“Words”

SESSION PLAN

Preparation needed

- **Projector/ PC if needed**
- **Flipchart/whiteboard and marker pens if needed**
- **Relevant Powerpoint slides for scenario**

Reflection

- Consider the last session and spend a short bit of time covering any learning points and observations since the last session.
- If relevant **ask** – has anyone done anything that was influenced by this session?
- Reference any relevant news/information to update on previous session.
- Re-do/remind the group of the GROUP AGREEMENT.

Setting the Scene

Learning Intentions:

- **To understand the impact of language and how this can contribute to other types of abuse.**
- **To recognise the role of bystanders and ways in which bystanders can intervene.**

- **Introduce the session** – inform the group that this session will look at how words can be hurtful and can possibly contribute to other forms of abuse.
- Remind the group that for the session they are bystanders to a scenario.
- Hands up if you have been aware of this happening in your school? – Have the group discuss their thoughts and share any examples if appropriate.

The Scene

Have a volunteer read aloud the scenario. Thereafter read the scenario yourself.

One of your classmates tells your friend their new trainers are gay. This classmate always describes things they don't like as being gay. Your friend looks embarrassed.

Ask the group whether this is a realistic and relevant scenario. Could this happen?

Ask the group to discuss and identify any red flags in the scenario. Clarify you are looking for the words/phrases that appear wrong or unhealthy.

After few minutes **ask** the group to share some of the red flags they have identified.

Ask the group to raise their hands if they feel there is something wrong/hurtful in this scenario. **Ask** the group to look around the room at the responses from their peers.

My Challenges

Ask the group to discuss with a partner or within small groups what they are thinking when they read this scenario.

After a few minutes **ask** students for responses/feedback. Thereafter read aloud and show the following **train of thought.**

Why is my friend looking so upset? … It's only a word … He doesn't mean he thinks my friend is gay. Or does he? … Could he be gay? What does it matter? … I can't control what everyone says and thinks but why does he use the word gay in that way? … If I say something, will he or others think I'm overreacting or think I'm gay? What should I do?

Ask – What reasons might someone give for not getting involved?
Fear, not my business, don't want to lose a friend, don't know what to do etc.

Discussion Time

Agree/Disagree/Unsure (ADU) Activity & Discussion

Statement: <u>Using the word GAY to describe something is harmless.</u>

Give a short amount of time for the group to make their choice. Then ask 2-3 people in each group: Why did you agree/disagree/why are you unsure?

Ask the group:

1. When could it be used in a way that might be hurtful? *Suggestions might include: bullying, if your friend might be gay or bisexual.*

2. When else is the term Gay used? *Get the group to give some examples. You may get responses around a person's sexuality. If there is any confusion prompt by asking is the word sometimes used to describe objects?*

3. When the term is used to describe an object, is it a positive comment? *The word is often used to describe something in negative way.*

4. When we say something is gay does it matter if we don't mean any harm? *It doesn't matter if we don't mean to harm anyone, we can't determine the impact of our behaviour on others and it depends how another person might feel after hearing it.*

Ask group to sit down.

DISCUSSION STARTERS:

Ask the group:

1. In this scenario who might be hurt? *Suggestions may include: your friend, people around who are gay/have gay friends or family members etc.*

2. Why might use of the word gay in this way be harmful? *Likely responses will include that the word is being used as a put down, its negative, an insult.*

3. What does that say to a person who is, or might be, gay? *It suggests there is something wrong with being gay. There is not.*

4. How do you think your friend might be feeling in this situation? *Responses may include: embarrassed, upset, isolated, alone, scared etc.*

5. Why might this type of behaviour make it difficult for a gay person to be open about their sexuality? *Suggestions might include: they are embarrassed because they think people think it's bad or wrong to be gay, they might think they'll be bullied etc. Suggest to the class that negative comments about sexuality are common and that these comments might prevent people from being able to be themselves, and ultimately be happy in their lives.*

6. Why might other bystanders (friends) be slow to say or do something? *Suggestions may include: Fear of being different, being called gay or of attention turning on them, thinking it's just 'banter', they don't see a problem etc.*

7. In the train of thought the bystander thinks he might be called gay if he stands up for his friend. Could this be a reason people don't want to get involved? *Suggest that if everyone thought it was 'just a joke' and didn't link the use of the word to homosexuality, people wouldn't worry about being called gay for challenging the use of the word.*

8. What is homophobia? *Explore responses which will centre on hatred of a person because of their sexuality. Explain that using homophobic language can lead to a charge of hate crime and that it can be enough that someone is offended by language they hear, which they perceive to be homophobic – whether or not that language was directed at them.*

9. Do you think homophobia is a problem in the UK? Yes, homophobia remains a problem for young people in the UK. (Recent statistics from, for example, LGBT+ Youth www.theproudtrust.org could be used to support the fact.)

