

5. RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Aim of this unit: you are going to explore the idea that people's basic needs are considered rights and how these rights relate to responsibilities. You will learn some of these basic rights and whether they are respected everywhere. You will also learn about this powerful tool called responsibility and how it can help take control of your life.

Vocabulary: rights-related vocabulary and expressions; responsibility-based vocabulary.

Right: a *right* is something that is due to a person by law, tradition, nature or moral principles (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/right>).

Duty: behaviour that is expected or required of the person (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rights>).

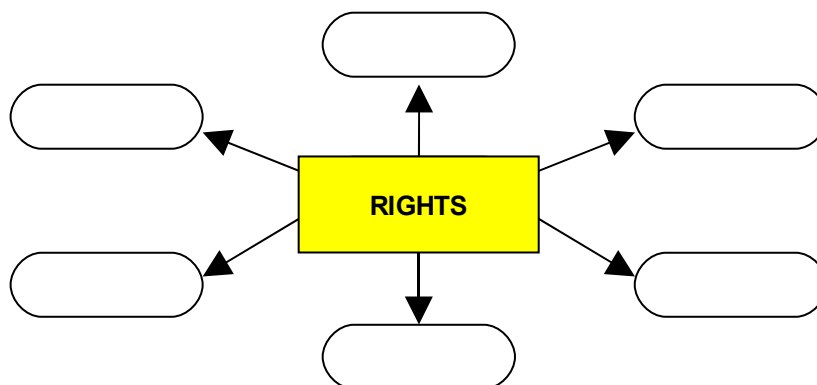
Rights are plainly rules that help people interact with one another. They set limits and obligations to individuals or groups of individuals or upon their actions. The limits of someone's rights are someone else's rights. For example if an individual has a right to life another individual cannot have the liberty to kill.

Think about it

After reading the definition of "rights", do you think that everybody's rights have historically been respected? Do you think everybody enjoys the same rights? Are there different rights in different places?

PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

- **Brainstorm.** Think of rights we all have. Complete the following diagram:



CHILDREN'S RIGHTS – 1989 UN CONVENTION

We all are human beings and we all have the same basic needs regardless of our age, the place where we live, our culture or our socioeconomic background. To grow to our potential we all need nutritious food, health care, shelter, education, protection, love, etc. We all have the right to have these basic needs met.

Children have the same needs too but as the most vulnerable beings they deserve special attention. In 1989 world leaders decided that children needed a special convention (*) just for them because children often need special protection that adults do not. The convention was passed in 1989 in the United Nations and it sees to it that all over the world children's minimum needs are met. It sets basic standards (rights) that should be respected by governments.

(*) A *convention* is an agreement between countries to obey the same law.

- **The little book of rights**

Your teacher is going to hand you the *Little book of rights* which contains a number of articles set out by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

(I) Read the different articles and make sure you understand the objectives they seek. Write down the vocabulary you do not understand. Ask your teacher for help if you get stuck.

(II) After going over the different articles say whether all your basic needs (or rights) have been met so far. If they have not, say what rights you think have been violated.

(III) Now that you know a little more about rights and needs, can you try to answer the questions in the *think about it* point above again?

TASK

In pairs, choose one of the articles and make a poster. Use meaningful pictures from magazines or newspapers to fully support the article. Show the poster to the class and share the information contained therein.



READING

Read the growth charts below and do the following:

1. Say what rights you think are endangered for both children.
2. Draw a similar chart on your own growth. Point out the differences between the growth of these children and that of any child in your country.
3. Complete the growth charts with one ending that explains the children's future.

Andre's Growth Chart

2000

5

YEAR FIVE

UNICEF/HQ98-05-56/GIACOMO PIROZZI



The school was repaired this year, and Andre was excited about starting school. But he had to make a long journey every day to collect the family's water from a stream, and there was no time for school.

4

YEAR FOUR

Andre's health improved, and he was ready for school – but the village school had not been repaired from the war.

3

YEAR THREE

When the fighting stopped, Andre and his mother returned home. But things had changed. Their house and the school were in ruins, and the water pump was destroyed. Without clean water, Andre got bouts of diarrhea. A UNICEF health worker showed Andre's mother how to treat this serious illness with ORS – a simple mixture of boiled water, salt and sugar.

2

YEAR TWO

Andre was living in the refugee camp with his mother. UNICEF gave him immunizations and vitamin A to help keep him healthy. Every day, Andre and his mother would take their jerry-cans to collect clean water from the UNICEF trucks.

