

Helsinki

Story of Choices

Instructor's Guide

Story of Choices – instructor’s guide

The Story of Choices is a method for teaching 6th-graders about emotional skills, safety skills and the dangers of substance abuse. You are holding the Instructor’s Guide, which forms the framework for the Story of Choices lesson, together with the video. We hope you have good discussions with the 6th-graders!

Preparations before the class’ arrival

- It should have been confirmed prior to the lesson that the class is indeed participating and that the teacher has divided the class into two or three groups (each group should have 7–10 pupils).
- Reserve the groups two or three calm rooms where the pupils can be seated and there is room for the participatory exercises.
- Ensure that all pupils can see and hear the video played on a TV screen, laptop, video projector, tablet, etc.

Instructor’s checklist

- The lesson is 60 minutes long for each class.
- All instructors should be present when the class arrive.
- The instructors welcome the pupils and introduce themselves.
- The instructors inform the class briefly of what will happen during the lesson.
- Emphasise that the most important thing is to discuss things together, not whether the answers are right or wrong.
- The groups move to the rooms reserved for them.
- The durations marked in the different sections of the lesson are approximate.
- The text includes sections that have information, tips and guidance for the instructor.

- You can ask the questions in italics if there is time.
- Keep the goals of the Story of Choices in your mind throughout the lesson.

The goals of the Story of Choices lesson are the following

Part 1

- Getting to know the characters.
- Warming up for the discussions.
- Creating a safe atmosphere.

Part 2

- Understanding the causes and consequences of experimenting with and using intoxicants.
- Thinking about how we act and make choices in difficult situations.

Part 3

- Strengthening safety skills regarding personal boundaries.
- Increasing understanding of the causes and consequences of feelings and actions.
- Practising how to act in various situations.
- Stimulating the group’s thoughts on choices and their effects on you and others.

Helsingin kaupunki 2018

Lasten ja nuorten ehkäisevä päihdetyö,
Klaari Helsinki

Työryhmä:

Mari Sirén, Klaari Helsinki

Marinoora Alanne, Klaari Helsinki

Denice Lönnroth, Klaari Helsinki

Anu Mäkinen, Espoon kaupungin
nuorisopalvelut

Paula Mattila, Vantaan kaupungin
ehkäisevä päihdetyö

Kirsi Porras, Väestöliitto

Sari Hälinen, Väestöliitto

Tuija Rinkinen, Väestöliitto

Videon käsikirjoitus ja ohjaus:

Samuli Mäkisalo, Nuorisopalvelut / Narrin
näyttämö

Videon kuvaus ja editointi:

Kulttuuriareena Gloria

Lesson on the Story of Choices

Video: Part 1 Introduction (5 min)

Characters in the story:

Emil is an 8th-grader
Arttu is an 8th-grader
Jessica is an 8th-grader
Emma is an 7th-grader

Exercise: Getting to know the characters

The pupils stand in a circle, with a screen showing the pictures of the characters. Go through the characters: taking turns, each pupil says one thing they remember about a character (for example: that Jessica is Emma's friend). You can also use a ball to choose who speaks next.

What happened in the story?

Why did Emma ask Jessica to come with her to Emil's?

Could Jessica have said no? (Opinion: thumbs up/down)

In what ways could she have refused?

What could her refusal lead to?

Why didn't Emma tell her parents where she was going?

Why would it be good to tell your parents where you're going?

It's good for parents to know where and with whom their child is.
This creates a feeling of trust and safety both for you and your parents.

Video: Part 2 Alcohol, snus and peer pressure (15 min)

What happened in the story?

Exercise: Opinion line

Done by the instructor and assistant instructor together. The assistant instructor may also join the pupils on the line. It is important that the assistant instructor gives the pupils space to express their opinions.

Next, you will think about the things Emil says in the story using an opinion line. One end of the line means 'yes', while the other end means 'no', and the middle of the line means a neutral opinion or 'I don't know'. Read out statements to which the pupils will answer independently by moving to a point on the line that corresponds to their opinion regarding the statement. The instructor will read out statements 1–3, with their justifications, and all the included sub-statements. Read out statement 4 only if you have the time.

Emil claimed to know a lot of things.

Snus is a smokeless tobacco product that is placed under the upper lip loose or in a pouch.

