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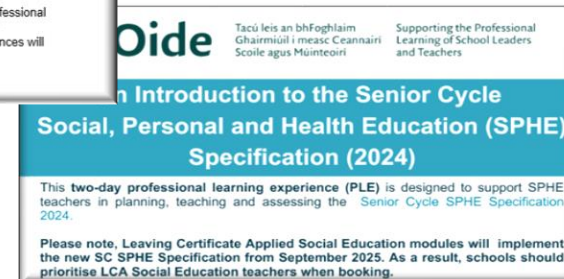
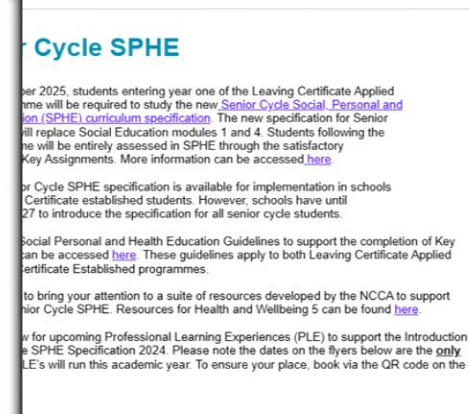
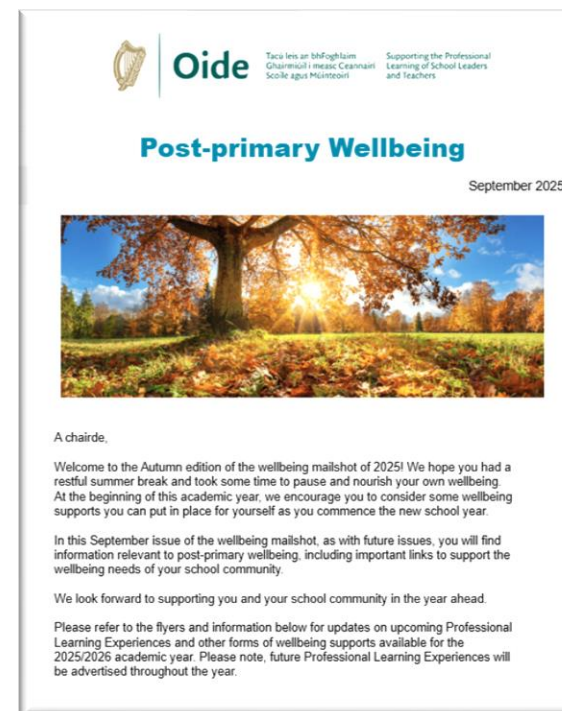
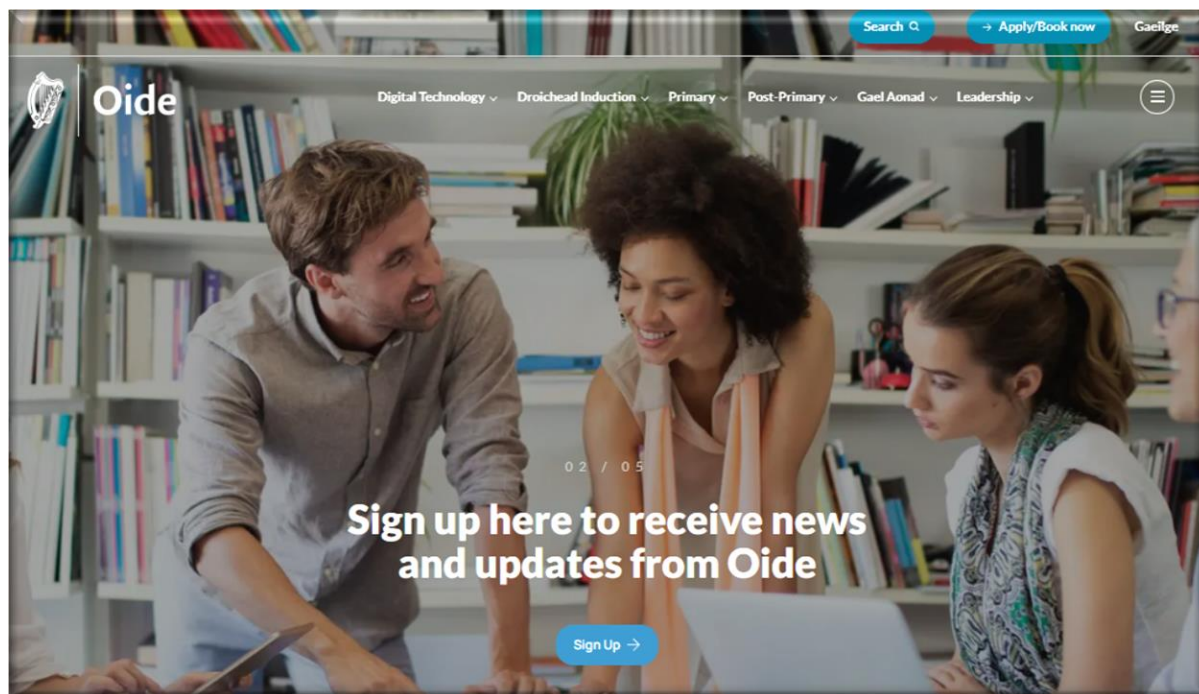
Planning and Preparing for Sensitive Issues in Junior and Senior Cycle SPHE

Facilitator:



Oide

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Jigsaw's mental health supports for post-primary schools

