

Disagreeing respectfully



Today we have some scenarios to share with you.

We'll be doing lots of thinking in question time, and we'll be hearing from other children, too. Are you comfortable?

Let's get started with some questions.



Has this ever happened to you? You are talking to your friend, or brother or sister, and they say something that you disagree with, but you don't say anything – you just keep it to yourself. Why didn't you say you disagreed with them?

Looking back on it, are you pleased you didn't disagree with them out loud?

Can you think why that might be?

Do you think there could be times when it is important to tell someone that you disagree with them, even if you know it will annoy them or hurt their feelings?

To help us to think about this, let's look at some scenarios. The first one is about Amelia and her friend Ella.

Amelia loves riding her bike. She lives in a small town in the country, and she and her friend Ella ride to school together every day. They keep away from the main road and don't see many cars. For the past week it's been hot – very hot – even in the mornings. By the time the girls get to school and take off their helmets, their faces are red and their hair is sweaty.

Today Amelia has had enough. "That's it," she says. "Tomorrow I'm not wearing my helmet. It'll be so much cooler without it. It can't be that dangerous to ride without a helmet."

Ella is shocked. All sorts of thoughts run through her head. "What if Amelia runs over a rock on the road and falls? What if a car comes too close? What if she goes too fast down the hill and loses her balance? It's too dangerous to ride without a helmet."

But then she thinks, "I'd better not say anything. I should let Amelia make up her own mind." And so, Ella keeps her thoughts to herself.



Ella doesn't agree with what Amelia says about not wearing her helmet because it is too dangerous.

Why do you think Ella doesn't tell Amelia what she thinks?

Would you do the same as Ella or would you do something else?

Let's hear from some other children.



Mac: Ella thinks it's way too dangerous not to wear a helmet but I think she doesn't want to tell her friend what to do because that would be being bossy.

Sragvee: I think that Ella's right, Amelia should make up her own mind, if she hurts herself it's her own fault.

Spike: I think I would say to Amelia: "Yeah, right, as if you'd do that!" – that's not being bossy.



What do you think? If no one tells you that what you are saying or doing is incorrect – that you are making a mistake – will you go on believing this?

Here's another scenario.

All summer holidays, Jake has been learning how to ride a skateboard. His parents gave him the skateboard for his birthday, just before the end of school for the year. They gave him a helmet and kneepads too and made him promise to always wear them.

Now Jake's pretty good. He can do jumps and turns, but the thing he likes most of all is going downhill fast.

Nat is Jake's friend. Nat has a skateboard too, but he's not as good as Jake. And he's scared of going too fast.

Right now, Jake is telling Nat about a hill he has just discovered close to the skate park where the boys ride their boards.

"It's steep and it'd be such a good ride," says Jake. "There's just one problem though – no footpath."

"Well then, you can't do it. You know you can't skate on the road," replies Nat.



What do you think: Is Nat right? Or is it OK to skate on the road?

Let's see what Jake thinks.

"I think it might be OK. I don't think the road's very busy," says Jake.

"I can't believe you're saying this Jake. Skating on the road is totally dangerous," Nat says.

"Well, I'm going to give it a try," says Jake.

"What? You're crazy! You're an idiot! You're mad! I've had it with you!"

And with that said, Nat runs off.

Here are some questions and ideas for you to think about, and you'll hear from some other children as well.



Nat tells Jake that skating on the road is "totally dangerous". Do you think Nat should have kept his opinion to himself?

When Nat yelled at Jake, and called him 'crazy', an 'idiot' and 'mad', was that OK?

Let's hear what other children think about this.



Sragvee: Yes, I agree it's OK, because Jake is all those things – crazy, an idiot and mad – and more. He's only thinking about having fun!



Do you think that yelling at Jake and calling him names would have changed Jake's mind?



Mac: It depends – maybe they call each other names like that in fun, so it wouldn't change his mind.

Sragvee: But Nat runs off and leaves Jake, so I think Nat must be *really serious* and so it might change his friend's mind.



Is it possible that yelling at Jake could make him more determined to prove that he could do it?



Ellie: It might... just to prove the point.



Some people might say that Nat was being disrespectful to Jake when he disagreed with him, yelling at him and calling him an idiot. What do you think?

If you were Nat, what would you say to try to change Jake's mind?

Is what you would say being respectful of Jake?

This is the last scenario for you to think about – it's about two friends, Nala and Hannah.

By the way ... there's talk of a dog in this scenario, a Chihuahua (you say it like Chee-wah-wah) – this is a very small breed of dog about the size of kitten that could sit comfortably in your lap or fit in a backpack!

Here's the story: For as long as she can remember, Nala has wanted a dog. But each time she asks her dad, he says the same thing: "You can have a dog once you're old enough to look after it yourself."

In two weeks, it will be Nala's birthday. She will be eight. And this morning at breakfast, her dad said, "Nala, I've made a decision. This birthday we will get you a dog."

Nala couldn't believe it. 'Thanks ... thanks Dad!' she said and gave him a big hug. And then she ran off because she felt like crying. She didn't know why.

Now Nala is on her way to school. She can't wait to tell Hannah. She and Hannah have been friends since kindergarten. Hannah loves dogs too.

She runs straight to the seat where she and Hannah meet every morning.

"You won't believe this, Hannah," Nala says. "I'm getting a dog for my birthday!"

Hannah is really happy too. "That's fantastic!" she says. "What kind of dog do you want? Do you get to choose?"

"I hope so," Nala says, "because I really want a Chihuahua."

"Oh no!" says Hannah, "don't get one of those."

"Why not?" says Nala. "I think they're the cutest little dogs, I'll be able to carry her and take her anywhere."

"Just trust me," says Hannah. "They're useless. Get something else."

And now, I have some questions for you to think about...



What do you think – is it okay for Hannah to tell Nala she shouldn't get a Chihuahua?

Let's listen to what some other children have said.



Spike: I think it is OK for Hannah to say what she thinks, because they have been friends for a long time, so they probably know each other really well. Also, it says in the scenario that Hannah is really happy that her friend is getting a dog.

Ellie: But when Hannah says that, I bet Nala felt pretty awful!



In the scenario, Hannah says “Just trust me ... they’re useless. Get something else.” Does Hannah say why she thinks this? Can you think what Hannah’s reasons might be?



Ellie: I think they are really expensive to buy.

Mac: Chihuahuas make a horrible yappy noise.

Spike: It could be because Hannah knows Nala really loves playing and running with the all the other dogs in the park ... and you can’t do that with a Chihuahua because they are way too small and it would get hurt!

Ellie: Hannah might be jealous.



What do you think? If you were Nala, would you want to know Hannah’s reasons? Would knowing Hannah’s reason help Nala think more carefully about Hannah’s opinion? Would it be more respectful to Nala if Hannah had explained why she disagreed?

We considered and heard some really interesting ideas today!

You might like to keep thinking about disagreeing and disagreeing respectfully and have a talk to family and friends about what they think, too.

Thank you to our wonderful actors Mac, Sravgee, Ellie and Spike who helped us to hear different points of view. While sometimes these points of view might have reflected their own opinions, at other times they were asked to express an opposing view in order to help us think more deeply about the topic.

Photo credit: [Robina Weermeijer](#) on Unsplash