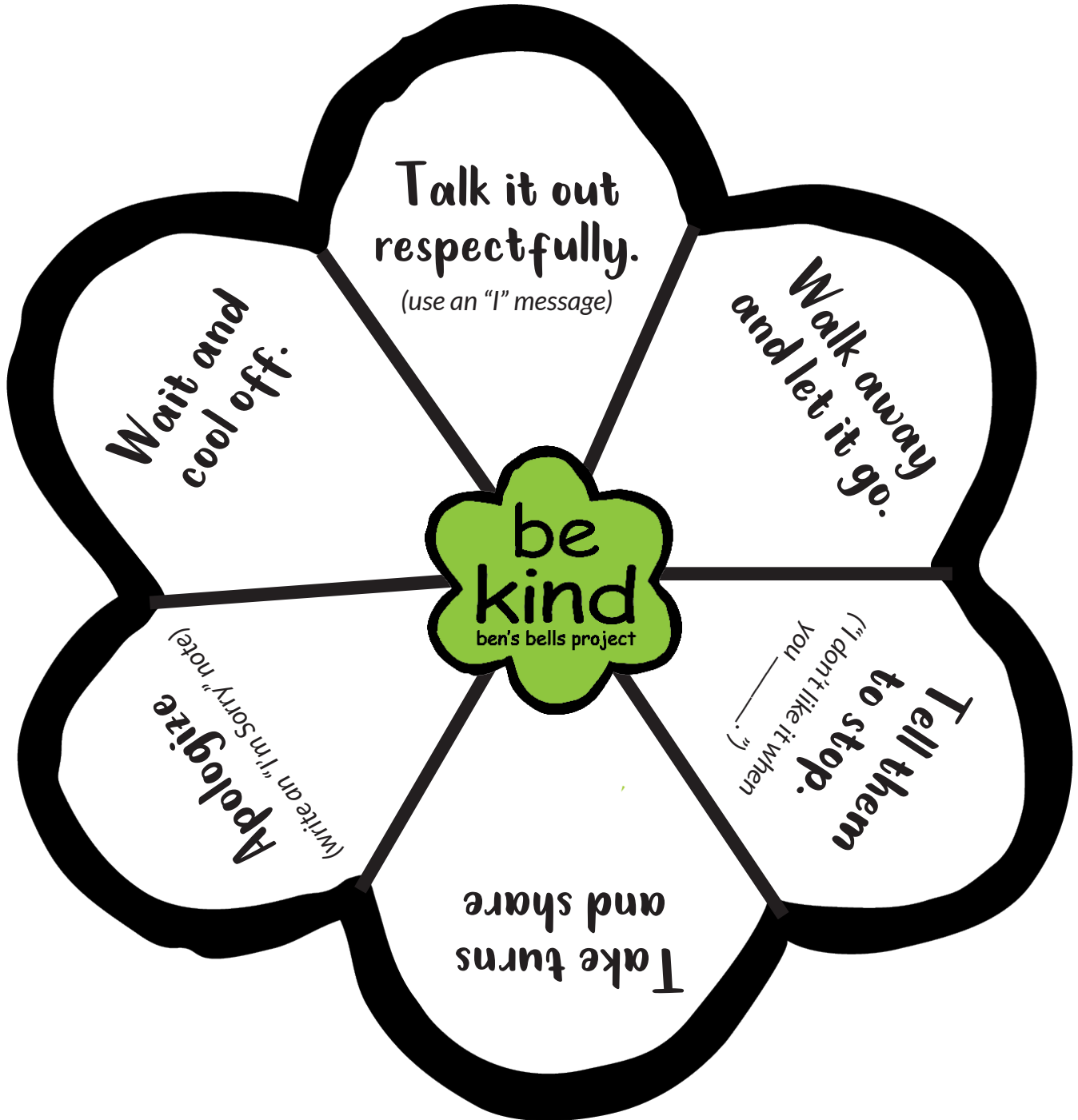
 After thinking about the possible outcomes, what choice would you make? Is there more than one possible choice? Explain why you would make this decision.



Elementary Kindness Dilemmas

Kind Choices Wheel: Problem Solving with Kindness

Use the Kind Choices Wheel in collaboration with the Kindness Dilemmas Discussion Guide. For each dilemma, spin the wheel to work out a kind solution.



*If the solutions don't work, or in an emergency get an adult to help.