

The heart of the classroom: developing our people skills in ELT

Webinar handout

Teresa Bestwick

What are the key people skills for the adolescent classroom?

'Soft skills' covers a variety of different areas, though in the session, we focused on developing learners' critical thinking skills, self-awareness and interpersonal skills. These skills are particularly beneficial for the future, when learners enter the world of work.

Here are four of the practical activities which we looked at in the session, each with a brief explanation of the set up and the rationale.

Yesterday, I didn't...

Tell learners about something you didn't do the previous day that you should have done. Using the guided questions shown on-screen during the webinar, ask them to consider the feelings of the people involved and the outcome of the 'inaction'.	This encourages learners to develop empathy as they consider how their 'inaction' affects other people.
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The stress bucket

Give learners scrap paper on which to draw water droplets and holes. The water droplets represent the things which cause them stress, and the holes represent ways they can relax.	By identifying their biggest stressors and the things they find most relaxing, learners can reflect on their mental health. Identifying what helps them de-stress also encourages them to use these strategies when needed.
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The big frog

Tell learners to write a list of the things they have to do and identify the 'big frog' - this could be the most boring, the most difficult or the task which will take the longest to complete.

This activity can help learners to manage their time more effectively and prioritise their tasks. They can also consider the benefits of achieving a smaller task early on.

Fact or opinion?

Provide statements and tell learners to discuss whether each one is a fact or an opinion.

The internet is filled with fake news and people sharing their opinions as facts. This activity encourages learners to develop their critical thinking skills.

Exit tickets

Build in time for reflection at the end of your lessons with a variety of exit tickets focusing for example on what learners found useful, the interaction patterns they found most enjoyable or how that day's learning could be transferred to other subjects or the wider world.

Reflection is often forgotten in busy classrooms, but it helps to involve learners more in the learning process and can provide useful feedback to the teacher. Learners can also be encouraged to reflect on how they enjoy working - developing their self-awareness - or on how what they learned could be useful in other contexts - developing their critical thinking skills.

Further links

A recording of Teresa Bestwick's webinar can be watched here:

<https://web.facebook.com/share/v/1FnFKVccWM/>

Watch Nik Peachey share tips of fostering dialogue through active listening:

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/news-and-events/world-teachers-day/2022/fostering-dialogue-through-active-listening>

You can also find further resources on developing empathy and respect on the TeachingEnglish website: <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/community/top-stories/new-lesson-plans-listening-and-empathy>