

Real life, your life?

Activity 05 Talk it over



How we talk about healthy living makes a difference to how we and those around us feel. Research shows that using positive language creates positivity. Activities 4 and 5 link together body language and how we use verbal language.

Lesson time guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This activity will take about 65 minutes. This includes time to develop the scenario dialogues.• If students are going to develop a piece of extended work from this (for example, a dramatised narrative) then a further 45 minutes should be allocated. There are some guidance notes on how to write dialogue to support this.
QCDA PLTS Framework links	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explore issues, events or problems from different perspectives.• Collaborate with others to work towards common goals.• Reach agreement, managing discussions to achieve results.• Generate ideas and explore possibilities.• Question their own and others' assumptions.• Provide constructive support and feedback to others.
Subject applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• English, citizenship, PSHE and the society, health and development diploma

We're looking at two kinds of language – what we say and the body language we use when we talk (and when we say nothing). The last activity looked at body language. Now it's the turn of what we actually say.

How do you talk about how you feel? Recent research into how we try to describe how we feel revealed that we use a lot of metaphors – 'feeling under the weather'; 'I've got this stabbing pain in my tummy'. The research showed that doctors and patients often used very different images to describe health.

see over >>>>

Doctors tended to use metaphors which assume *the body is a machine* (the urinary tract was the 'waterworks', bodies could be 'repaired', joints suffer 'wear and tear'); illness is *a puzzle* (symptoms are 'clues' to 'problems' that have to be 'solved'); and a *doctor is a controller* (they 'administer' medication to 'manage' symptoms and 'control' disease).

The metaphors used by patients were different. They were more vivid, expressive and unusual ('it's like the devil's got into her', 'it's like a Chinese burn, 'it just gets tighter and tighter', 'it's as though my body has been beaten up'). Even when doctors and patients used the same words (such as 'tension', 'relaxation', 'nerves') doctors tended to use them literally while patients used them to help create pictures of how they were feeling. Patients used words like 'dull', 'stabbing' and 'sharp' to describe aches and pains, but these words were *never* used by the doctors taking part in the research.

So we don't all talk the same language – and this causes confusion.

Here's some more information to make you think. How do you look at your future? Do you see life as:

- **a journey, travelling from place to place and meeting new people?**
- **a race with you always trying to find the fastest route and win?**
- **a roller coaster with ups and downs that you can't control?**

The metaphor that we use to describe our own lives can be rather revealing. What does your metaphor say about you – or do you use different ones in different situations? Discuss this with your partner.

Now, remember Holly and her broken wrist? Have a look again at that video story. It is called 'Ramp' at www.stepintothens.nhs.uk/lesson-plan-library.aspx

If you completed Activity 4 you'll remember looking at the body language in a video extract. You then needed to look at what might be said in the third column – things to say.

The grid is reproduced here.

People	Body language	Things to say
Paramedic		
A and E receptionist		
Staff nurse		
Doctor		
Radiographer		
Plaster technician		
Holly's mum		

For some of the staff Holly saw, there wasn't much time to say positive things to her. But what sort of positive language could each of them have used to reassure Holly on her visit to hospital?

Using all the information that you have learnt in this activity, work with your partner and decide on what could be said in each new situation Holly comes across in hospital.

The final stage is to create some dialogues using your ideas of what would be said to Holly in each situation. Rehearse these and then present them to some other pairs of students.

To help you more, we've written a short guide on how you should write dialogue. Check this out before you start.

Your written dialogue may also be used as the basis for a more extended piece of writing. Talk to your teacher about how to use this material in different ways.