My Leadership

Ask the group to discuss with partners/in groups the following:

- what is their role in this scenario?
- who should they be thinking about in this scenario?
- who do they have a responsibility to help in this situation?

My Plan

Say - We have discussed the 'scene' and your 'challenges' lets now think what we can do.

Tell the group they have 5 – 10 minutes to discuss in pairs their plan around what they could do in this situation. **Ask** the group to make sure that they think of any consequences that could occur.

Option 1: Do nothing. It's none of your business.

Ask the group:

1. Is this an option that some might consider using? *We have already identified some of the reasons people might give for not getting involved.*

2. What might happen if you do nothing? *Responses may include: It could get worse, people might feel unable to be open about their sexuality, people can be offended.*

3. What does doing nothing say to your friend? *That you don't think there's anything wrong with what was said.*

4. What does doing nothing say to the person using the word gay as an insult? *That this is ok and that you don't think there's a problem with what s/he is saying.*

Option 2: Quickly change the subject to take the attention off your friend.

Ask the group:

1. How could you change the subject in this situation? *For example, ask what your friends are doing at the weekend. Come up with a couple of your ideas ahead of the session in case you need to prompt the group.*

2. What might this say to your friend and classmate? *They might recognise that you don't agree with the use of the word gay as an insult, or they might just think you didn't hear or weren't interested in what was being said.*

3. How likely would this be to stop further use of the word gay as an insult in the future? *Not really. You haven't challenged the use of the word.*

Option 3: Ask your friend if he's ok and let him know you didn't like what happened.

Ask the group:

1. How might your friend feel if you did this? *Suggestions might include: supported, pleased you recognised there was something wrong, less isolated etc.*

2. If you only speak to your friend, what haven't you addressed? *If group have difficulty with this, you may need to prompt them:* Do you think you might still need to speak to the person who used the word gay as an insult? Why? *Not addressing it with the person who used that word won't stop him/her from doing so again.*

Option 4: Let my classmate know I'm not happy with what she/he said and that the word gay should not be used as an insult.

Ask the group:

1. How easy would it be to directly confront the behaviour in this way? Why? *This might be easier for more confident people in the group, but can be difficult for others.*

2. What could you do to make this option safer and easier to do? *Suggestions may include: making sure you say it at the right time and in the right way – not judging, but being clear about what is wrong, perhaps taking a friend with you or asking an adult to address it with your classmate rather than doing it on your own.*

Option 5: Start a discussion with your friends and see what their views are.

Ask the group:

1. Why might this be a good option? *Remind the group that as most/all have already agreed that they see something wrong in this situation (when they raised their hands earlier), chances are their friends do too.*

2. If more people start to challenge the use of this word as an insult when they hear it, what might happen? *Suggestions may include: people would stop using it so much, people who are gay/bisexual wouldn't feel there was something wrong with that, people could be themselves, school would be happier etc.*

Option 6: Talk about this with a teacher/adult you trust or an MVP mentor, and ask if they can start a class/group discussion on this. Or invite the local LGBTQ+ group in.

Ask the group:

1. What might make this a good option? *Suggestions may include: you don't need to get directly involved, or name the people involved, but can still address the issue in a wider group. Pupils might be more likely to listen to a teacher/adult or MVP mentor. It gives an opportunity to discuss the potential harm as a group.*

2. What reasons might people give for not choosing this option? *Suggestions might include: don't want to be a tell-tale / a 'grass' (remind pupils that helping out in this situation is about being a good friend), don't want to be targeted (remind pupils that the teacher /mentor won't need to identify them if they choose to have a wider class discussion about this).*

Option 7: Personal Option

Ask the group:

1. Is there anything else you could do? *Remember to explore the possible consequences for any additional options.*

Final words

Reinforce key messages

Reinforce the key messages from discussion to include:

- Let the group know that as leaders, they have the opportunity to make sure their school and community are supportive and inclusive, and this begins with the use of language.
- Using the word gay as a put down can be hurtful and disrespectful.
- This type of behaviour could make it difficult for a gay person to be themselves.
- Whilst there may be no intention to cause harm it could still affect how others feel.
- There are a number of options we can choose from to challenge behaviour when we don't agree with it.
- We have a responsibility to help our friends and keep ourselves safe.