

Lesson 3: How can people's actions be affected by others' influence?

Context

References to the PSHE Association Programme of Study

Key stage 4 Core theme 2: Relationships

- to recognise when others are using manipulation, persuasion or coercion and how to respond
- the role peers can play in supporting one another

Key stage 4 Core theme 3: Living in the wider world

- the unacceptability of all forms of discrimination, and the need to challenge it in the wider community, including the workplace
- to think critically about extremism and intolerance in whatever forms they take
- to recognise the shared responsibility to protect the community from violent extremism and how to respond to anything that causes anxiety or concern

This is the third in a series of four lessons. It aims to help young people understand the impact of charismatic speakers on perceptions of what is true or right. The session also aims to develop pupils' awareness of the effect on behaviour of being part of a group.

The lesson plan is based on a one-hour lesson. While it is always important for PSHE education lessons to be pacy, it is equally important to meet the needs of your pupils. More may be gained from spending longer on exploring in-depth an activity that has fired up discussion and imagination, so long as you are comfortable leading the discussion and feel that the pupils are progressing towards the lesson objectives.

Neither this, nor any of the other lessons, is designed to be taught in isolation, but should always form part of a planned, developmental PSHE education programme.

Learning objectives	<p>Pupils:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> understand how group influence and charismatic leaders can distort perceptions of what is right
Intended learning outcomes	<p>Pupils can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> describe how charismatic leaders can distort people's perceptions of the value of the beliefs and ideas they promote explain the effects of being in a group on people's thinking, behaviour, sense of responsibility and choices
Resources required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Box or envelope for anonymous questions Resource 1: <i>Scenario handout</i> – 1 per pair
Climate for learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider any sensitivities and prior knowledge about specific pupils' circumstances. Signpost local and national support groups or helplines. Invite pupils to write down any questions they have, anonymously, at any time, and collect them in using an anonymous question box or envelope. This should be accessible during and after every lesson. Establish or reinforce existing ground rules. Add or emphasise any that are especially relevant to this lesson. <p>See <i>Teacher's notes</i> guidance document for further details.</p>
Key vocabulary	group thinking, charismatic leadership, peer influence
<p>Starter activity / baseline assessment</p> <p>15 mins</p>	<p>Introduction</p> <p>Explain that today's session focuses on the way other individuals can impact on a person's behaviour – charismatic leaders and groups or gangs. It links to the last lesson's learning about becoming a critical consumer of information, as we can apply the same skills to evaluating what people say and do to influence our behaviour.</p> <p>Great speakers</p> <p>Ask the class what they understand by the term 'charismatic speaker'. Collect up some ideas.</p> <p>Webster defines charisma as '... a personal quality that gives an individual influence or authority over large numbers of people'. A charismatic speaker leaves an impression on their audience that makes them want to come back for more.</p> <p>Can the class think of some examples of charismatic speakers?</p> <p>In groups of four, give the pupils a sheet of paper divided in half. On the top of one column ask them to consider the characteristics of a 'charismatic' speaker and in the other column those of an 'informed'</p>

speaker. Remind pupils that speakers can be both 'charismatic' and 'informed' so it is fine to have some characteristics in both columns.

Show an example of a charismatic speaker by showing a clip of Martin Luther King's 'I have a dream' speech:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vDWWy4CMhE> or an analysis of one of Obama's speeches which contributed to his rise to the presidency: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OFPwDe22CoY>.

Ask pupils to add additional ideas to their lists after watching the clip.

Some questions the class might explore:

- How do people *feel* when they hear a charismatic speaker?
- Do you think *how* things are said can sometimes feel more convincing than *what* is being said?
- If we enjoy listening to someone, does this mean what they are saying is accurate or factual? Celebrity endorsements of products illustrate this point well:

Wayne Rooney's endorsement of a Nike football

<https://www.brandwatch.com/2013/10/celebrity-twitter-endorsements-regulations-allegations-and-selling-out/>

Tiger Woods' Nike advert

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/golf/tigerwoods/9957308/Tiger-Woods-Nike-advert-causes-storm-with-winning-takes-care-of-everything-message.html>

Katy Perry's Popchips advert

<http://www.brandingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/katy-perry-popchips-1.png>

Jennifer Aniston's Living Proof advert

<http://www.celebrityendorsementads.com/celebrity-endorsements/celebrities/jennifer-aniston/images/jennifer-aniston-living-proof-2013.jpg>)

- If someone we respect or find charismatic says something, how does that impact on our viewpoints?

