

Myself as an SPHE teacher

The teacher as facilitator

At the heart of all teaching and learning is the relationship. Building supportive, caring and respectful classroom relationships which allow students to safely engage in dialogue and reflection and grow in awareness of themselves and others, is an essential foundation for effective SPHE. This requires the teacher stepping out of the role of expert and assuming the role of facilitator; acknowledging that many of the topics addressed in SPHE may be sensitive and complex and may not have easy answers. It also requires adopting an open, non-judgmental disposition and at the same time being able to skillfully question and probe assumptions, behaviours and viewpoints, within youth culture or society at large.

Effective SPHE involves the teacher taking on a facilitative role. This involves:

- planning for learning in consultation with students to learn about their interests and concerns in relation to specific topic .
- using active and collaborative teaching and learning methodologies.
- letting go of the need to be an 'expert' and sometimes acknowledging your own lack of experience or knowledge on questions that arise.

A positive, safe, caring and respectful classroom environment will support you in adopting a facilitator role. This requires agreeing clear ground rules and boundaries from the start.

Skills for facilitation of classroom discussion

The teacher

- Engages in active listening
- Reflects back what s/he hears
- Avoids putting anyone on the spot by asking 'why?' or 'what do you mean?'
- Uses people's names, without making anyone feel they are being put on the spot
- Asks questions to prompt deeper thinking
- Seeks clarity – 'what does it look like?' 'Tell me a bit more about that?'
- Doesn't deny any experiences, validates the students' feelings and experiences
- Doesn't personalise - speaks about the issue, not the person
- Draws out resistance or alternative perspectives in a controlled way
- Isn't afraid to press pause if needed
- Is not afraid of the silences
- When noting ideas from class discussions or brainstorm, ensures the recorded wording comes from the students themselves

Other relevant topics

What makes a safe SPHE/RSE classroom?
 What makes an inclusive SPHE/RSE classroom?
 Dealing with challenging conversations
 Dealing with disclosure about sexual abuse

The teacher as facilitator of learning

Possible statements, questions and phrases to use when facilitating classroom discussion

I was wondering...

Can you think of a situation when you might think/respond differently (introduces flexible thinking)

I hear some of you say...

Also I hear some of you say...

I see that works for you

I hear what you are saying...

Can you say a bit more about that?

So what do you consider to be the main 'take-away' points from the discussion today?

Does anyone feel differently about ...

(e.g. if something is said that's negative and/or you need to create a balance)

You may / may not think this is worth trying?

That sounds like something that needs to be looked at more

Does anyone else have ideas?

I wonder what the other person might be thinking

I am curious about.....

I understand that is your experience and I was wondering could there be another explanation?

What does the group think?

What would that look like?

I appreciate your honesty

How might you do that in your life?

Tell me about that (e.g. if someone says that they can't do x, avoid asking why?)

I noticed that a lot of you seemed to agree/disagree about...

How might someone your age ...? (takes the focus off the individual feeling exposed)

Thank you for sharing your viewpoint