

Materials

- People's lives have different stages of growth and development.
- Changes in relationships over time are normal.
- Changes in relationships can bring about different feelings for different people.
- There is a range of strategies to use to cope with changes in relationships.
- People cope with changes in relationships differently.

Before you get started

- Be mindful that discussing significant changes in the family's routine, structure or dynamic might bring up issues for students (e.g. separation or divorce; or death of a parent, grandparent or pet).
- It is important for the teacher to consider and affirm a range of parenting styles, family contexts and cultural backgrounds students may describe, to ensure the traditional family structure is not held up as the 'norm', or the only or best way.
- Teachers should know and understand the [protective interrupting](#) technique, and what, why, when and how it is needed and used, before facilitating this activity.

Learning activities

Whole Class

Students develop an understanding that significant changes in relationships are normal and they can have an impact on their feelings.

1. Divide the class into small groups. Ask them to consider changes they have experienced in their lives within their family and friendships, e.g. new baby in the family, pet dying, starting a new school, joining a new sporting team, family break-up or the death of a grandparent. Stress that changes in relationships over time are a normal part of life.
2. Have groups complete the Student Activity Sheet: *Changes in relationships* listing 'Good changes in relationships' and 'Not-so-good changes in relationships'.
3. Once this has been completed, cut the sheet into half: the 'Good changes in relationships' column and the 'Not-so-good changes in relationships' column.
 - Now cut the responses to the 'Good changes in relationships' column into single cards and put them in order, with the best change first.
 - Ask each group to share their top two responses with the class. Discuss the similarities and differences.
4. Ask:

- How do things in the 'good changes' column make us feel? (e.g. excited, happy, warm, connected, like we belong, proud)
 - How do things in the 'Not-so-good changes' column make us feel? (e.g. sad, angry, nervous, powerless, agitated)
 - How could we support our friends when they have experienced 'Good changes' in their family and friends?
 - How could we support our friends when they have experienced 'Not-so-good changes' in their family and friends?
 - How could we support our family when they have experienced 'Good changes'?
 - How could we support our family when they have experienced 'Not-so-good' changes?
- Now cut the responses to the 'Not-so-good changes in relationships' column into single cards and arrange these in order from most to least difficult.
 - Ask each group to share two responses (those which are most difficult) and discuss the similarities and differences.
 - Groups select three or four of their 'Not-so-good changes' cards and change the statements into a question. For example, the statement 'The first day at a new school' could become 'What can I do to cope with the first day at a new school?'. Students write the question at the top of a piece of paper.
 - Have each group brainstorm and record the strategies or advice they would use for dealing with, or helping someone else deal with, this change in relationship.

Independent or Small Group

Independently, students reflect on a significant change that has occurred in their own family or friendships.

- Introduce the 'Banana Split' strategy by showing page 1 of the Student Activity Sheet: *Deal with it banana split* as a poster or PowerPoint slide. Explain the sections to be completed independently:
 - **Cheerful Cherry:** Changes in relationships are a normal part of growing up. There is hope for the future. Write a hopeful message to yourself.
 - **Rainbow Sprinkles:** Bad times don't last forever. Write down 2 two great things that have happened to you since this event.
 - **Ooey-Gooney Sauce Feelings:** Intense feelings are normal in these situations. Name feelings you have had or are still having.
 - **Cool Down Icecream:** Stay cool, stay calm. Write 1 way you could calm your body in this situation.
 - **Tough as Nuts:** It's always good to talk to others in these situations. Who could you talk to feel better or who did you talk to?
 - **Cool Down Icecream:** Stay cool, stay calm. Write one other way you could calm your body in this situation.
 - **Bendable Banana:** Write the one 'Not-so-good change' you have experienced and some of the things you have done to cope (or try to cope) with this change.
- Provide each student with a copy of page 2 of the Student Activity Sheet: *Deal with it banana split* and discuss.
- Students complete the worksheet independently, using one significant change that has occurred in their own family or friendship group.

3-2-1 Reflection

- Have students share their Banana split responses with others in a small group. Ask:
 - What are some useful things that people thought or did that helped them cope with a 'Not so good change'? (their bendable bananas)

- *What are some useful things people did to calm their bodies down in these situations? (their cool down ice cream)*
 - *Who were some helpful people to talk to in these situations? (their tough as nuts)*
 - *What were some common feelings that people had in these situations? (their ooey-gooey sauce)*
 - *What were some positive self-talk messages that people came up with? (their cherry on the top)*
2. Highlight that everybody deals with significant change and loss differently and that's okay. It is important that our sadness or anger does not hurt other people. Thinking about how to cope with our pain can help with this.