

What do you need?

The purpose of this activity is to encourage young people to consider what is really important to them and to question whether the patterns of consumption that we all fall into are fulfilling those needs.

First, ask pupils to say what our absolute basic needs for survival are. They will usually very quickly come up with -

Food
Water
Shelter

(shelter would be interpreted as keeping you cool or warm enough to stay alive)

The next question is - What do we need to make life worth living?

Tell them to imagine that they have enough healthy food, clean water and are kept warm and dry but they have no-one and nothing else. What do they need to stop them going mad, getting depressed?

A further way to prompt this is - What makes them feel good, feel happy in themselves?

There are three possible ways to proceed now -

1. Run it as a whole class activity with you writing their suggestions on the board
2. Get them to discuss it in small groups and feed back their ideas
3. Give them some prompts in the form of the ideas (laid out below in a format to be easily cut out as cards)

You might ask them to choose 5 or 6 out of the ideas.

You might want to add things to the cards or not use some.

You may need to get into discussion about some issues, such as 'feeling safe'. One pupil suggested 'protection' which led to a discussion about the difference between feeling safe and needing protection because you don't feel safe, and which is preferable.

Most of the issues on the cards are things put forward by pupils. 'Heirlooms' comes from a pupil saying 'valuable belongings', by which it turned out that he didn't mean financially valuable but 'something that belonged to your grandmother'.

Most people's lists have companionship or something that means that at the top and they prioritise feelings over 'stuff'. It is worth raising issues such as the idea of retail therapy to make us feel better. If what we really value is other people, then what might we do when we feel low?

Research has shown that once people's basic needs are met, increased wealth does not increase people's sense of happiness.

You might want to introduce the concept of Maslow's hierarchy of human needs.

To be able to say
what you think

Heirlooms (belongings
that have meaning)

For people to listen
to what you say and
do it

Something to be proud
of

Be allowed to take
risks

Companionship, friends

To be inspired

Be appreciated

Choose what you
learn

Creativity

Choose how you learn

Fairness

Something to look
forward to - dreams

Hobbies / games

To love

Own space

To feel safe

Confidence

Movement

Health care

Freedom

Shopping

Have people around
you that you trust

Entertainment

Nature

Be trusted by others

Nice bed

Family

Music

Initiative

Art

Education

Fun

Feel loved

TV