1

YEAR ONE

Andre was born in Sierra Leone. His family fled their home when war broke out. On their way to the refugee camp, Andre and his mother were separated from his father and brothers. Nobody in the family had birth certificates. This made it very hard to search for Andre's family.

5

YEAR FIVE

UNICEF/HQ97-0290/SHEHZAD NOORANI



Kaya's mother takes her to work at the garment factory. Kaya sews buttons on the shirts her mother makes. Kaya's mother wants to send her to school with Idris instead of working in the garment factory, but she's worried about how the family will manage without Kaya's income.

4

YEAR FOUR

Although Kaya's health improved, she was still weaker and more tired than her brother. Idris began to offer her part of his food at the daily meal. Kaya grew stronger, and the family realized that the common practice of giving sons more to eat than daughters was the reason for Kaya's poor health. Now, Kaya and Idris share food equally, and Kaya is healthier.

3

YEAR THREE

Kaya's mother took her to a local UNICEF Immunization Day, hoping that the immunizations would help Kaya grow bigger. The health worker explained that the immunizations would prevent some diseases, but Kaya's growth chart showed that she wasn't eating enough nutrients.

2

YEAR TWO

Kaya got sick often this year. Her mother was very worried, because Kaya was much smaller than Idris.

1

YEAR ONE

Kaya and her twin brother Idris were born in a big city in Bangladesh. Because of a UNICEF-assisted national campaign to register children at birth and give them a legal identity, Kaya has an official birth certificate. It's her most valuable possession, because it will allow her to go to school and get medical care.

2000

Kaya's Growth Chart



LOOK IT UP ON THE WEB!

Visit the internet site of a popular British paper and do the activity right below:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/>

- Find a story in which children's rights were denied. Explain what happened. Say which article of the convention was breached.
- Read the description of a “popular job” among poor children in England in Victorian times. Again, say which articles of the convention such a job would breach nowadays. Can you imagine yourself working in those conditions?

CHILD CHIMNEY SWEEP

Small boys between the ages of 5 and 10 are sought to clamber up chimneys to clean out deposits of soot. Some of the chimneys are extremely narrow, perhaps only 18 centimetres (7 inches) square, and you may be reluctant at first to wriggle into them. However, plenty of encouragement is provided – by a lighted straw held beneath your feet or by pins stuck into you. You may suffer some cuts, grazes and bruises at first, but months of suffering will toughen up your skin to a leather-like quality.

Sweeps have other things to look forward to – twisted spines and kneecaps, deformed ankles, eye inflammations and respiratory illnesses. The first known industrial disease – ‘chimney sweep’s cancer’ – appears in the testicles from the constant irritation of the soot on naked skin. Many sweeps are maimed or killed after falling or being badly burned, while others suffocate when they became trapped in the curves of the chimneys.

Although you will officially be apprenticed as a chimney sweep, there really is no work of any value to be had at the end of your years of training – despite your poor diet, you will have grown too large to be of any use.



Video- Watch the short video in the URL below. Answer the questions:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojfpFCRGA8>

- x What do children in Somalia lack?
- x What do they dream of?.
- x According to the UNICEF Somalia Representative, what kind of environment do children there live in?
- x What do the children of Somalia remind us of?

WANTS AND NEEDS

Want vs need

A *need* is something that you have to have. A *want* is something you would like to have. However evident this may seem, a lot of young people believe that a playstation is a need...

- Write an example of a **need** and a **want** you have



CREATIVE WRITING

Explain in writing what you would say to a girl / boy your age who thinks that a video game console is a need.

TASK

Now you are going to engage yourself in an activity that will show you the difference between what we really need to be provided with in order to survive and develop well and what we do not need (materialistic items).

Imagine that the local government is opening a new office the main objective of which is to ensure that young people enjoy all the basic things that they want and need. Your teacher is going to hand you a set of cards which represent a list of wants and needs that the office has drawn up. The Government would like young people themselves to add four items that might be missing. In groups decide on these four items and write them on the blank cards.

Now, follow your teacher's instructions.



GAME – Play the UNICEF *Wants and Needs* game to help you distinguish between those two. Click on the following link:

<http://www.unicef.org.uk/tz/games/index.asp#>

POSTER – Your teacher will put up two posters on the wall: a poster titled **wants** and another titled **needs**. Bring pictures from magazines and newspapers that fit into either category and glue them there.