A partnership between Jigsaw and the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) / Department of Education & Youth

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Supporting mental health in post-primary schools

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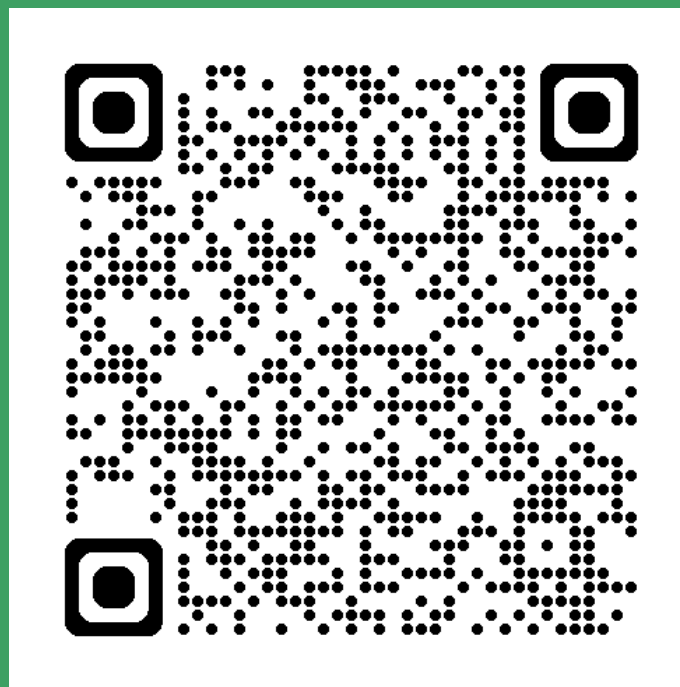
An Roinn Oideachais agus Oige
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Padlet Wall

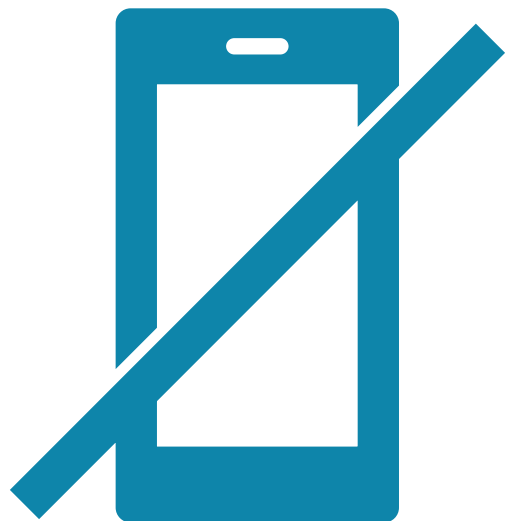
Resources and Supports



tinyurl.com/588j9nfy



Expectations



Tea/Coffee

11:00 – 11:15

Lunch

13:00 – 14:00



Introduction



- Your name
- The school you're teaching in
- What are your hopes for today?



Overview of the Day

Session 1 09:15 – 11:00	Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Engage in a collaborative approach to planning- Work with learning outcomes as the foundation of planning- Design a Unit of Learning underpinned by linked learning outcomes
11:00 – 11:15 Break	
Session 2 11:15 – 13:00	Facilitate <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Explore facilitation as an approach to fostering sensitive conversations- Recognise pedagogical strategies that promote facilitation- Develop skills through the facilitation of conversations
13:00 – 14:00 Lunch	
Session 3 14:00 – 15:45	Prepare <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Analyse a teaching resource to identify potential sensitive issues- Prepare appropriate strategies for delivering sensitive content safely and inclusively- Reflect on the Zones of Influence to acknowledge what is within and beyond their control when teaching sensitive issues



During this Day Participants will

Understand the key role that effective planning plays in facilitating sensitive conversations.

Further develop facilitation skills necessary for sensitive conversations in the SPHE classroom.

Analyse a teaching resource and prepare for sensitive issues which may come up.



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Session 1

Plan





During this Session Participants will:

Understand the key role that effective planning plays in facilitating sensitive conversations.





Safe Space Agreement

A safe space isn't about avoiding difficult topics - it's about ensuring that those topics can be explored responsibly, respectfully, and with care.

What guidelines do you need for the Safe Space Agreement for our group today?





Group Discussion

What are the
current planning
practices in your
SPHE team?





SPHE Background Paper

“At the same time, it is important that all students have the opportunity to engage with core learning and that teachers don’t ‘cherry pick’ safer topics or those they consider to be important and leave out others.”
(NCCA, 2021, p.18)



Effective Planning Practices

- Identify SPHE core teams
- Continuity in planning
- Revisit learning outcomes multiple times
- Show progression for age and stage of students
- Linked / Individual learning outcomes





