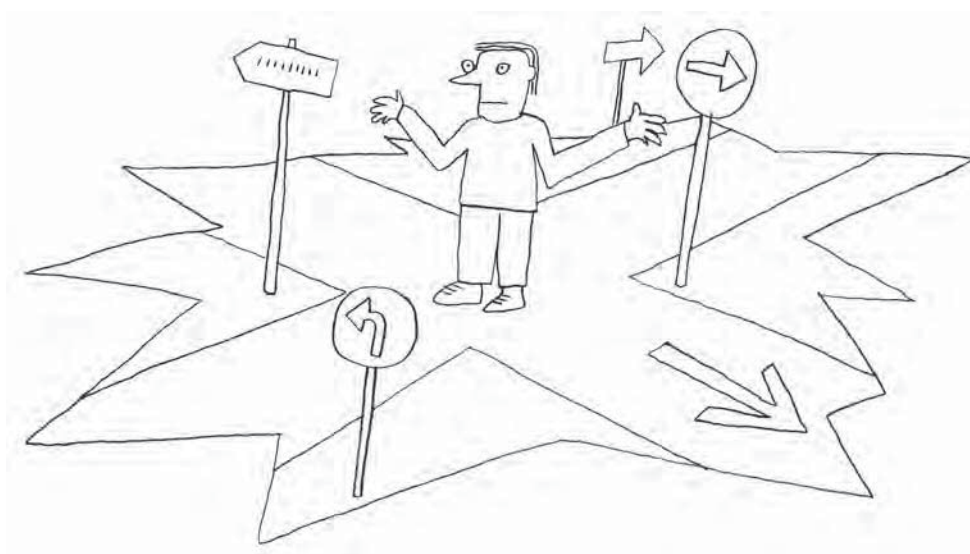


## Chapter 2 – Clarifying values



### Introduction

In modern society, we may – and we must – choose the values that we think are important and meaningful for us. In making such choices, we are using our freedom of person, thought and belief and also our freedom of expression when we confess to our views in public. Therefore the exercises in this chapter address a key principle of human rights – the freedom of person or the individual.

As the illustration shows, however, personal freedom comes with the need to make choices. Free people can be very lonely people. No one can, or should, tell us what to believe in or what values we should choose. And we must make a choice – or how else would we know what is important in life? Choosing values is therefore a key issue for young people in their effort to answer the question: Who am I? What is my identity?

From a different point of view, from the needs of society as a whole, we find that freedom of the individual will lead to a pluralistic society, with its members adhering to different values and beliefs. Pluralism can be a source of conflict. This gives rise to the question as to which values our community and our democracy rely on, for example appreciation of compromise, non-violence or integration of minorities. As a rule, if the members of a society succeed in agreeing on the rules of peaceful, non-violent argument and decision making, they can deal with a lot of controversy in their views and interests.

All these questions are equally important in the micro-society of a school class and in society as a whole. In a democratic community, no individual or authority has the right to define values for all. Rather, citizens will negotiate a minimum agreement on certain values. Therefore it is not the teacher's business to define values in terms of political correctness or a particular party, belief or ideology. The students need to learn how to make use of their freedom of thought and how to share their choices with others.

These exercises support the students by developing their skills of negotiation. They become aware of the fundamental principle of reversibility. They understand that our choice of values has a lot to do with our social situation and our interests. In every exercise, how the students argue – peacefully and in mutual respect – is just as important as what they actually argue in favour of or against.

## Exercise 2.1. – The raft game

Educational objectives	The students are introduced to the notion of values. The students learn how to identify prejudices.
Resources	Cards giving information about characters.

### Procedure

Nine people are adrift on a raft in the open sea. They do not know their exact position. The raft is too small for all of them. Four of them must be thrown into the sea.

Who will they be and why?

Each student receives a card giving some information about the character that she or he is to represent.

This is not only a role-play but also a matter of identifying with a character by finding reasons why he or she deserves to survive more than the others. They must always use the first person – “I”. The situation and what is at stake are also indicated on the card. There must be complete silence during this first ten-minute phase.

- The students work in groups of four to six.  
Each group decides who should be saved according to arguments put forward by each student. To increase interaction, each person must not only defend his or her character but should also attack another. A collective decision must, however, be reached within twenty minutes.
- Each group reports their choices and compares with the other groups.
- The whole class identifies the values and prejudices that have arisen.