RESPONSIBILITY

Responsibility is often regarded as something one should get rid of (specially young people). It is regarded as a burden, something that weighs heavily on all of us. Let us look at the positive side of responsibility and see if it can help us shape our lives.

- TEST **ARE YOU A RESPONSIBLE PERSON?**
(Mark the following statements true or false and decide).

I do what needs to be done.

I am reliable and dependable.

I am accountable for my actions.

I don't make excuses or blame others.

I fulfil my moral obligations.

I use good judgement and think through the consequences of my actions.

I exercise self-control.

POINTERS

- ✓ Do what needs to be done
- ✓ Use fair judgment
- ✓ Be accountable for your actions
- ✓ Fulfill your obligations
- ✓ Be sincere

(Result: the more marks you get the more responsible you are)



After taking the test above answer the following **QUESTIONS**:

- What does responsibility mean to you?
- Look at the answers on the test. Do you consider yourself to be a responsible person? Why? In what ways?
- What are the benefits of being a responsible person?
- Do you consider it important for your friends or family members to be responsible? Why?
- Think about a person you know who is very responsible. How does that person demonstrate responsibility? Does that make you respect him/her more?

GROUP WORK



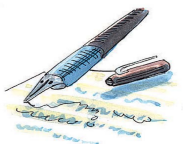
In groups discuss the following:

Imagine you hit a parked car accidentally (while riding your bike or driving another car, for example). Nobody has seen you do it.

Would you report the incident?

Would you take the responsibility of reporting something even if nobody saw you do it?

In which way do you think a society with greater numbers of people taking more and more personal responsibility can change? Would it change for good or for bad?



Creative writing: choose one of the following two topics and write a short essay.

(I) Write a letter to a newspaper about someone who did something that you think was irresponsible. Be specific about why you do not think it was right and why you think this action sets a bad example.

(II) Describe something you have done that was really irresponsible. How did you feel afterwards? What did you learn from it?

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Now that you know what rights and responsibilities are, read the following statements and write them under the right category below. Look the words up if you do not know any.

1. To be treated kindly
2. To ask for help
3. To do my best
4. To complete assignments
5. To a clean and attractive classroom
6. To work in a quiet classroom
7. To use materials neatly and return to correct place
8. To be kind
9. To learn
10. To tell the teacher what I am feeling
11. To be on time to school
12. To follow the teachers directions
13. To use my time wisely
14. To be listened to
15. Not to bully others
16. To listen to others
17. To complete assignments

RIGHTS

RESPONSIBILITIES

Read the rights and responsibilities in the previous exercise once again. From the statements contained therein, do you think you are treated right in school? Do you think you act responsibly?

- Complete the following “act-responsibly” sentences:
 - When I get angry at my friend, I ...
 - When I am picked on, I ...
 - When I can't have my way, I ...
 - When I get in trouble, I ...
 - When my parents won't listen to me, I ...

MAKING EXCUSES



Sometimes we will make excuses or will tell half truths to feel better about something we are trying to justify or about a behaviour we positively know will be censored or criticised by other people. Occasionally it helps psychologically and emotionally to make up excuses for something: you may not want to reveal too much about yourself. And we all have made up an excuse at any point. Even teachers hardly admit they do not know the answer to questions asked of them, specially outside the classroom: they will possibly come up with any unbelievable answer just to reassert themselves.

Fabricating stories?