Sensitive Learning Outcomes

Senior Cycle SPHE Strands of Study

Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing	Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality	Strand 3: Into Adulthood
<p>Factors that influence health and wellbeing generally</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 explore the determinants of good health 1.2 investigate ways a person can influence their holistic health, including physical activity, food, sleep, social connections, positive self-image and connecting with nature, and discuss how these are related 1.3 examine social norms, attitudes and beliefs related to alcohol, tobacco/vaping and substance use <p>Fostering positive mental health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.4 explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, community, peers, school, social media, digital technology, alcohol and mood-altering drugs, and one's self-image and identity 1.5 recognise helpful and unhelpful thinking patterns, including negative self-talk, and how these can affect emotions and behaviour 1.6 describe and draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health <p>Coping with emotional or mental health challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.7 recognise the signs and symptoms of low mood, stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed 1.8 discuss ways of responding to low mood, stress and anxiety 1.9 explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed <p>Staying safe when out socially</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.10 discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk 	<p>Healthy relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1 demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating effectively, navigating difficult conversations, preventing and managing conflict and dealing with break-ups 2.2 reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity, and those of others, can influence the dynamics of families. <p>Understanding myself and others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.3.1 explore the physical, social and emotional changes that happen during adolescence 2.3.2 reflect on their personal strengths and values and how they bring these into relationships 2.3.3 explore the range of influences and its experiences that can impact on self-image and self-esteem and identify ways to nurture a positive sense of self-worth 2.4.1 recognise the factors and influences that shape young people's self-identity, such as family, peers, culture, gender identity, sexual orientation, race/ethnic background, disabilities, religious beliefs/world-views 2.4.2 reflect on gender equity and how gender stereotypes impact on expectations, behaviour and relationships 2.4.3 discuss experiences/situations of bias, inequality or exclusion and devise ways to actively create more inclusive environments 2.4.4 communicate in a respectful and effective manner and listen openly and sensitively to the views/feelings of others 2.4.5 reflect on the meaning and importance of empathy and discuss ways that it can be expressed 2.4.6 demonstrate self-management skills, including setting personal goals, delaying gratification, and self-regulation of thoughts, emotions and impulses <p>Emotional wellbeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.5.1 discuss the fluid nature of emotional wellbeing and ways to nurture and protect it 2.5.2 recognise and acknowledge their emotions and recognise the links between thoughts, feelings and behaviour 2.5.3 consider the impact of stress and draw upon a variety of techniques to help self-regulate emotions and cope with the day-to-day stresses of life 2.5.4 discuss ways to support themselves and others in challenging times and where/when/when to seek support, if needed 2.5.5 explore how emotional wellbeing can be affected by factors within our control, such as sleep, diet, exercise, substance use and online exposure, and factors beyond our control 2.5.6 recognise different kinds of abusive and bullying behaviour that can occur in interactions online and in person 2.5.7 explain why not responding to different kinds of abusive or bullying behaviour that can occur in person and online is important and discuss appropriate responses including, why, how, where and when to report 2.5.8 identify actions young people can take, without putting themselves at risk, in situations where they are aware of incidents of abusive behaviour or bullying happening and explore the barriers to standing up 2.5.9 demonstrate how to access and appraise appropriate and trustworthy information and services aimed at supporting young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health 	<p>Self-management and self-care skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1 consider strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health 3.2 demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life 3.3 explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times and <p>Understanding myself and others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.3.1 explore the physical, social and emotional changes that happen during adolescence 2.3.2 reflect on their personal strengths and values and how they bring these into relationships 2.3.3 explore the range of influences and its experiences that can impact on self-image and self-esteem and identify ways to nurture a positive sense of self-worth 2.4.1 recognise the factors and influences that shape young people's self-identity, such as family, peers, culture, gender identity, sexual orientation, race/ethnic background, disabilities, religious beliefs/world-views 2.4.2 reflect on gender equity and how gender stereotypes impact on 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<p>Relationships and sexuality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1 reflect on the values, behaviours and skills that help to make, sustain and end relationships respectfully with friends, family and romantic/intimate relationships 3.2 examine benefits and difficulties experienced by young people in a range of relationships—friendships, family relationships, and romantic/intimate relationships 3.3 identify signs of healthy, unhealthy and abusive relationships 3.4 appreciate the importance of setting healthy boundaries in relationships and consider how to show respect for the boundaries of others 3.5 consider the importance of taking care of their reproductive health 3.6 appreciate the breadth of what constitutes human sexuality, and how sexual orientation and gender identity are experienced and expressed in diverse ways 3.7 explore the pressures to become sexually intimate and discuss ways to show respect for people's choices 3.8 appreciate the importance of seeking, giving and receiving consent in sexual relationships, from the perspective of building caring relationships and from a legal perspective 3.9 explain the importance of safer sexual activity with reference to methods of contraception and protection against sexually transmitted infections (STIs) 3.10 discuss the influence of popular culture and the online world, in particular, the influence of pornography, on young people's understanding, expectations and social norms in relation to sexual expression 3.11 demonstrate how to access and appraise appropriate and trustworthy advice, support and services related to relationships and sexual health

Review the learning outcomes from the Junior or Senior Cycle Specifications.

As a group, select one or two learning outcomes that you find sensitive to teach.

Junior Cycle SPHE Strands of Learning

Understanding myself and others

- 2.1 consider the multifaceted nature of health and wellbeing, and evaluate what being healthy might look like for different age groups, including how food, physical activity, education and hygiene contribute to health and wellbeing
- 2.2 investigate how unhealthy products such as nicotine, vapes, e-cigarettes and unhealthy food and drinks are marketed and advertised
- 2.3 discuss societal, cultural and economic influences affecting young people when it comes to making healthy choices about smoking, alcohol and other addictive substances and behaviours, and how harmful influences can be overcome in real-life situations
- 2.4 demonstrate skills and strategies to help make informed choices that support health and wellbeing and apply them in real-life situations that may be stressful and/or involve difficult peer situations
- 2.5 discuss the physical, social, emotional and legal consequences of using addictive substances—immediate and long-term
- 2.6 consider scenarios where, for example, alcohol, nicotine, drugs, food and electronic devices might be used to cope with unpleasant feelings, or stress, and discuss possible healthy ways of coping
- 2.7 assess the benefits and difficulties associated with their online world and discuss strategies for dealing with a range of scenarios that might arise
- 2.8 discuss how to share personal information, images, opinions and emotions in a safe, responsible and respectful manner online and in person
- 2.9 explore why young people share sexual images online and examine the risks and consequences of doing this
- 2.10 demonstrate how to access and appraise appropriate and trustworthy information, supports and services about health and wellbeing