1. Snus is healthier than cigarettes.
Yes – no. Why did you choose this point on the line?

- Selling snus is not permitted in Finland.
- Persons over 18 years can import a limited amount of snus for their personal use.
- Snus contains hazardous substances, such as substances that cause cancer, metals that are hazardous for health and the environment, and pesticides and herbicides.

- Snus causes a powerful nicotine addiction since it contains 20 times more nicotine than cigarettes.

Snus has both immediate and long-term effects on the body

- It stresses the heart -> it raises the blood pressure and increases the pulse temporarily.
- It's harmful for the mouth -> it causes smelly breath, discolours and erodes the teeth, and damages the mucous membranes; in long-term use, it also harms the gums and increases the number of cavities.
- It affects the muscles -> nicotine reduces the oxygen supply to the muscles and reduces muscle power and muscle mass. (ASH Finland)

There's no point in comparing intoxicants to each other.

All intoxicants are harmful.

2. It's more fun if everyone is drinking.

Yes – no. Why did you choose this point on the line?

How does alcohol affect a young person?

Why do people drink alcohol?



Why did Emil and Arttu decide to drink alcohol before the girls arrived?



Alcohol affects different people differently.

- The younger a person is, the greater the risks of alcohol are.
- A person's sex, weight and age all contribute to how alcohol may affect the person.
- The brain of a child or a young person is more sensitive to the effects of alcohol. Our brains continue to develop until we're over 20 years old. This is why using alcohol may disrupt a person's learning and memory.

- Children and young people have a greater risk of being involved in an accident when intoxicated by alcohol.
- A person's personality may change when intoxicated by alcohol: some become more talkative, and others may become aggressive.
- When large amounts of alcohol are consumed, it typically causes rapid mood swings, the slurring of speech, staggering and the inability to assess your actions and the consequences of the actions.

Why people drink alcohol

- When adults use alcohol in small amounts, they may feel invigorated, relaxed or more sociable.
- Excessive alcohol use is also harmful for adults, and it may also cause addiction. However, there's help available for addictions. (Nuortenlinkki.fi)

You don't need alcohol to have fun.

3. Accessing alcohol is difficult for pupils in the upper stage.

Yes – no.

Why aren't persons under 18 allowed to consume alcohol, according to the law?

In Finland, children and young people are protected by an age limit of 18 years. The restriction is set because alcohol affects young people more powerfully and is more harmful for them, as we mentioned earlier.

Offering or buying alcohol for anyone under 18 is also forbidden by law.

Giving alcohol to a minor is punishable by law. A grown-up friend, parent or stranger commits a crime if they buy, offer or give alcohol to a minor. They will have to pay a fine.

If something serious happens to the young person, the person who bought/offered them alcohol may have to face consequences (fines, a police interrogation), depending on the situation. If a minor is caught using intoxicants, child welfare services may be notified.

You are not allowed to drink alcohol when you're underage, and you don't have to drink. You won't have to drink as an adult, either.



**4. You have to try everything (not just alcohol).
Yes – no. Why did you choose this point on the line?**

It's good to have an open mind about new things, since unnecessary prejudice may prevent you from learning fun new things or skills.

It's also good to think about why something is forbidden. There's usually a reason behind the restrictions.



Emil said he knew what girls want.

How can you know what another person wants?

Were the things Emil said true?

Why did Emil say he knew things he actually didn't know?

People act differently in different situations. People aren't always what they seem or what they say they are. For example, Emil may feel insecure and want to hide it, or maybe he wants to be more popular.

Does Emil need to pretend he's something he's not?

What advice do you have for Emil so he can just be himself?

Do you need to pretend when you're in the upper stage?

The assistant instructor's turn
(if an assistant instructor is not present, the instructor may use this turn to speak)

- You can be yourself even in the upper stage, and you don't need to pretend to be something or someone else.
- You don't need to use or try alcohol, cigarettes or snus when you in the upper stage.
- You don't need to try and impress others by trying things that make you uncomfortable.
- Entering the upper stage may also offer a new opportunity.

In the story, Emil offered alcohol to the others.

In what ways could Arttu have refused when Emil offered him alcohol?

What kinds of choices did Emma and Jessica make about alcohol?

Why did Emma drink, even though she and Jessica had talked about not being interested in drinking?

Was it easy for Jessica to refuse?