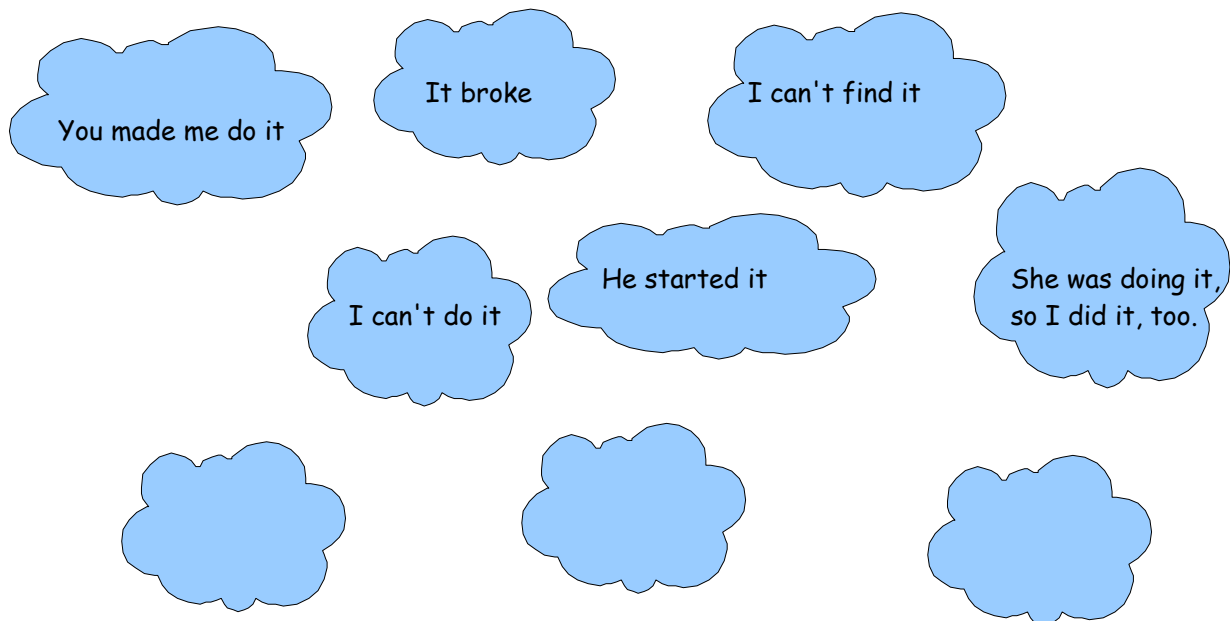
Being playful with friends?

Being a chronic excuse maker at school?

Telling half truths to your parents?

- Do you really think the lies you tell are harmless lies?
- Do you feel fine making up excuses?
- Are your excuses preventing you from being a responsible person?

Read some of the excuses or half truths we normally use to avoid facing responsibility. Complete the empty bubbles with your own excuses:



● Why Do We Make Excuses?

Not feeling adequate, feeling vulnerable or foolish, fearing observation, fearing being considered daft, etc. There are a number of possible reasons why one would deliberately decide to be untruthful. In time, somebody who compulsively makes excuses is avoiding responsibility, not fulfilling their duty and ultimately living a lie.

Responsibility-taking

Read the following possible ways of reacting responsibly in front of the excuses we saw in the previous point and try to come up with three responses for your own excuses, too:

- EXCUSE: It broke.
- TAKING RESPONSIBILITY: I broke it. How can I fix it?
- EXCUSE: I can't find it
- TAKING RESPONSIBILITY: I haven't found it yet. I need to look harder.
- EXCUSE: He started it.
- TAKING RESPONSIBILITY: I chose to get involved in something I should have stayed out of.
- EXCUSE: You made me do it.
- TAKING RESPONSIBILITY: I caved in to peer pressure, and I shouldn't have.
- EXCUSE: She was doing it, so I did it, too.
- TAKING RESPONSIBILITY: I won't do it.
- EXCUSE: I can't do it.
- TAKING RESPONSIBILITY: I choose not to do it. I need help to do it.



LOOK IT UP ON THE WEB

Visit the following web and learn about some famous quotes on excuses.

<http://quotations.about.com/cs/inspirationquotes/a/Excuses1.htm>



GROUP WORK

In groups, discuss the following questions:

- Why do we use excuses?
- When you use a responsible statement, who is in control?
- Tell about a time that you made an excuse to avoid a negative consequence. What happened?
- Is it easier to make excuses or responsible statements? Why?
- Is it better to take responsibility and accept consequences or make an excuse to avoid consequences? Why?
- How can accepting responsibility help improve yourself, your school work or your relationship with your friends?



MAKING UP EXCUSES!

If you are a chronic excuse maker you will possibly know that telling *half truths* or telling lies is part of your way of being, part of your life. If you persist on living this *lie*, you will most certainly become an artist of deception. You will be caught eventually and you will have to craft further excuses that will add to the original lie. This is called "digging yourself into a deeper hole". The deeper the hole the more complicated it turns out to get out of it... I would not want to be in your shoes. And all for what? Admitting that you are not perfect.

Taking responsibility for your actions, admitting failures, apologising for some wrongdoing, etc., however hard it may seem, is the thing you have to do, specially since you are getting into adulthood. If you do you will soon realize what a satisfying feeling this is.

● KNOWLEDGE QUEST

Complete the summing report your teacher will give you.