Relationships and sexuality

- 3.1 reflect on the values, behaviours and skills that help to make, sustain and end relationships respectfully with friends, family and romantic/intimate relationships
- 3.2 examine benefits and difficulties experienced by young people in a range of relationships—friendships, family relationships, and romantic/intimate relationships
- 3.3 identify signs of healthy, unhealthy and abusive relationships
- 3.4 appreciate the importance of setting healthy boundaries in relationships and consider how to show respect for the boundaries of others
- 3.5 consider the importance of taking care of their reproductive health
- 3.6 appreciate the breadth of what constitutes human sexuality, and how sexual orientation and gender identity are experienced and expressed in diverse ways
- 3.7 explore the pressures to become sexually intimate and discuss ways to show respect for people's choices
- 3.8 appreciate the importance of seeking, giving and receiving consent in sexual relationships, from the perspective of building caring relationships and from a legal perspective
- 3.9 explain the importance of safer sexual activity with reference to methods of contraception and protection against sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- 3.10 discuss the influence of popular culture and the online world, in particular, the influence of pornography, on young people's understanding, expectations and social norms in relation to sexual expression
- 3.11 demonstrate how to access and appraise appropriate and trustworthy advice, support and services related to relationships and sexual health





Supporting Sensitive Learning Outcomes

Read the learning outcome carefully and identify the focus of the learning

Look at the elaboration documents and the SPHE Toolkit

Think about the prior learning students will need to engage with this learning outcome

Check in with students (is there anything about it they would find helpful to focus on?)

Check in with myself (is there anything I need help with?)

Check in with my department (has anyone taught this before and can give advice?)



Working with Learning Outcomes

Learning Outcome

2.9 - explore why young people share sexual imagery online and examine the risks and consequences of doing this

Junior Cycle
 Senior Cycle

Action Verb

Explore:
systematically
look into
something
closely for the
purpose of
discovery; to
scrutinise or
probe
(NCCA, 2023,
p.20)

Key Terms

Sexual imagery

Risks

Consequences

Intended Learning

- Why people share images
- Identify social influences and peer pressure
- Recognise power dynamics in relationships
- Understand the legal risks
-
-

Linked Learning Outcomes

3.10
3.11

L1/L2 LP Links

Personal Care
3.34, 3.44, 3.45



Activity – Working with Learning Outcomes

Each group has selected one or two learning outcomes they find sensitive to teach.

Using the format provided, identify and extract the key components of your selected learning outcome/s.

Learning Outcome

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○ Junior Cycle
○ Senior Cycle

Action Verb

Key Terms

Intended Learning

Linked Learning Outcomes

Linked Learning Outcomes

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Use the glossaries and further elaboration documents to help you.





SPHE Toolkit

Before you begin creating a unit of learning, take time to explore the relevant toolkit and resources connected to your chosen learning outcomes.



Preparing to teach




Teaching SPHE




Resources for teaching and learning SPHE/RSE



Units of Learning

Unit of Learning Planning Aid  Oide


Learning Outcomes		Learning Experiences	
Key Learning	Formative Assessment	Resources	
		Reflection	

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Unit of Learning SPHE Department Planning Aid
Year Group: _____ Duration of Unit: _____

Learning Outcomes

Key Learning

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Assessment

Resources

Reflection

Department




Activity – Creating a Unit of Learning

Using the learning outcome resource you have developed, create a Unit of Learning.



15 mins

Unit of Learning Planning Aid 

Learning Outcomes		Learning Experiences	
Str. Lessons	Formative Assessment	Resources	
		Reflection	

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Unit of Learning SPHE Department Planning Aid

Year Group: _____ Duration of Unit: _____

Learning Outcomes	Assessment
Resources	
Key Learning	Reflection
	Department: _____





Units of Learning

Review your unit of learning and focus on opportunities for dialogue.

1. Identify where there are opportunities for sensitive conversations.
2. Consider what prior learning has taken place.

The image displays three overlapping 'Unit of Learning Planning Aid' forms. The top form is a general template with sections for Learning Outcomes, Learning Experiences, Key Learning, Formative Assessment, and Resources. The middle form is a 'Unit of Learning SPHE Department Planning Aid' with sections for Learning Outcomes, Key Learning, and Assessment. The bottom form is a 'Unit of Learning SPHE Department Planning Aid' with sections for Resources, Reflection, and Assessment.





Personal Reflection

Reflect on your personal strengths, vulnerabilities, and needs when facilitating sensitive conversations.

