

POINT TO POINT

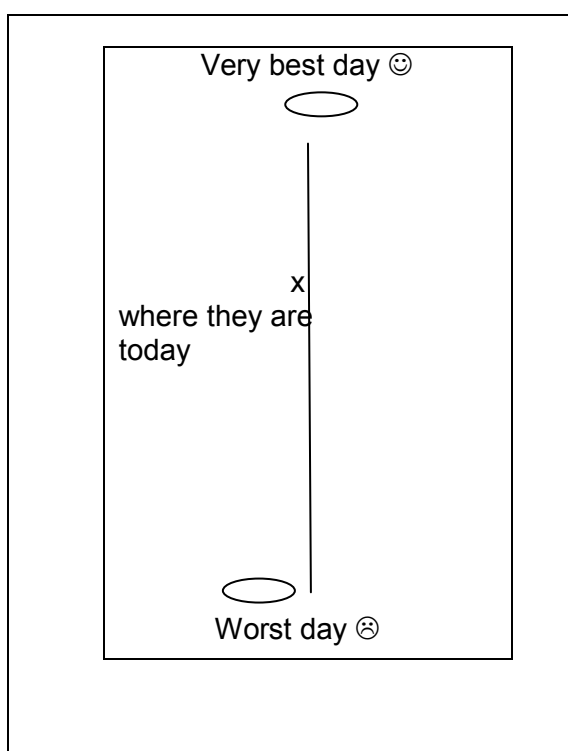
An activity to encourage a student to discuss supports and barriers at school around specific events

Introduction

Research has indicated that children and young people often find it easier to talk about the barriers they face and the support they require by talking about specific events in their lives which they view as 'good' or 'bad'. The Point to Point activity has been designed to take account of this finding.

During this activity a student is first asked to make a mark on the paper which represents their very best day at school, and then to make a mark representing their worst day in school. They are then asked to join the two marks together (hence 'Point to Point') and to make a mark on the line to show where they feel today in relation to their happiness at school.

Throughout this process students are invited to describe and discuss their choices and to comment on supportive factors and barriers. The child or young person is free to explain their view of their world, and they may surprise us with their definitions and interpretations of what is supportive and what is not.



Point to Point provides a structure for discussion and will be most productive for the individual child where time can be taken to explore difficult issues in depth.

The role of the facilitator

The facilitator is likely to be a member of staff who is known to the student (but preferably not someone that the student may wish to please by providing the 'correct answers'). A peer or older student may be able to take on this role if they are well briefed, as long as the target student is comfortable about such an arrangement.

The facilitator's role is to help a student think about supportive factors and barriers they face in the school environment (and possibly factors relating to their transition between home and school such as transport or communication with their parents or carers).

Carrying out the activity

1. Materials needed:

- A sheet of A3 paper
- Photocopies of any picture prompts
- Coloured pens
- A quiet space where the student will not be overheard and the activity will not be interrupted.

Alternatively:

- A traditional or interactive whiteboard and pens could be used (with blu-tack to secure the picture prompts on a traditional board).
- A metal board with magnets (with string for the line, secured with blue-tack)

2. Decide how introduce Point to Point to the pupil.

- Make sure the students know why people want to know what they think, what the purpose of the activity is and who will have access to the information. Pupils need to understand that there are no right and wrong answers and that you just want to find out what they think about things that help them at school and things that don't help.
- Make sure you leave enough time at the end for students to discuss their feelings about what has been discussed, e.g. 'Has anything we have talked about been upsetting? Would you like to talk some more to someone about your feelings?'

3. Start with positive factors

- Ask the student to make a mark (an X) which represents his or her very best day at school. This mark is made at the top of the paper (or whiteboard, or magnetic board) where a smiley face is drawn, or 'Very best day' is written (or both). Ask the student to describe this day and why it was their best, what helped to make it good, who you were with what they did etc

4. Then look at negative factors

The student is asked to make a cross on the piece of paper representing his or her worst day in school, to describe this day and explain why it was so difficult.

5. Joining the marks

Ask the student to join the two marks and to put a cross on the line where he or she feels today in relation to happiness at school.

- The student is asked what helped him or her to move from the worst day to today's position, for example by asking:

What or who makes things okay?

What makes things better and helps you to have a good day?

- Any additional support factors or barriers discussed by the student should be recorded on the chart.

Undertaking the activity with a group

Where students are comfortable talking about sensitive issues with one another the activity could be carried out in pairs or in small groups. Find a quiet space where the group can have a discussion without being overheard or interrupted.

Agree ground rules, e.g.

- Listen to each other
- No put downs (as in circle time)
- Recognise that we all have different ideas about what helps and what gets in the way and that it is important that everyone gets a say

Use a large sheet of paper to record students' responses, e.g. a flipchart.

One student at a time

- One student is asked to go first, with the rest of the group listening, questioning or adding comments.
- At the end of the session, the group would consider each student's chart and then make a final chart, recording any supports or barriers in common

Example of how one school carried out this activity

The deputy head of a special school introduced the activity in a school assembly where the pupils had started to think about their best and worst days at school, things that can get in the way and things that can support learning. The teacher then followed it up with a small group of pupils who were used to working together. He prompted the pupils to think about school by using an example from his own school life. He said one of the most important and best days was when he realised he could read on his own.

They were then given an A3 sheet of paper with 'My best day' at the top, with a box for a picture and 6 bubbles for them to write in. In the lower half of the paper, 'My worst day' was written. There were 4 bubbles for negative factors and a box to draw a picture. There was a line down the right hand side. The issues raised by the children included doing something they regretted, being bullied and friends going away. The teacher supported the pupils to think through the issues reflecting back their comments and feelings and gently asking questions that help to identify sources of support and strategies e.g. was there anybody who could have helped ? how would you like to have done ? what would you do now if you were in that position ?

The activity was brought to a close by the teacher commenting that some things can stay with you for a long time and that you often remember things that you didn't like happening. He said that their ideas may change with time.

Chart for recording best and worst days (A3)

Very best day 😊

Worst day ☹️

