

Stories to help young people think about the fact that actions have consequences and the importance of impulse control

Active and experiential approaches to PSHCE

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Consequences

Aim:

- To enable pupils to think about and discuss the consequences of impulsive actions
- To raise awareness about the importance of impulse control

Resources:

- Traffic lights cards
- Thought sharing circle sheets or questions on OHT and plain paper

Introduction

I adapted the following two stories from two television episodes of “CSI Miami” and “Without a trace”. In both these stories, innocent people become caught up in the consequences of crime.

I think this could make an engaging lesson if you tell the story without the children knowing in advance what happens and then conduct a traffic light discussion afterwards – everyone has green red and amber cards. Ask a number of questions about the story and ask the class to vote after each one whether they agree - green – disagree – red ,or are not sure, amber, then invite cardholders to say why they think as they do. This will encourage thinking skills speaking and the ability to develop an argument. A ground rule could be that after stating an opinion everyone should say, I think this because

Revenge is sweet ?

Once upon a time there was an ordinary young woman living a very ordinary life , what was her name ? I know, let us call her Joanna. She was thirty one years old, attractive, with an excellent job. She was recently divorced from her dead- beat husband with all of her life ahead of her - and it was sweet! Until now ...

....and that is because also, once upon this very time, there lived *another* ordinary young woman, also thirty one years old and attractive, but *she* didn't have a very good job or a husband, ex or

otherwise. She was struggling. Recently arrived in Miami and deserted by her boyfriend, she took a desperate course , as you will see....

It was a Wednesday morning when it all began, and Rachel, for that was her name, was sitting in a café drinking coffee with her last few dollars and as chance would have it, she was watching Joanna, opposite her. Joanna was on the phone to her friend. Rachel listened. She became consumed with jealousy as she realised how different Joanna's life was to hers. It simply wasn't fair! Why should Joanna have all this when Rachel had to struggle even to eat?.

....and so she hatched a plan, so daring, so complex and yet so cunningly executed.....

Rachel followed Joanna home to see where she lived. Over the next few days and weeks, while Joanna was out at work or enjoying herself, Rachel sorted through her dustbins, gradually collecting enough information from her to ***steal Joannas identity***.

Rachel took out loans in Joanna's name. She arranged credit cards in her name. She took out a drivers licence and identity cards all with Joanna's name and finally, with a master stroke .. she accused *Joanna* of stealing money from *her* . Now, why would she do that?, to get papers which said that she ,Rachel, was a victim of fraud, and so if anyone got suspicious or refused her credit then they could be persuaded to change their mind!

Joanna paid for every bit of Rachel's lifestyle and there was nothing that Joanna could do.

But...Rachel justified her actions by telling herself that she took just enough to live on . Joanna still had plenty left.

One day, Rachel was watching Joanna by a pool. She often followed her. It was so easy, Joanna had no idea what her secret enemy looked like. At this expensive hotel, Rachel paid a young boy to run off with Joanna's beautiful, new designer bag .

The thief, according to plan, dropped the bag and ran off so the

security guards could pick it up. Soon after, Rachel, sweet as pie, came to claim her bag. She handed over her identity card and quoted Joannas' social security number without missing a beat, since it matched the information inside the bag, the policeman naturally handed it over!

Shortly after Joanna arrived. She collapsed in tears of frustration when she learned from the policeman that her bag had already been claimed. She poured out her story. Determined to help her, the policeman got involved. He and his colleague worked out a way to prove which was the true Joanna.

They picked up Rachel for questioning. Rachel insisted she was the rightful Joanna. "We will see!" the cops said, triumphantly. They scanned the bodies of both the puzzled girls and triumphantly announced that Rachel was the fraud. "How do you know?" she gasped. "Because the real Joanna had multiple fractures from a car accident - Joanna has them, clear as day, all healed, but your bones are intact! Rachel was terrified.

Joanna almost wept with relief. "What will happen now? she asked will she be stopped?"

"No, we just have to hope that she will be frightened enough to stop now. The DA isn't going to spend public money on something that isn't affecting the public. I am sorry we have done all that we can."

Joanna was shattered and even more so when the money continued to go out of her account.

A few days later the two policemen were called to a murder scene.

A man in his open top car, with a nail file thrust through his eye and clutching a handful of long blonde hairs.

Joanna wept silently as she identified her husband "you see she will stop at nothing - look she has killed my husband now! Now you have to arrest her and put her in jail"

"But why on earth would she do that?"

"Because every month I pay him \$500 dollars as part of our divorce

settlement. With him dead that is more money in my account for her to take”.

Sure enough the nail file had a beautiful big finger print showing it was Rachel’s and so were the long blonde hairs in his hand - but there was a fatal flaw ! DNA analysis showed they were pulled out long *before* the murder – Have you guessed what happened ?

“Why did you do it? Joanna?” said the policeman “why did you murder your own husband and make it look as though Rachel did it? “I just wanted my life back” she sobbed. “I tried her at her own game - I went through her trash. I found the file and some of her hair and made it look as though she did it . I wanted her dead .I just wanted my life back”

“I see” said the policeman “and now you have lost it” .