Personal Reflection

Topic/Theme:

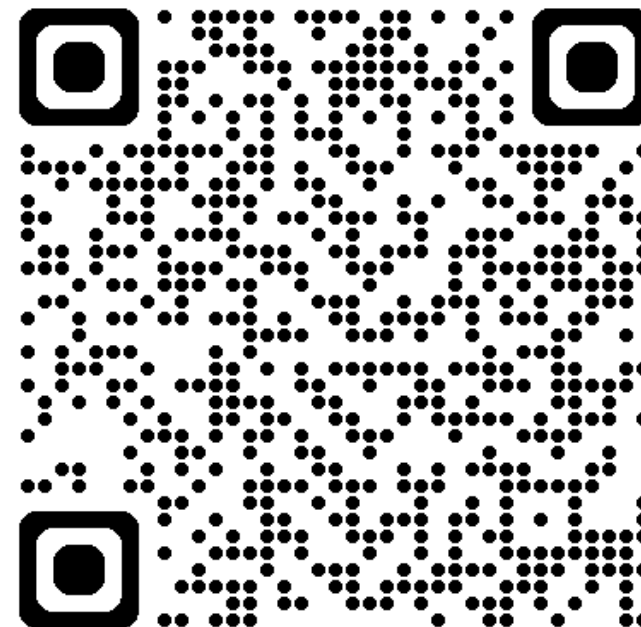
Strengths Prior knowledge, experience	Vulnerabilities Fears, uncertainties, gaps in knowledge	Needs Resources, information, advice



Sos/Break



15 Minutes



To book future PLE in
Wellbeing and SPHE

tinyurl.com/kcyfzdwf



Energiser



Choose a card that resonates with you.

Read the question on the reverse and feel free to share your response.



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Session 2

Facilitate





During this Session Participants will:

Further develop facilitation skills necessary for sensitive conversations in the SPHE classroom.





Teacher as Facilitator

What is effective facilitation?





CNQ

What Connections do you make with this document and your own practice?

What is New for you?

What Questions do you have?

tinyurl.com/bd522wk8

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

www.curriculumonline.ie NCCA

SPHE teacher as facilitator of learning

questions and phrases to use in room 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...
- I see that works for you
- I hear what you are saying...
- So what do you consider to be the main 'take-away' points from the discussion today?
- You may / may not think this is worth trying?
- That sounds like something that needs to be looked at more
- I wonder what the other person might be thinking
- I am curious about....
- What does the group think?
- I understand that is your experience and I was wondering could there be another explanation?
- 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

www.curriculumonline.ie NCCA



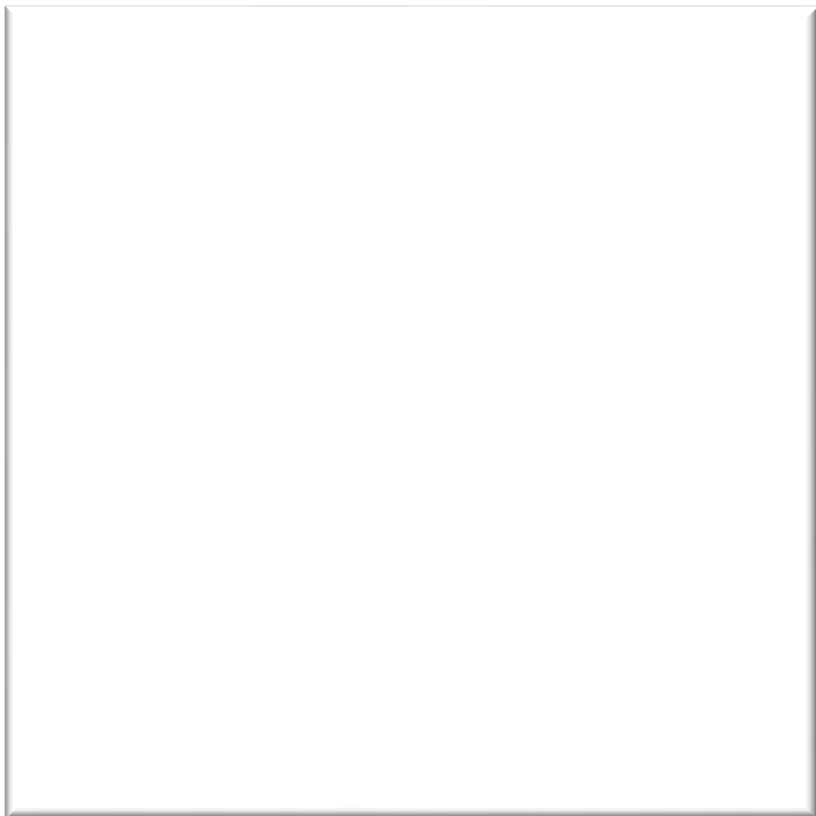
Facilitating Sensitive Conversations

What strategies work in your SPHE classroom to facilitate a sensitive conversation?





