



Middle and High School 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

Scott is giving Yarah unwanted attention. Scott is really nice and all, but Yarah is not interested. She doesn't want to hurt Scott's feelings, but Yarah is starting to get bothered by the attention.

Jenny is a student in your homeroom/class. Jenny knows everything about everything, always claims the moral high ground, and critiques others frequently without noticing that it hurts people's feelings. One afternoon, Jenny is sitting alone outside during a break.

You notice that Amir doesn't seem to connect with peers. He is not being left out completely, but he doesn't quite fit in as easily as the others. You can clearly see that Amir is trying, but something is making it difficult for him to really connect.

Stacie is close friends with four other students. She starts to notice that when Amirah is not around, the others call Amirah a mean nickname. Stacie doesn't use the mean nickname, but she also has not defended Amirah and asked the other students to stop using the mean nickname.

On a school field trip, you and your peers are looking out the window of the bus when it passes several people sleeping on the sidewalks. Yuhan makes a derogatory comment to their seatmate and snickers. No one else laughs or makes a comment. You happen to overhear the comment.

Monica is asking if she can copy Aurelia's homework before class. Monica did not have time to complete the assignment, and she and Aurelia are close friends. But Aurelia feels that this request compromises her integrity as well as Monica's.

Charmian is sitting at a table with a group of people and Clarissa asks to join the table. Valerie says to Clarissa, "You can't sit here, we didn't invite you." Charmian does not agree with Valerie's response.

Jamal is at break and a group of students comes up to him. One of them hits Jamal and laughs, saying boys can't hit girls. Later, the same student kicks Jamal under the table when the teacher isn't looking, knowing that Jamal doesn't want to say anything and that Jamal will not hit back or respond in a physically aggressive way.

Lysette is a new student who arrives at school on the first day of class in an outfit that is unstylish and unflattering. Brittany hears other kids saying mean things about Lysette and making jokes at Lysette's expense. Brittany is a freshman and is anxious about fitting in at the new school.

Kota is a freshman who transferred from a small school to a large school. He eats a gluten-free diet and packs his lunch. Kota doesn't realize that at his new school, the "cool" thing to do is eat pizza on Tuesdays. David has Kota in three classes and thinks he's funny. David hears other kids making fun of Kota and talking badly about him.

Jada is walking in the hallway when they overhear another classmate using a racial slur about their friend Miguel. Jada is shocked and disappointed.

Adriana is worried because her friend Elliot's father recently died. Adriana wants to reach out to Elliot but she is not sure about the right thing to say.

Esther sees several posts on social media that are gossiping about their friend Heather. Esther knows that the information about Heather is not true – it is a rumor and it is going to hurt Heather’s feelings.

Carlos has been great friends with Michael since 5th grade. Now that they’re in high school, Carlos notices that Michael treats him differently. Michael walks in front of Carlos, and he huddles and laughs with friends but doesn’t include Carlos. Carlos feels excluded, but he’s unsure if he’s imagining it or if the exclusion is really happening.

When Tonali walks into school one morning they notice that several groups of students are huddled around their phones laughing. They learn that someone has posted an unflattering video of one of their favorite teachers, Mr. Wong. Tonali isn’t sure if they should tell Mr. Wong about the video.

Joe is a close friend who recently came out as gay. You are really excited for him because his parents are being supportive and Joe was worried about that. But now other kids at school are teasing Joe and bullying him in the hallways and at lunch.

At a party at Pierre’s house, Samantha and Pierre overhear two adults talking. One of the adults tells a homophobic or racist joke. Samantha and Pierre are disturbed by hearing this and disheartened.





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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?

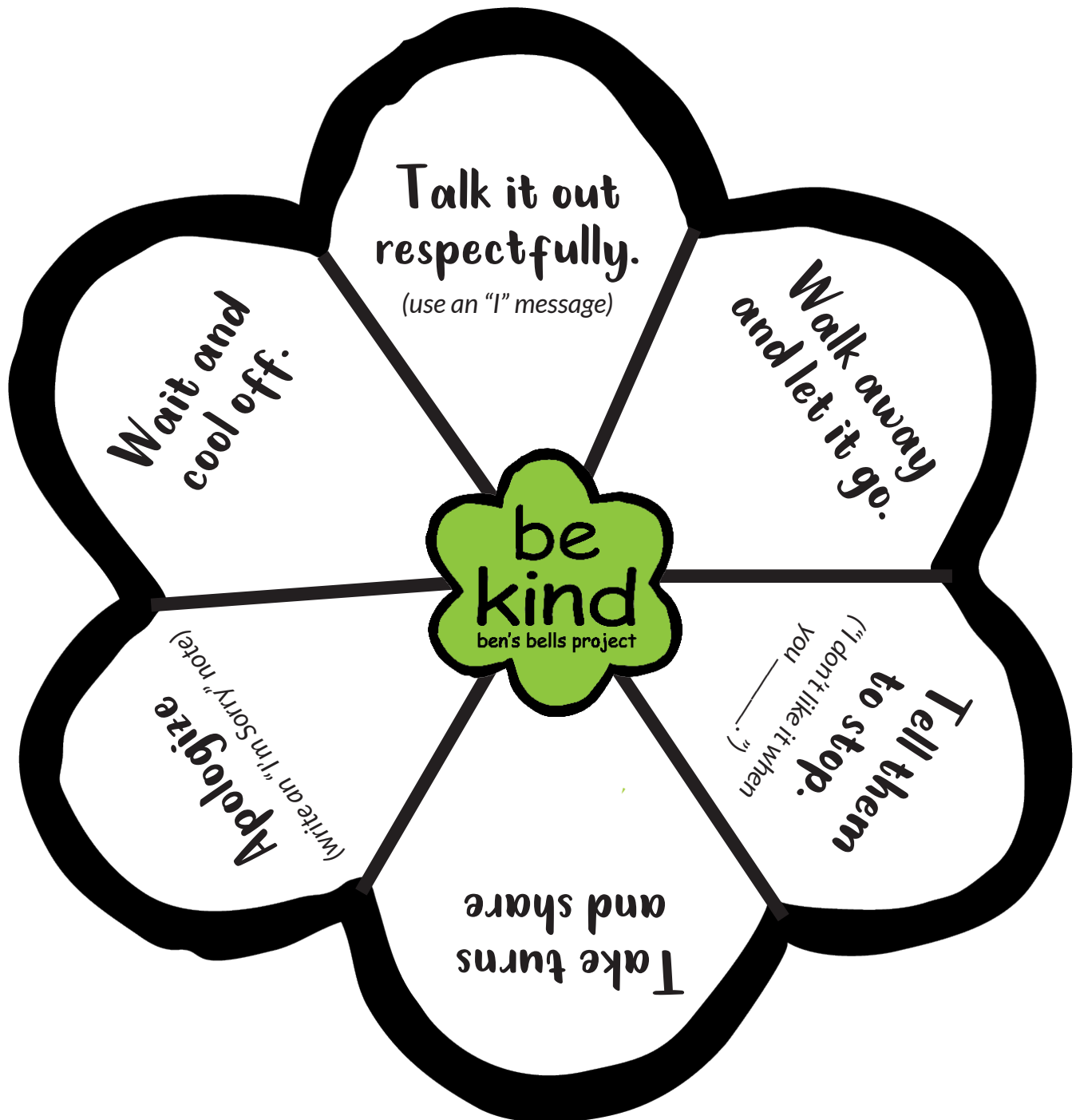
 After thinking about the possible outcomes, what choice would you make? Is there more than one possible choice? Explain why you would make this decision.



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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.