In which different ways can you refuse something you don't want to do?

There are different ways of refusing something, and everyone can refuse in their own way. For example, you can refuse by saying 'no' or 'thank you, but I'd rather not'. You can also leave the situation; you don't need to explain why you're leaving. Agreements and curfews agreed with your parents can help you in situations like this. Here, the instructors and pupils can give examples, such as refusing to participate in bullying.

Video: Part 3

Emotions and safety skills related to emotions, feelings and boundaries (25 min)

What happened in the story?

Do you think there's a difference between having a crush and being in love?

Which word would you use in this situation?

The feeling of infatuation/love may be very powerful, and you can't always affect who you get infatuated/fall in love with. Or you may not be infatuated/in love with anyone, and that's okay. Infatuation/falling in love is a very personal matter, and you shouldn't pick on anyone because of their crush. There are many different emotions and feelings, and you shouldn't be afraid of them. You can't always control them, either. However, you can control your own actions. That's why it's important to identify your feelings and emotions.

Which characters have a crush on someone, and on whom?

Whom can you have a crush on/be in love with?

The story describes Emma having a crush on Emil, but there's no mention of the others' crushes. Go through all the different options of who could have a crush on whom: Arttu with Emil, Emil with Arttu, Jessica with Emma... Pay attention to equality! The story describes Emma having a crush on Emil, but there's no mention of the others' crushes.

How can you tell if you're having a crush/if you're in love?

Where on your body could you feel the infatuation/love?

Tell the pupils that the feeling of infatuation is individual, and everyone feels it differently and in different parts of the body.

You can keep the infatuation to yourself: you don't need to do anything or tell anyone about it if you don't want to.

If you want to approach the person you have a crush on, how could you do that?

What can you do when things don't go the way you want and you feel disappointed?

Take a moment for everyone to reflect on this privately; the pupils don't have to answer aloud. Disappointment may feel awful, but talking to a friend or adult, for example, usually makes you feel better. You must never take your bad feelings or disappointment out on others by insulting or hurting them. Sports, music or writing a diary may also help with difficult feelings.

What should you do when someone has a crush on you, but you don't have a crush on them – how do you deal with it without hurting the other person's feelings?

You must not spread rumours about the other person's crush, and you must not pick on anyone over their crush. Always consider the other person's feelings: it's not always easy to reveal you have crush on someone.

What does it mean to date someone/be in a relationship with someone?

A relationship is always a mutual agreement between two people. You need to respect the other person, and both persons are equal in a relationship. Dating/a relationship is what you both decide it should be. You never have to do anything you're not ready for or anything that doesn't feel good.

On the video, Emil put his hand on Emma's thigh, and Emma pushed it away.

What could Emma have done if she didn't want Emil to keep touching her?

For example, Emma could have said 'no', turned away, or moved further away, and if she was nervous, it would've been important to say it aloud. That's how Emil could've learned how Emma felt.

Signals from the body = confusion, restlessness, anxiety, unpleasantness or fear that is expressed by the muscles becoming tense or wanting to leave the situation, etc. When you're faced with such a feeling, remember that it's always possible to back down.

How could Emil have made sure that it was OK to touch Emma?

By asking and observing the other person's body language.

Select one of these exercises: Stop or Disagreement.

Exercise: Stop

In this exercise, pupils will practice setting physical boundaries in pairs.

The pupils will stand face-to-face with their partner with 2 metres between them. Do the exercise twice.

1. The first pupil (A) stands still and imagines that the second pupil (B) is a complete stranger. Pupil B approaches pupil A slowly. A says 'Stop!' and makes a stop signal with their hand once B gets too close. B stops when asked. After this, the pupils switch roles.

2. The first pupil (A) stands still and imagines that the second pupil (B) is someone they know, but not as close to them as a family member or their best friend. Pupil B approaches pupil A slowly. A says 'Stop!' and makes a stop signal with their hand once B gets too close. B stops when asked. After this, the pupils switch roles.

3. Debrief the exercise jointly.

What kinds of thoughts did the exercise evoke?

Everyone has a different need for personal space, and that's fine. This also depends on how safe you consider the other person to be and how well you know them

How did you feel when the other person raised their hand and said 'Stop!'?

How did it feel to raise your hand and tell the other person to stop?

