

A Selection of Our Cooperative and Analysis Tools for Kids and Adults

Please get in touch at info@theskillsnetwork.org if you want guidelines on how to make simple versions of these at home and for suggestions on how to use them.

We have a few ready-made ones for sale for £5 and under as well...

Cooperative Tools

The power ladder

This is one of our most-used tools at Skills Network. It's a great way to explore how power works in wider socio-political settings, in familiar institutions, such as schools, and in everyday interactions, by positioning different 'characters' in relation to each other on the ladder. Scenario cards provide the opportunity to think about how hidden power and invisible power affect our behaviours and interactions; how power can shift with context; and how we can move away from using power oppressively as 'power-over' and build more 'power with' and 'power within.'

It can be used with kids as well as adults – just adjust the scenarios and cast of characters.

The perspectives board



An interactive way for kids to explore how different people might feel in particular situations. We have a range of scenario cards for kids aged 4-12 years, or you can make up your own.

We have also used the perspective board ourselves, in a slightly more complex way – to help externalise fraught conversations when people have different views on emotive topics. Faces with different expressions can be moved

around the board to explore different positions, and how oppressions might play out.

Walking in their shoes



A physical way of introducing kids to the idea of walking in someone else's shoes – an idea which we talk about a lot through life, but which can feel quite difficult to grasp and do. It can be just a fun drama game, or it can trigger more complicated conversations. Useful for adults too – we could all do with trying to feel other people's situations more!

The full picture puzzle

A game to help children understand the idea that they only ever have one piece of the puzzle, and that they see things through their own 'filters' (or perspective). You can then use this idea to help your children think about situations they face and question their own initial assumptions. For example if they think a school friend has been mean – they can think about what else might be going on for that person, what else might be part of the picture.

Analysis tools

Capabilities board



A tool to explore 'choices', in particular the questions: how far do people have 'meaningful' choices? What needs to happen to make choice

meaningful? We use it in our research work, to explore together how particular policies- particularly those that claim to give people 'choice' - work or don't work for different people in different circumstances, and how they could be improved.

It can also be used with kids to help adults understand better the contexts within which children are making decisions or 'choices,' the kinds of thing that constrain them in their 'choices' (things adults often never think of) and the things that need to happen to give them meaningful choice. We have found it useful, for example, to explore why a child is distressed by or resistant to commands like 'learn your times tables by heart' or 'you must always do your homework.

Critical word slider

This is a very simple tool, which we have found particularly useful for getting people critically analysing media and other texts during our language and power workshops. Participants pick out words from supposedly 'neutral' phrases and sentences, and place them on the positive to negative connotations scale. It soon becomes apparent that language is *never* neutral.

You can use the tool to explore different ways in which we connect words and ideas - for example words like 'chatter' and 'gossip' which feel like less serious ways of talking are usually associated much more in our mind with women than with men. Why is that?

We have also found that using the tool with words used in children's books, can lead to interesting conversations. Again the way we describe female (beautiful? Good? Waiting-to-be-rescued?) and male (adventurous? Heroic?) characters in many children stories can be very thought-provoking.