

Rules of Coexistence

Key message

The direct participation of the whole community when facing conflict situations is a key aspect for the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence. Establish coexistence rules of the group by involving young people in its definition is one of the first steps for promoting democratic participation, cohesion and group responsibility.

Key words: Conflict solving, democratic participation, coexistence rules

Summary

Coexistence rules are the reference framework for the regulation of the proper functioning of a group and the establishment of limits in order to avoid conflictive or disruptive behaviours.

Involving youngsters in the elaboration of the rules which will affect their group and themselves and determine limits and consequences, encourages their direct participation in preventing conflicts as well as their responsibility and engagement with the group.

Module	Group size	Group age	Duration
• Prevention	• small • medium	• 16 - 19	• 1 hour

Purpose

- Encourage youngsters to participate directly in the establishment of coexistence rules and agreements.
- Stimulate youngsters in developing democratic and participative strategies for the elaboration of rules and remedial actions to organise coexistence and solve conflicts.
- Back up youngsters' identification with coexistence rules thus encouraging their engagement and responsibility.

Description

Step 1: Start with a brainstorming about rules:

What rules are? What are they for?, Can only public authorities provide rules?, Do public authorities have to comply with the rules they set?, Can those who do not exercise authority provide rules? What can be done to establish rules?, In which fields rules are being created (school, family, etc.)? What rules do you like the less?

Entail reflection on the Centre and all its agents (e.g. pupils, teachers, administrative and professional staff, families, etc.).

Step 2: Make a presentation of the legal or regulatory framework (articles/statutes) that regulate

rights and duties in the corresponding field (e.g. articles 67, 126 and 17 of the National Education Law in the Educative area). Highlight aspects related with coexistence and ask students to give examples of situations they know in which these rules are or not applied and what penalty has been imposed. Ask to the participants of the group about these rules and if they think that some aspects are missing.(if yes, note it on the blackboard). Try to mention situations which have affected or may affect the group (e.g.: strikes or student demonstrations for students under the age of 18) and its corresponding regulatory framework.

Emphasize that these rules are general for all centers or persons of the same field (e.g. National law of education or the rules of coexistence of the center) and as a group it is necessary to be aware of them, but that it is also important to agree on rules that adhere to the general standards and comply with the group's own expectations.

The need to speak about mechanisms and tools to change the rules may arise, so take note of this issue to be discussed in the next working group (e.g. what mechanisms of participation do young people have if they do not agree with some of the rules).

Step 3: Motivate the group to elaborate its own rules of coexistence in accordance with the norms already established seen in the previous step. Make sub-groups (max. 6-7 persons) and ask them to produce a two columns list of daily conflictive situations (e.g. scorn, interruptions, etc.) to report, by one side, on coexistence rules proposed for their group and by the other, on the corrective-remedial measures for those persons who do not respect the rules in question. To ensure the participation of the whole group, ask each participant to provide a rule in their subgroup and to seek among all a corrective measure.

Give an example on the blackboard:

COEXISTENCE RULES

*"Do not damage furnishings"
"Do not interrupt when someone is talking"*

in case of breaking something,
in case of interruption,

REMEDIAL MEASURE

*"Must help the person in charge of maintenance"
"Prepare a topic to expose in 5 minutes in the next class"*

Requirements to set rules:

Rules should contemplate the relations and rights of all the persons who participate to the Centre or group.

Rules have to be consensual, therefore is necessary the participation of everybody.

Step 4: Make a pool session and create the final list by consensus. Congratulate the group participation and have a reflexion on the difficulties encountered during the exercise. The agreed rules have to be reported in a list visible and accessible to the whole group (e.g. on a cardboard, a blog, or on the group's social network, etc.) and must be signed by all members of the group to enhance their commitment to them.

Materials needed

Blackboard, paper, pen, cardboard, markers.

Methodology

Discussion group

Advice for Trainer

- Guide the group of young people in the identification and elaboration of rules and ensure that all the participants have had the chance to speak and vote regarding the setting of the rules.
- In case of conflict between the proposed rules and those of the Centre, motivate the group to deal in another session with the existing mechanisms and tools to change the rules in question.

Source / Literature

Storni C., Carpentieri Y., Alonso E. (n.a.). Normas de Convivencia en el aula. *Ministerio de Educación y Deportes de la Nación: Argentina.*



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