

CLIMATE CHANGE AND CONFLICTS

INTERGENERATIONAL CONFLICT

In the debate on mitigating and adapting to climate change, there is generally a consensus that the current generations have a responsibility towards the younger and future generations. However, the youth climate strikes and the debates around them have shown that when young people foreground, on their own terms, the threats and fears that concern them and the hopes for corresponding measures to tackle them, the older generations often oppose them. They can dismiss and try to invalidate the youth message.

Young people may experience this intergenerational conflict in many ways and at many levels in their lives. In addition to dealing with measures to solve the problem, it is important to address the emotions involved.

WHAT THE EXERCISE IS ABOUT

- Duration: 40 minutes.
- Discuss together in small groups on the practical experiences of intergenerational conflict and the emotions they evoke.
- Draw up a group letter to the older generations.

THE GOAL OF THE EXERCISE

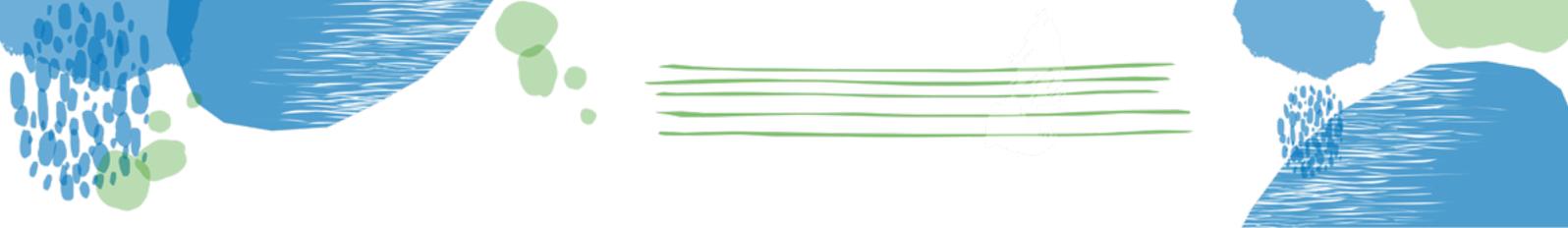
The exercise raises awareness of the different experiences of intergenerational conflict related to climate change, the frequency and diversity of those experiences, and the emotions associated with them. These emotions are identified and expressed in a joint letter.

HOW THE EXERCISE SHOULD PROCEED

Before the class, find a picture online from a youth climate demonstration, preferably one where slogans on different signs are clearly visible. (Searching pictures from Google with “youth climate protest” gives good results).

Ask the students to discuss in pairs or small groups what thoughts the photo evokes, using the following questions:

- What are your experiences of intergenerational conflict in relation to climate change?
- In what situations have you felt powerless to make the changes you want because the people from older generations prevent you?



Then, put these experiences together as a group. Whenever a student tells about their experience, you can ask how many people recognise the same situation. What kind of situations and experiences bring the group together?

Next, discuss first in small groups and then put together the answers as a group:

- What feelings have these experiences aroused in you? Try to identify your feelings precisely.

Use coloured pens to write a joint letter to older generations, where everyone describes their emotions and what causes them. Make a collage on a large piece of cardboard or virtually (e.g. on a Padlet wall space), where each student adds their own feelings and the experiences that evoked them. Write down sentences as you speak directly to the older generations. For example:

- "It's frustrating when I want to bike to workouts in the evening, but you insist on going by car."
- "It is a pity that you vote for parties that are not prepared to have a proper climate policy."

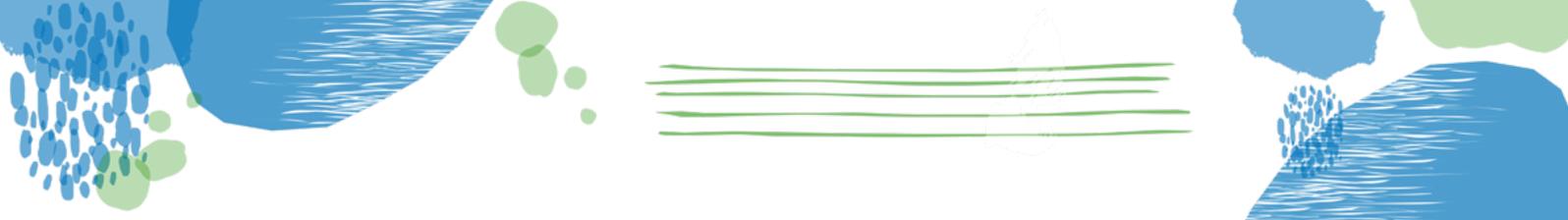
Once the letter is finished, you can discuss whether you would like to share it with e.g. the group's parents.

- "Turhauttaa, kun tahtoisin pyöräillä illalla treeneihin, mutta vaaditte saada kuskata autolla turvallisuuden nimissä."
- "Surettaa, että äänestätte puolueita, jotka eivät ole valmiita tekemään kunollista ilmastopolitiikkaa."

Tip: It is natural to continue after this exercise with the **Influencer Bingo** or **From fear to positivity** exercises.

Tip: The following Ahtisaari Days exercise will provide you with a good basic knowledge fundamental underlying concerns of conflicts. You can read it for background information or use it to work more deeply on conflict issues with a group:

http://ahtisaaripaiva.fi/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/CommunicationSkillsAndEmpathy_RecognizingBasicHumanNeedsAndConcerns.pdf



LINKS AND FURTHER READING:

Support letter to the Finnish scientific community by climate striking children and youth (2019) <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeXNUN44ZL9O88dbcHfODLP9QKo-qVGpFEqNTivYPJ7Eabxhgzg/viewform>

A generation gap, when it comes to climate change? (Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 15.3.2019)
<https://thebulletin.org/2019/03/a-generation-gap-when-it-comes-to-climate-change/>