### Materials

#### Some examples of different characters

A 35-year-old decorator, single, who is active in a political movement.	A gypsy who has just come out of prison.
An HIV-positive prostitute.	An old woman, a widow, who is travelling to her native country with her savings in order to see her son again.
A Russian pianist, father of two children.	An English skinhead who is drunk.
A 15-year-old teenager, winner of an important literature award.	An old famous American baseball player.
An ambassador working for the United Nations.	A young mother who has a broken leg.
A soldier coming back from time off-duty.	

## Exercise 2.2. – Value systems

<b>Educational objective</b>	The students discover that different values are a possible source of conflict.
<b>Resources</b>	Paper and pens, a worksheet containing a list of different values.

### Procedure

A list of 20 values, not in any particular order, is given to each student: social success, love, obedience, security, peace, order, human dignity, feeling good about oneself, equality, respect for others, honesty, family, solidarity, responsibility, justice, tolerance, freedom, competition, health, patriotism.

1. The students work in pairs.
2. The teacher asks the students to group the values on the list in three categories. “In the first, put those that seem most important to you; in the second, the least important; and finally those that are unclassifiable.” This work should be done slowly and with thought.
3. Feedback takes place in groups of alternating pairs, by discussion.  
No hierarchy is preferable to another. No assessment or mark will be given for the activity.  
The teacher should emphasise the difference between simple ideal values and effective values – those that take account of a type of behaviour.
4. Ask the students to keep their list with their first choices.

### Extension

1. The students form groups of three and compare their respective systems (list of first choice) by answering the following questions:
  - Why have I chosen this value as being the most important?
  - Is this value of any importance for my practical behaviour?
  - What are the obstacles to its realisation?
  - What is my main conflict?
  - What can I do to resolve it?
  - Which are the individualistic attitudes as opposed to genuine collective commitments?
2. The students group their values under categories, for example general ethics or human rights, practical use, general or social success.  
Which grouping seems to be the most significant?  
When faced with a choice, an individual can act unthinkingly according to habit or look for what seem to be the best reasons for acting. We think about values when we ask ourselves not what the best means of reaching a goal are, but which goal should be chosen.
3. This process offers an acceptable solution for all parties confronted with opposing arguments when there is a conflict of interests. Although we are often tempted to use moral terms to defend personal interests, certain principles are in operation. Respect for the individual is a principle, a rule that makes the acceptance or refusal of a category of actions possible.  
The most reliable criterion for knowing whether a rule of conduct favours respect for the individual is reversibility. It makes us give as much weight to the interests of others as to our own.

In groups, students should formulate a few principles such as:

- the law must always be respected
- everyone has the right to live their lives as they see fit.

They can then identify the points of view expressed and the principles.

## Exercise 2.3. – Philosophy of life

Educational objective	The students understand that values have different practical implications.
Resources	A list of different ways of life on a poster or on the blackboard.

### Procedure

1. The students assess each “way of life” with the help of the following scale:
  - 7 – you like it very much
  - 6 – you like it
  - 5 – you quite like it
  - 4 – you are indifferent to it
  - 3 – you don’t care for it
  - 2 – you don’t like it
  - 1 – you don’t like it at all.
2. The teacher asks the students to compare their rating in pairs or in groups of three or four.

### Extension

The students write a description of their ideal way of life (they should try to avoid describing their own present way of life). They find out what the contradictions are; do they conform to their scale of values?

### Materials

(see next page)

### Different ways of life

1. The following are needed in life: moderation, intelligence, balancing of extremes, friendships, self-control, discipline, foresight, good manners and respect for certain traditions.
2. What counts in life are individual and intellectual freedom, indifference to the material and physical world.
3. The most important attributes are affection, love, devotion, control of one's passions and interests, openness to others. Bold intellects, quest for power and egotism are to be mistrusted.
4. Enjoying life is more important than changing the world: a refusal of ethics, discipline and personal sacrifice; the need for sociability but with periods of solitude.
5. One should identify with a group and seek comradeship. Sociability and action are important, as is a refusal of meditation as an abstraction, of solitude and material interests. Positive emotional externalisation and shared pleasures are preferable.
6. One should seek exuberant physical activity, exploration of one's world and practical senses, a preference for work, the refusal of dreams as nostalgia, the rejection of comfort and self-satisfaction.
7. The days follow each other but they are all different. Instability and adaptation are central, and one should desire to enjoy every important moment. Above all, do not be the slave of an idea.
8. Simple pleasures are important: comfort, friendship, rest, good health, refusal of intense, complex pleasures, rejection of ambition and fanaticism.
9. Openness and receptivity are necessary: pleasures and successes will come on their own; wait calmly and receptively.
10. One must have self-control, but be vigilant, aware of the forces of the world and of human limitations. One must be generous, but not utopian, and go through the world with self-control and dignity.
11. Contemplation is important. The world is too big and too aggressive. The inner life of the soul is essential and has priority over a futile, painful world that must be rejected.
12. The focus is on action, execution, challenge, construction; the body, the hands, the muscles are the true life. Prudence, comfort and relaxation must be rejected.
13. Human beings exist to serve: being useful to others to foster their personal growth. Abandon oneself to the world; be humble, constant, faithful, flexible. Receive without asking, work for the reign of the Good.

