

# How to help Leon out of his dilemma situation?

Activity for primary and lower secondary schools

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<b>Rationale:</b> Children's and young people's rights of participation were and sometimes still are (or maybe will be again) massively affected by contact restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic intended to slow down the spread of the virus. Their views were hardly included in the decision-making processes in most countries. As a result, many children and young people felt and still feel powerless as never before. Young people complain of being reduced to their roles as mere pupils, who are meant to master their subject matters. They feel that their worries and hardships were not seen and heard enough.  This activity is meant to help pupils feel that they are seen as human beings (again). It is about enabling them to regain self-confidence with regards to their individual abilities to act.
<b>Target group:</b> Primary and lower secondary schools
<b>Project theme addressed:</b> Making children's voices heard
<b>Duration: 90 minutes</b>
<b>Competences being targeted by the activity:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Valuing human dignity and human rights (e.g. argues that specific rights of children should be respected and protected by society);</li><li>• Respect (e.g. gives space to others to express themselves; expresses respect for other people as equal human beings);</li><li>• Self-efficacy (e.g. shows that he/she feels secure in his/her abilities to meet life's challenges);</li><li>• Empathy (e.g. can recognise when a companion needs his/her help; expresses sympathy for the bad things that he/she has seen happen to other people; tries to understand his/her friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective; takes other people's feelings into account when making decisions);</li><li>• Knowledge and critical understanding of the world (e.g. can explain why everybody has a responsibility to respect the human rights of others);</li></ul>
<b>Learning outcomes:</b> Learners have intensively dealt with the case story by working on the given tasks (see below), thereby: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• connecting with different realities of life during the COVID-19 pandemic (respect, knowledge and critical understanding of the world);</li><li>• understanding that people may put up with restrictions out of consideration for others (empathy);</li><li>• detecting that people may develop gestures of solidarity (empathy);</li><li>• including situation-related human rights and children's rights in all considered solutions (valuing human dignity and human rights);</li></ul>

- developing three solutions ideas for Marta within a given time frame and in a competitive manner (self-efficacy, knowledge and critical understanding of the world).

**Materials or resources required:**

1. The case story: Leon`s dilemma

Marta (13), Leon`s elder sister needs an advice. Leon (8), her younger brother, goes to primary school and usually likes to be outdoors at all times with his friend Tim, no matter whether it rains or snows. They build huts and bridges, play all sorts of ball games or stroll through the neighbourhood.

In Coronavirus times, however, Leon has suddenly turned into a stay-at-home. Despite the nice weather and the newly re-gained freedom of movement for families and close friends, Leon cannot be convinced to leave the apartment in which he lives with his sister Marta, his mother and his mother`s new partner. Leon just won`t do it, arguing that he wants to wait until his friend Tim can also go out. Without Tim, Leon says, being outdoors does not make sense and is boring. Above all, and that`s Leon`s strongest argument, it would not be fair for him to go out while Tim cannot. He wants to show solidarity with his friend.

Indeed, Tim doesn`t go out at all out in order to protect his sister who is chronically ill. An infection with COVID-19 could seriously affect her health. Marta has seen Tim on the balcony sometimes, however, and managed to say hello by shouting rather loudly.

Marta can understand Leon`s arguments. Nevertheless, she would really like to convince Leon to go out and get some fresh air.

2. Postcard "[Children have rights!](#)"
3. [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

**Method/Approach**

The case story looks at children`s and young people`s everyday challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. It has been written to highlight the human rights and children`s rights related dilemmas caused by the contact restrictions meant to slow down the spread of COVID-19.

The approach orients towards the lives of children and young people and this is crucial. It conveys to pupils that their worries, wishes and needs are taken seriously by adults. This approach is an important pre-condition for children and young people - whose rights of participation have been and still are restricted due to the COVID-19 crisis - to gain or regain trust in democratic processes and their competence to act.

The "lending a helping hand" perspective from which the case story has been developed is pivotal for pupils` democratic competences growth. In the frame of this activity, the person presenting the case (Marta) wants to constructively change a problematic situation and asks for ideas for solutions. The participants are asked to develop courses of action while bearing in mind human rights and children`s right as a democratic reference framework.

The solutions ideas need to be sensitive with regards to the persons involved (Leon, Tim, Marta) and should, of course, improve the situation of the children affected and not worsen it.

**Description of activities/Process:**

Step 1: The teacher informs the students that she/he needs their views and expertise.

Step 2: She/he presents the following scenario:

Marta (13) is the case presenter, who is worried about her younger brother Leon having become a stay-at-home. On the one hand, she wants to respect and appreciate his decision not to leave the apartment in order not to let down his friend Tim. On the other hand, she is careful not to lose Leon's needs of/for recreation and physical movement out of sight.

Step 3: Discussion in pairs or in small groups:

- Do you understand why Marta feels it is so important for Leo to go out?
- Do you understand Leon's motivation not to go out anymore?

Step 4: Individual work

When reflecting on Leon's dilemma, please take human rights and children's rights into consideration. You may, of course, use the Postcard "Children have rights" ([www.makista.de](http://www.makista.de)) and Convention on the Rights of the Child )

- Which human rights/children's rights are affected?
- Which human rights/children's rights are colliding?
- Which right seems to be of utmost importance for you in this specific situation?

Step 5: Group work (competitive mode)

The teacher presents the following questions that are belonging together:

- What could Marta do to help Leon?
- Do you have any further ideas about how Leon could show his solidarity with Tim?
- Do you have any idea about what Marta could do to convince her brother Leon to go out with her?

The teacher then informs the students that each group has the task of developing three solution ideas for Marta/Leon. Whichever group is ready first, someone from this group calls out STOP. Now the other groups have to stop thinking/writing. All solutions ideas are collected in the plenary group.

(Comment: This way, the awareness for creative competences to act in difficult everyday life circumstances is strengthened. It's a safeguard against feelings of helplessness and scepticism and helps people to re-gain courage.)

Step 6: You have probably experienced the problem of cultivating your friendships during the COVID-19 pandemic yourself.

- What are your individual experiences?
- What has been helpful to keep in touch well with your friends and classmates?

**Tips for trainers:**

Strengthening the awareness of and the knowledge about children`s rights (e.g. valuing human dignity and human rights/argues that specific rights of children should be respected and protected by society) does not happen by itself. It can be supported, however, by asking the right analytical questions that determine children to consider children`s rights when developing specific courses of action for the given scenario.

Children`s rights that could be affected here are e.g. respect for children`s views and their self-determination; freedom of thought; right to play and relax; right to live a healthy life or the best interest of the child. The teacher should consider herself/himself before the activity in how far likely courses of action are suitable to protect or re-enforce children`s rights.

Possible courses of action developed by pupils could include the following solutions ideas:

- Marta could encourage Leon to collect stones for Tim or take pictures of places, where they like to hang out together usually.
- Maybe Leon could ask Tim, whether he actually/really wants him to stay at home to show his solidarity and friendship.
- In any case, Leon`s decision needs to be respected. He can`t be pushed out of the apartment against his will. Otherwise his right to self-determination would be violated.