Teacher Testimony



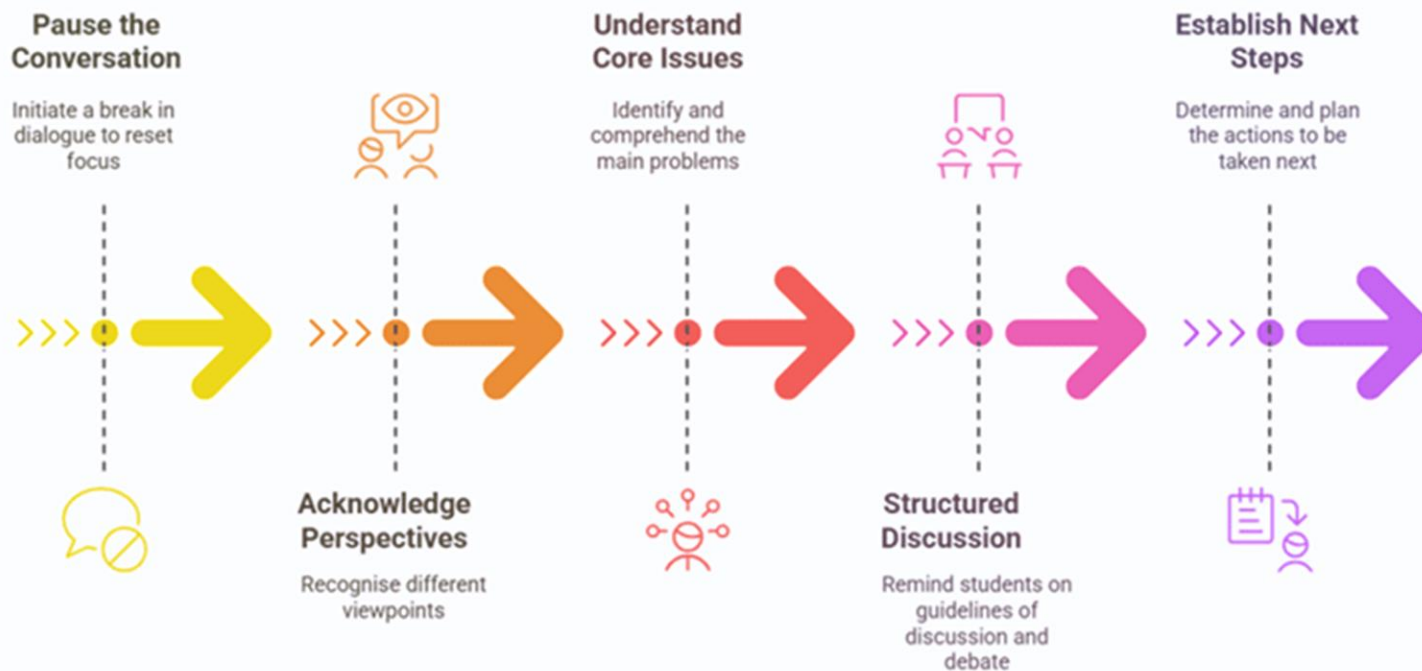
While listening to this teacher, what strategies are used to redirect the conversation and refocus the students?

Vicky Uí Chatháin
Dunamase College



Pressing Pause

DURING: The PAUSE Method



Learning and Teaching Hub (2025)



Pressing Pause Phrases

On post it note, write down one phrase which will help you when pressing pause on a conversation.





Activity – Role Play

1. Select a scenario and read through the activity.
2. Agree on the intended learning for this conversation.
3. Consider what sensitive issues might come up and what prompt questions would encourage meaningful dialogue.





Safe Space Agreement

As we enter this role-play activity, let's take a moment to recall the co-created safe-space agreement.

What should you be mindful of as we engage in this activity?

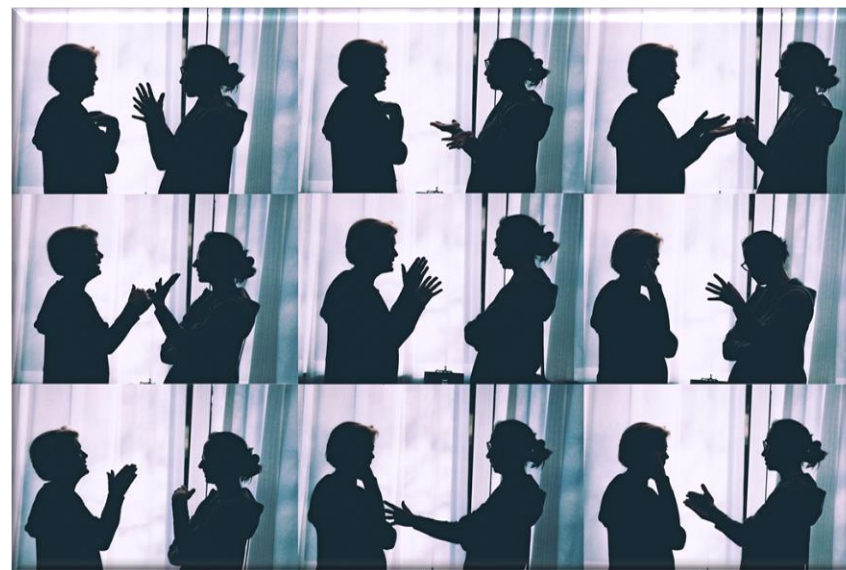




Activity – Role Play

Using your scenario:

- ✓ Read the class context card
- ✓ Divide out the character cards
- ✓ One person will be the teacher and facilitate the discussion.
- ✓ Use strategies to facilitate the conversation.





Individual Reflection



things I have learned.



things I could implement when planning for dialogue.



facilitation skill I will practice.



Exit Slip

How did the Safe Space Agreement support you during the activity?





Lón/Lunch

CALL 1800 411 057

Folláine le Chéile
Wellbeing Together

Sign Up

First Name

Last Name

Email Address

Organisation Code

Password

Repeat Password

Location

Member Level

I agree to the privacy statement

I agree to the terms and conditions

Sign up

Employee Assistance Service



Organisation
Code:
yVVIU17



Energiser

Find someone who in the last week has...