## Clarifying values

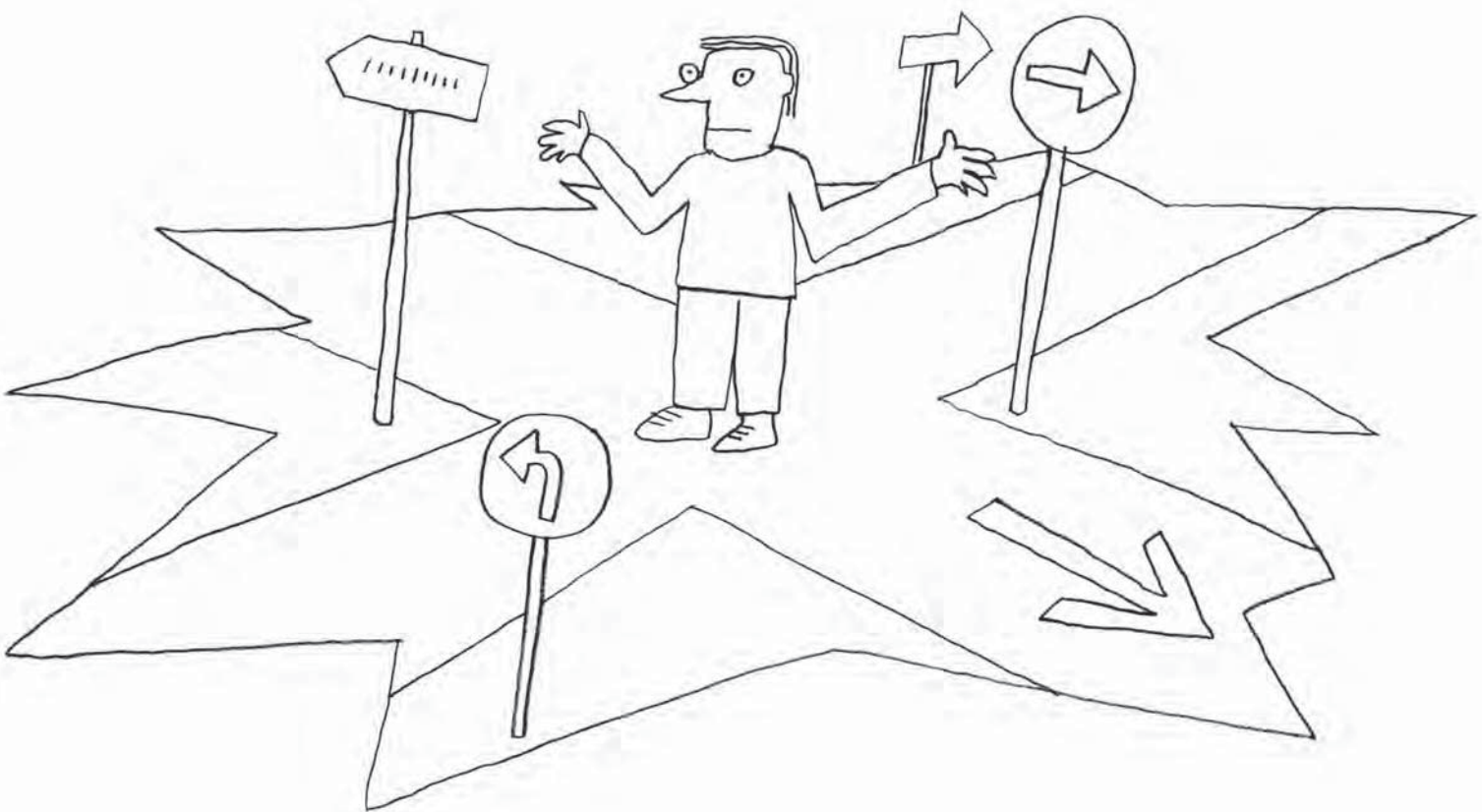


Illustration from Chapter 2

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Teaching democracy

*A collection of models for democratic citizenship and human rights education*