Reconnect further with the learning in Lesson 2 by asking pupils to apply their checklist of questions for evaluating information to one of the examples above.

Core activities

15 mins

Leader scenarios

Give pupils a copy of Resource 1 in pairs. Each pair decides what the characters could do in each situation to resist the draw of a leader who may not be leading them in the right direction.

Class feedback should involve discussion of how people sometimes act in ways which are not right because they believe in the cause (as in scenario 2). Make the point that the ends rarely justify the means and draw out the possible consequences for the characters in the scenarios of following the 'leader'.

10 mins

If you believe your pupils can deal sensitively with the issues raised, a part of Donald Trump's speech calling for the removal of a protester can help to explain how a charismatic leader can affect people's behaviour, particularly when part of a group:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4--cG8h52Ps>

Group behaviour continuum statements

It is important that pupils understand the 'power of groups', including recognising and managing situations such as those in the statements below.

Clear an area in the room where pupils can stand to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with a set of statements. Indicate a continuum where one end represents 'strongly agree' and the opposite end represents 'strongly disagree'. Pupils stand along the imaginary line as you read each statement.

- **Statement 1: It is hard to be the first member of a group to question a decision or opinion.** Ask volunteers to explain why they chose to stand where they did. Ask for suggestions on how to manage this – perhaps with ideas of how to start a sentence challenging a decision one person in a group is making, that others seem to be going along with.
- **Statement 2: People always break rules if others break them too.** Invite examples of when this might happen and why they think this is/is not the case. Explain the concept of 'the diffusion of responsibility': our vulnerability to a false belief that our personal responsibility and accountability for our behaviour is diminished if we act as part of a group or crowd.
- **Statement 3: Being in a group makes people act differently.** Pick up on how people act differently – points could include increased or decreased confidence, allowing others to make decisions, one-upmanship, peer approval takes over from reason. Explain the phenomenon of 'group think', where the pressure to be loyal to a group begins to control decision-making and becomes more important than the actions and consequences of the group's behaviour and the values of the individuals in the group. This ties in with 'the power of authority': a vulnerability to obey instructions from people we believe have genuine authority, or whose wider goals we may value, and to follow their lead even if the directed actions conflict with our personal ethics. This is a particularly powerful influence when we see others in a group following a leader unquestioningly.

10 mins

'We all decided to go'

Read the following script as a class.

One rainy afternoon a group of friends are sitting around talking.

One of them, Sue, suggests they take a trip into a nearby town to see a new shop that has opened that morning. It means taking two bus journeys and the fares won't be cheap.

Ola, another of the group, says 'That sounds like a good idea.'

Parama thinks that she would rather stay indoors because the journey will take quite a while and the weather looks bad, but feels she must be out of step with her friends and so says 'That sounds good to me, I just hope Robert wants to go.'

'Of course I want to go! I haven't been into town for ages', Robert replies.

The journey takes longer than they thought, the new shop turns out to be pretty boring and they arrive back together cold, wet and exhausted.

One of them sarcastically says, 'That was great wasn't it?'

Robert says that actually he would rather have stayed at home but went along because everyone else seemed so enthusiastic about going.

Parama says 'I wasn't keen about what we were doing. I only went because the rest of you wanted to go.'

Ola says 'I just went along to keep you all happy. I would be mad to want to travel miles in the rain.'

Sue then says she only suggested it because she thought the others might be bored.

The group sit back confused that together they decided to take a trip that none of them actually wanted. They would each have preferred to stay comfortably indoors but none of them wanted to admit it when they still had time to enjoy the afternoon.

[Adapted from J. B Harvey (1974). 'The Abilene paradox: the management of agreement.' *Organizational Dynamics*, 3: 63–80.]

Facilitate a discussion:

- How hard can it be to disagree when you're in a group? Could there be a conflict between loyalties to the group and disagreeing with what they want to do?
- Do you think people's loyalty to a group and keeping a group together could ever become more important than individual members' reservations about what the group believes or intends to do? Can you think of any examples?