What do you think: is it easy to tell someone that something doesn't feel good? (Thumbs up/down)

Having others respect your physical and mental boundaries is a human right. You should never touch someone without their permission if you're not sure the other person is OK with it!

Exercise: Disagreement

Tehtävässä harjoitellaan sanomaan käskypareja eri äänensävyillä ja kehon asennoilla.

1. Divide the pupils into pairs. The idea is that one partner gives different commands and the other refuses them. Always start and end the exercise with the pupils standing face-to-face, a short distance from each other.

The command-pairs are the following:

Take – I won't take it

Look – I won't look

Come – I won't come

Stop – I won't stop

2. The pupils switch roles at times. Encourage the pupils to try different tones of voice and different postures.

3. Debrief the exercise jointly.

How did it feel to disagree with your partner?

How did it feel when you changed your body posture?

How did changing your tone affect the commands?

(Adapted from: Voimaneidot, Kalliolan nuoret)

In the video, Jessica slaps Arttu. Why?

Is it OK to slap someone? (thumbs up/down)

How did Arttu feel when Jessica slapped him?

What's the difference between bullying and a joke?

If you notice the other person's feelings were hurt by a something you said or did as a joke, it's no longer a joke. In this case, it's smart to stop and apologise.

Online safety skills

Ask if the pupils have been taught about online safety skills at school.

In the story, Jessica took a picture of Arttu's bottom and shared it online.

What do you think about Jessica's choice to share the picture online?

You're not allowed to share a picture of another person on social media without the other person's permission; using pictures of other people is controlled by the law.

- The Criminal Code of Finland forbids taking pictures in people's homes or private yards without permission. It also forbids spreading information that violates personal privacy, such as pictures.
- The Personal Data Act requires you to ask a person for permission before publishing their picture if the person is recognisable in the picture. If you receive a picture from your friend and you don't know who is in the picture, you are committing a crime if you share the picture with others.

How did Arttu feel when the picture was posted online?

Why did Arttu get angry when Jessica posted the picture on Instagram?

Are you allowed to share a picture of someone online without their permission?

What could Jessica have done when she noticed Arttu was hurt by her sharing the picture?

Can you remove a picture from social media?

A person who's uploaded a picture to social media can also remove it. However, you should remember that other users may have also shared the picture, which will make it difficult to make things completely right.

- • On some sites/services, you may ask the admins (= the company/people who control the site/service) to remove a picture or other inappropriate content you see. You can also contact the police online.

Why did Arttu decide to walk his motorbike home?

Did you know that you're not even allowed walk your scooter or motorbike when you're intoxicated?

What kinds of choices did the characters make?

We make choices all the time. Some choices are easy, some are hard, and some choices we make without noticing. Sometimes our choices are good, sometimes not so good, but usually, we get over the worse choices. You never leave a friend behind!

What kind of night did Emma have?

What kind of night would Jessica have had if the others hadn't been drinking?

Who can you talk to if you're worried about yourself or your friend?

Go through the different people the pupils can talk to, such as friends, parents, teachers, a school welfare officer, a psychologist, a school nurse, a youth worker, a coach and other trustworthy adults. You don't have to be alone with your worries: you should always ask for help.

You should always tell your parents where you're going and whom you'll be with. This way, you can maintain trust between you and your parents. You should always call your parents if you experience something that worries you.

Video: End credits

Show the pupils the rest of the video and read the sentences on the screen aloud.

What feelings did the lesson evoke?

Conclusion (5 min)

What did you think of this lesson? (thumbs up/down)

Exercise: Safety instructions

Some pupils may be familiar with these safety instructions, but it's still worth going through them.

Go through the instructions with the pupils either by doing the exercise or by reading the instructions aloud. You can encourage the pupils to practice firm refusal at home, as well.

1. Say NO

- Practice saying NO loudly, firmly and convincingly.

2. Leave the location or online service

- You're always allowed to leave without having to explain yourself.
- You don't need anyone's permission or consent to leave a suspicious or uncomfortable situation.

3. Talk to a trustworthy adult

- Talk to an adult even if the situation has already passed.
- An adult can intervene in the situation and support the child.

(Lajunen et al. 2005; Brusila et al. 2009.)

The instructors will inform the class's teacher if a specific subject arose often during the lesson, or if the instructor was concerned about anything.