10 mins

Wellbeing Bingo

Enjoyed an evening walk	Started a new hobby	Practiced meditation	Had a screen-free evening
Opted not to take on additional tasks	Joined in a sporting activity	Caught up with a friend	Organised a space at home
Started watching a new show	Phoned a friend to catch up	Spent time walking their dog	Experimented with a new recipe
Enjoyed some quiet reading time	Slept soundly all night	Focused on treating themselves kindly	Enjoyed some music I love



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Session 3

Prepare





During this Session Participants will

Analyse a teaching resource and prepare for sensitive issues which may come up.

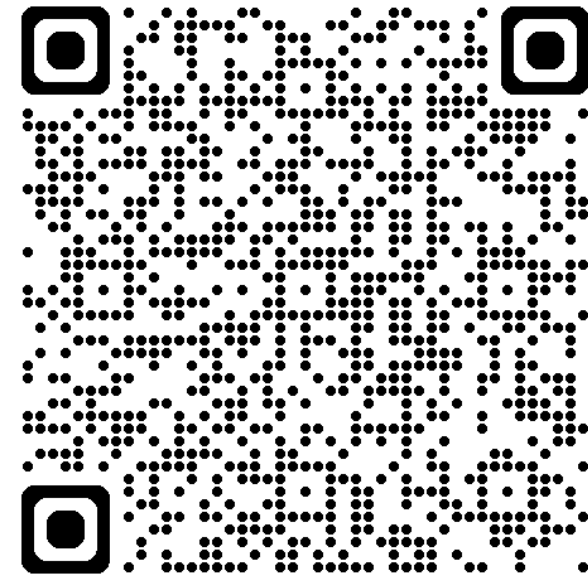




Preparing Activity 3 – Food for Thought

Read the teacher's note on pages 14 and 15.

“The key message that you want students to take away is that: Food is a source of nourishment, not a threat.”
(HSE, 2024)



tinyurl.com/mpdxdex

Inclusive Language around Food



<i>Instead of</i>	<i>Try</i>
"Foods that are good for you"	"Foods that we should eat every day"
"Foods that are bad for you"	"Foods we eat occasionally"
"That food is bad for you because it is high in sugar."	"That food is high in sugar so it would be good to have occasionally"
Treat	Food we enjoy
Talking about weight	Talking about creating healthy habits
Calories	Food that is nourishing
"What are we going to cut out?"	"What new foods are we going to try?"
Food diaries	Vignettes (character stories)
Giving an example of one specific food	Give a variety of examples
Junk food	Ultra processed foods that are high in fat, sugar, salt and calories
"Eat this amount to maintain weight"	"Eat a varied and balanced diet to promote good health."



Step 1: Why, where and when we eat?

As a group, read step 1 and consider the possible sensitive issues which might come up.

Step 1: Why, where and when we eat?

Food is an important source of nutrition, but it provides more than nutrition. It is important to look at the whole spectrum of occasions, places and reasons why we eat what we eat. For young people, the social context of food is particularly important. For example, sharing a pizza or a bag of chips with friends can be an important source of connection, belonging and enjoyment.

Invite students to form small groups and then ask each table to brainstorm one of the following:

1. Reasons **why** they eat.
2. The different places and scenarios **where** they eat.
3. Occasions and times **when** they eat.





Step 2 – Making Healthy Food Choices

Read through at least one scenario and consider:

How would you prepare for this activity? Yourself and class

What sensitive issues might come up?

How would you facilitate these conversations?



HSE (2023)



Preparing for Sensitive Issues

- ✓ Using a learning outcome you have identified as sensitive, choose an activity from the toolkit linked to it.
- ✓ Read through the activity and consider what sections may have the potential for sensitive conversations.
- ✓ Consider how you would facilitate these conversations in an inclusive way.



Preparing to teach



Teaching SPHE



Resources for teaching and learning SPHE/RSE

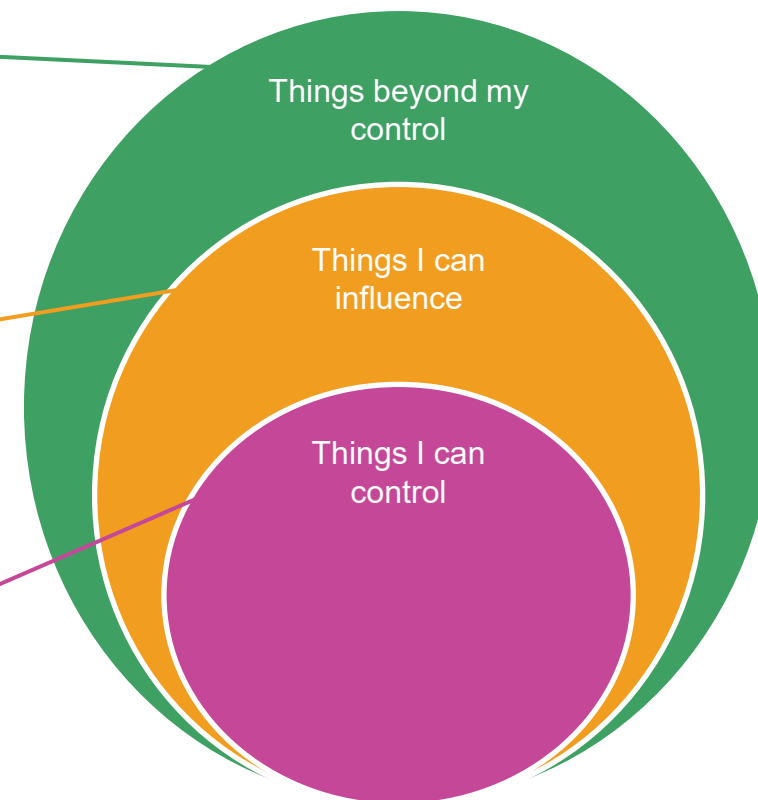


Reflection – Zones of Influence

These are the factors beyond your control
(home environment, cultural beliefs)

These are the factors outside of your control
which you can still influence
(classroom culture)

These are the factors within your control
(lesson planning, how we respond to something)





During this Day Participants have

Understood the key role that effective planning plays in facilitating sensitive conversations.

