

Song about friendship

Topics of the method
Friendship Care-activities
Target group
Children in kindergarten (age 3 - 6) The song can also be used for working with older children. For this target group we refer to the “Lessonplan English”, which includes the song and an age-appropriate content-related discussion of the topic of friendship adapted to the learning situation in primary schools.
Number of participants
There is no minimum and maximum number of participants.
Situation
The song can be used in any situation. Learning the song requires concentration from the children, as they have to remember both the lyrics and the melody. If the children already know the song, they need less concentration and it can be a fun exercise. The song can be sung for fun or used as an introduction for exploring the topic of friendship and caring for each other.
Framework
Necessary material
Accompanying instrument or Computer with speakers, for playing the music
Preparation
The educator should already know the song and have aimed for initial reflections on the topic of friendship.
Time
Learning the song: 20 minutes Learning the choreography: 10 minutes Singing the song: 2 minutes Reflecting on friendship: 30 minutes
Room
Any room (e.g. classroom) is suitable for this method, but it's also possible to do this method outside in the garden.
Instructions and step by step description
<p>1) Step 1: Listen to the song and learn the lyrics and the melody. (For the leadsheet have a look at the appendix)</p> <p>2) Step 2: Learn the movements to the song (better understanding through physical movement). Each care-activity can be presented with a movement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comfort: hugging each other, or one self as a symbol • Play: moving hands as if playing with little dolls, lego, etc. • Help: extend both hands forward helpfully • Listen: put your hand behind your ear • Share: Pretending to break something in half with your hands (like a sandwich) <p>1) Step 3: Reflect and discuss upon the topics of living with others in a community (like a kindergarten class), relations to other children and observe your own behaviour. The educator can discuss the following reflection questions with the children:</p>

- Do you think that Alex is a good friend?
- What do you like doing with your friends?
- What do you like about your friends?
- Do boys* and girls* have different friendships? Why?
- Who listens to you when you are sad? Who comforts you?
- Do you listen to other people when they feel sad? Do you comfort others?

Aims of the method

With the help of Alex from the Song “Alex is my friend” children can learn about friendship and the qualities, advantages and important features of a pleasant relationship with others. Children are led to reflect upon their own friendships and their relationships to others. They are presented with an opportunity to discover what they consider important in their connections to others and how positive social interactions can help them overcome struggles and difficult situations.

Content-wise specifications

Men* and women* are raised to follow different gender stereotypes and behaviours from an early age on. These stereotypes also lead to boys* being granted less or little room for their emotions. This means that for example boys* learn to suppress sensitive and caring aspects in their friendships and relationships. The concept of Caring Masculinities aims to move away from this gender stereotypical image of men* being only strong and tough towards a caring and more active member of society.

Children are invited to reflect upon their feelings and to understand what makes their relationships with others valuable and important. This applies equally to working with boys* and all other children.

There is a strong emphasis on the lack of equality in what is expected from boys*/men* and girls*/women* and how they are limited in their life choices. This will relate to the children's sense of justice but also teach them about the possibility of change.

Variations

The song forms the basis. All other activities, such as the choreography or the choice of reflection questions, are up to the educator.

The name “Alex” was chosen for this song because it can serve as a gender-neutral name or for girls* or boys*. The song wants to emphasise the necessity of caring about each other and being attentive to each other's needs in a friendship, especially among boys*. For this reason, the pronoun “he” was chosen for Alex. The song can also be used in an introduction to the topic of non-binary children and serve as a point of identification for non-binary children. A possible variation of the song could be to take out one verse and sing it several times, each time choosing a different name from the children in the kindergarten group.

Together with the children, new care activities that are important in a friendship can be sought. These can then be incorporated into the song in additional verses.

For children over the age of six years or the context of primary school there is a “Lessonplan English”, which includes an English version of the song “Alex is my friend” and an age-appropriate content-related discussion of the topic of friendship adapted to the learning situation in primary schools.

Aftermath

After learning the song and discussing the topic of friendship, which requires concentration from the children, a break should be taken before using another ECaRoM-method (e.g.: “Memory game” or “When I am grown up”).

Attention should be paid to gender stereotypical behaviour and situations. If such behaviour is noted, it should be reflected and discussed with the children.

Comments, experiences, tips, risks

Risks:

The topic of Caring Masculinities might raise questions on the children's side which the educators should be prepared to answer. For this reason, some background information is collected in the Lesson plan - English to help the educator feel comfortable with the subject.

Tips:

For more information about the topic of gender stereotypes among children and Caring Masculinities have a look at the ECaRoM lesson plan for the English class or the handout for the implementation of the song in kindergartens. There you will find a short summary with factual information about the topics.

Sources of the method

The song was written by Veronika Suppan and Lisa Wagner (Institut für Männer- und Geschlechterforschung) for the project "Early Care and the Role of Men".

Further reading

Klischeefrei Methodenset M14: https://www.klischee-frei.de/de/klischeefrei_101987.php
Boys in Care Toolkit: <https://www.boys-in-care.eu/tools>