Traffic lights discussion questions

- Joanna had everything and Rachel had nothing. Rachel took just enough to live on, leaving Joanna plenty so did that make it alright, really?.
- The inequalities in society are why these things happen?
- Joanna’s husband’s death did not matter because he was a loser
- If Joanna had set Rachel up with a crime that did not involve hurting someone it would have been okay
- Imagine that Joanna had heard a man talking in a café just as Rachel had heard her. Imagine that she decided to set fire to his shop at dead of night so he could claim on the insurance and managed to blame it on Rachel, would that be alright?
- We cannot just make up our minds what to do with our lives because everything we do affects other people
- All our actions have consequences

- Controlling our impulses is important
- *Acting* on how we *feel* can get us into trouble
- Joanna was a perfectly innocent person who allowed her emotions to turn her into a criminal
- Joanna was worse than Rachel
- Rachel was a worst criminal than Joanna
- There was no difference in the end between Joanna and Rachel

Here is the second story

Consequences

Ria was forty two, and a post office worker. She had worked for the company for years. She was dating the manager and had been for a long time. They were very close. She was a much respected member of the firm. Suddenly she was missing - along with a hugely expensive consignment of play station games, she had been delivering - had she stolen them?. The manager defended her passionately

“She broke off with me, yesterday” he said “she wouldn’t give a reason, something is going on. There is a problem with her kids, she fosters, done it for years. She is so dedicated to those kids. When they come of age she gets a new set and whatever happens they come first, but she keeps in contact with all the old ones. They just love her. She would never do anything wrong. No way! A few days ago someone phoned in to social services and said she been abusing her kids, knocking them about and stuff. They were taken away for investigation. She would never have touched them, something is definitely going on. Something’s happened to her you have got to find her.”

The policewoman spoke to the social worker. “How did she take it when you came to take the kids away?”

“Better than they did. They were really upset, she calmed them down and was very loving. I don’t think there is a word of truth in this allegation, but I have to investigate”.

The policewoman spoke to the foster children. Chantelle was almost seventeen. “Something was going on” she said. “A few days ago she lost it, she never loses it. She told me to choose a video for us all to watch and I picked up one I shouldn’t, she went beserk – she apologised straight away. I don’t know what was on it?. I looked for it later, but it was gone”.

Suspicious, the policewoman looked for it and found it under the mattress - not at all suitable for children and not what Ria would have in the house.

She spoke to the other child, Malcolm. Malcolm was ten. He refused to speak at all, just stared fixedly into space. The social worker sighed heavily. “He has done this before” she said “when he saw his mother murdered. He has withdrawn because of the trauma about what has happened. Your only chance is his sister. May be Chantalle can get him to talk.

The policeman asked Chantalle to help. Worried about her foster mum and her little brother she readily agreed. She racked her brains. “A few nights ago he had a nightmare. I didn’t take it seriously .he often has them since our mum died. Maybe some thing happened. He said he saw a man, I thought he dreamed it . May be it wasn’t a dream after all” Chantalle talked to Malcolm bit by bit the story came out . There was a man, he visited late at night. Ria didn’t want him there. The man had said he was Ria’s brother.

The policeman investigated . The man was Ria’s brother. No one knew she even had a brother . Intrigued, the policeman followed it up.

He discovered that Ria had two brothers, one older and one younger. She also had a mother, still alive, but in prison where she had been put 17 years ago for murdering her brutal, violent husband, Ria’s father.

They spoke to Ria's now elderly mother and she told them that Ria's little brother had been run over by a car, shortly after she had gone to prison.

There was a problem. Try as he might the policeman could not find any record of the little ones death.

The mystery deepened, but Ria was still missing, without a trace.

Suddenly a report came in. The videos she was delivering the day she disappeared had appeared on the black market. Result! The policeman investigated.

Using the picture made from the description Malcolm gave his sister they were able to find out that the seller was Ria's older brother.

They traced him to a gambling den, he had sold the videos for thousands of dollars. All he had left was one twenty, the rest was all gambled away.

All his teenage and adult life he had been a gambler. Ria hid it from her mother. One day, soon after her mother had gone to prison, struggling with child care and trying to juggle three jobs to keep the family going, she left her little brother in the older one's charge. He went out to gamble leaving the little boy alone. Ria came home to find evidence of a break in and the child dead, probably a revenge killing because of the older brother's unpaid gambling debts. Together Ria and her brother covered up the death, hiding his body and making up a story to tell his heartbroken mother. Ria told her mother that it was her fault they had been crossing the road and she hadn't watched him properly.

All his life he had asked Ria for money. Now they were after him again. If he didn't pay his debts they would kill him. He came to Ria late at night for money. She had nothing left. He had already had it all. It was his desperate rowing with Ria that had frightened Malcolm so much.

The only thing that was left was the play station games on Ria's van. If she would steal those for him he would be saved. No one would know that she had been involved, he said. Ria refused

Desperate, he had tried to hi jack Ria's van. When she told him she would nor commit a crime against her own firm he pulled out his gun and shot her . Within seconds he realised what he had done, He had been so angry and so frightened about what was going to happen to him that he had acted on impulse . Now he wept broken heartedly over the body of the sister he loved with all his heart and who had loved him so much that she gave him everything she had.

What were the consequences involved here ?
How far is it just up to us how we behave ?

Confidential feelings visualisation

How far do your actions affect other people ?

You are going to be invited to think about two situations .One at home One at school. They could be situations which you are proud of and pleased about or ones that you are not so pleased about.

You will not be asked to tell anyone about it will remain confidential.

When the exercise is finished you will be invited to write anonymously about a situation . This will be put in the middle and everyone will pick one to read out. No one will know who said it. You might chose to write about something from your visualisation. It might something else that you feel more comfortable about. If you prefer you can simply leave your paper blank

Close your eyes or find a place to look at on the floor

Think about something you did recently which affected your family.

Was it a good thing or a bad thing?

How do you feel about what you did now ?

How might you change what you do in the future ?

Think of something you did recently which affected how people are learning at school?

How do you feel about what you did now ?

How might you change what you did in the future ?

Anonymous thought sharing circle sheet

A situation I was in recently that affected other people was

Afterwards when I thought about it I felt

If I was in that situation again, in the future, I would