Further developed facilitation skills necessary for sensitive conversations in the SPHE classroom.

Analysed a teaching resource and prepared for sensitive issues which may come up.



Hopes for the Day



Have you fulfilled your hopes
for today?



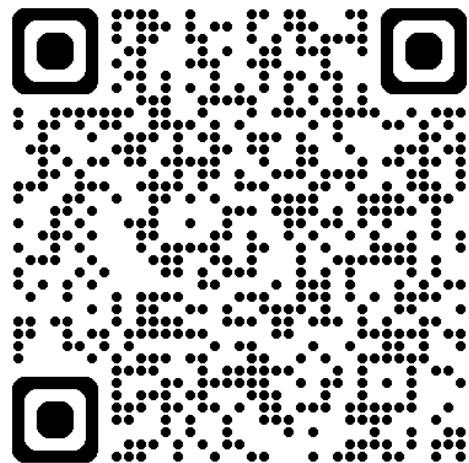
Next Steps

How will you incorporate your learning and experiences from the day into your practice?

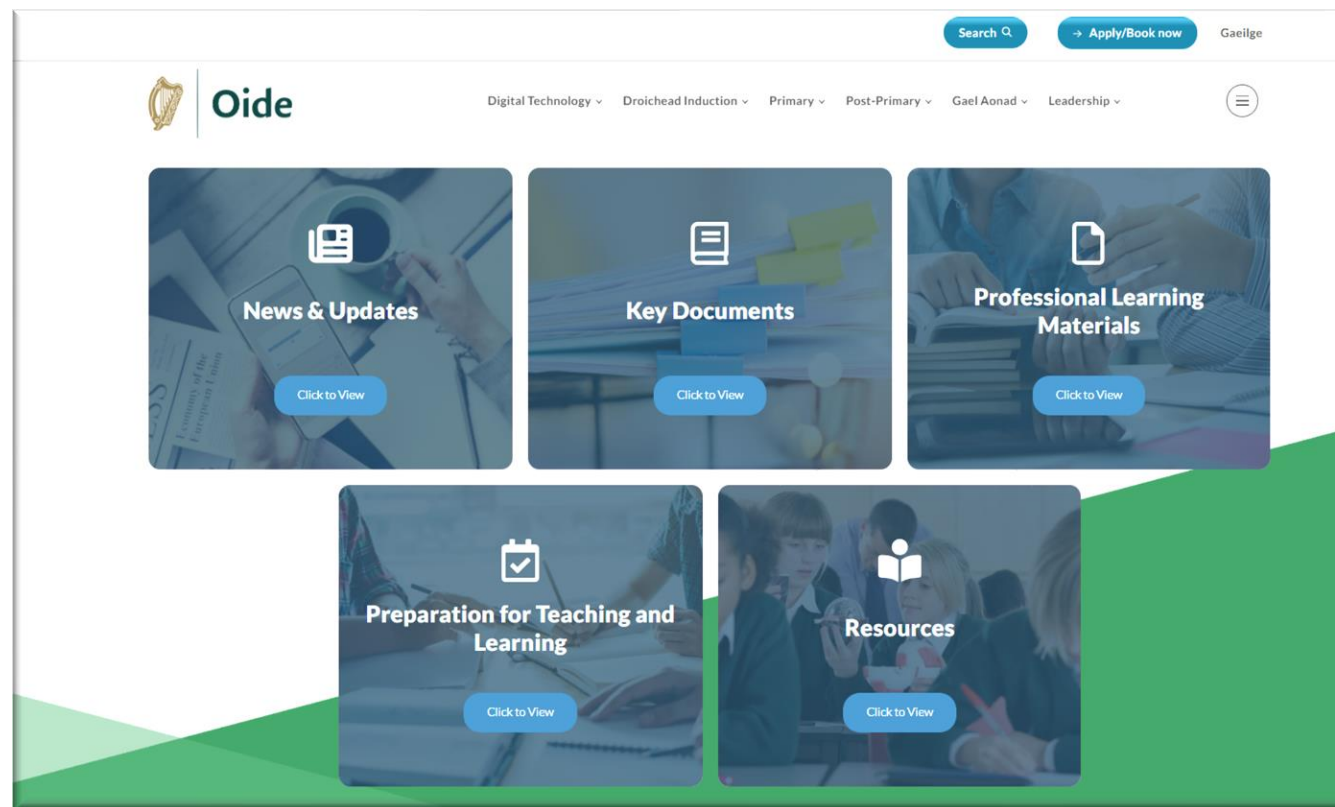




Key Documents and Resources available on the Oide Website



tinyurl.com/29zvs8n9





**Go raibh
maith agaibh**