
AGONY AUNT

All your problems solved

Type of modul	Creative Communication
Level	A2+
Target group	14-17-year-old learners
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A kiadvány az Educatio Kht. kompetenciafejlesztő oktatási program kerettanterve alapján készült.

A kiadvány a Nemzeti Fejlesztési Terv Humánerőforrás-fejlesztési Operatív Program 3.1.1. központi program (Pedagógusok és oktatási szakértők felkészítése a kompetencia alapú képzés és oktatás feladataira) keretében készült, a sulinova oktatási programcsomag részeként létrejött tanulói információhordozó. A kiadvány sikeres használatához szükséges a teljes oktatási programcsomag ismerete és használata.

A teljes programcsomag elérhető: www.educatio.hu címen.

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Educatio Kht. 2008

INFORMATION TABLE

TYPE OF MODULE	Creative communication
DESCRIPTION OF MODULE	<p>Ls learn about problems and issues of their peers in different cultures. First, they try to suggest solutions for teenagers’ problems around the world. Next, they are encouraged to raise issues that concern them.</p> <p>These issues are tackled by groups of 3 or 4, some solutions are sought and a poster is created. Thus the class designs its own ‘agony column’.</p>
AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF MODULE	<p>Language proficiency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ describe events and feelings, ask for and give advice ■ extensive practice in expressing opinion, ask for and give advice in different contexts ■ read descriptions of teenagers’ problems from around the world. The module features real teenager language. ■ Learner training: plan and present a poster in pairs, reflect upon issues and create written output together ■ Presentation skills: discuss and present issues
TIMEFRAME	5 lessons
TARGET GROUP	14-17-year-old learners
LANGUAGE LEVEL	A2+
SUGGESTED LANGUAGE COMPETENCE	<p>To complete the module, students need to be able to do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ form questions using a variety of question words ■ use the present and past tenses to narrate events ■ express agreement and disagreement ■ present general information
LINKS OF THE MODULE	
Cross-curricular links	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ psychology, sociology
Links with other modules	–

FOCI OF SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Communicative language skills

- Having completed the module, Ls will be better able to
- ask for and give advice
- express opinion
- discuss sensitive issues
- add subtlety to expressing their opinion

Other cross-curricular skills development

EVALUATION

emphasis is given to peer assessment

- during the process of assessing each other's work, Ls will learn to focus on positive aspects of the others' work

SUGGESTIONS

- discussing problems is a sensitive issue. Throughout the module attempts have been made for Ls to be able to distance themselves from the problems before actually engaging in discussing issues that concern them. However, special care has to be taken by the T with groups or individual Ls that might find certain things hard to discuss.
- You will need scissors, adhesive and A2 size sheets (possibly larger)

BACK UP SYSTEMS

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MAP OF THE MODULE

LESSON	FOCI OF SKILLS DEVELOPMENT	MAIN ACTIVITIES	LANGUAGE INPUT	MATERIALS AND RESOURCES
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ talking about and interpreting quotations, ■ discussing advantages and disadvantages of being a teenager, ■ describing a person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ discussing the advantages and downsides of being a teenager ■ practising asking for and giving advice in the 'problems game' ■ introducing the concept of an agony column 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ asking for and giving advice 	<p>1.1 Handout - Quotes for the lead-in.</p> <p>1.4 Role cards - The 'problem game'</p>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ to raise Ls' awareness of their own possible problems through an introduction of teenagers' problems from all over the world 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ discussing descriptions of people ■ listening to native speakers describing their friends ■ readings from an international agony column 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ listening for gist ■ listening for detail 	<p>2.2 Task sheet - 'Listen to these friends!'</p> <p>2.2. Tapescript - 'Listen to these friends' with highlighted expressions for further vocabulary enrichment.</p> <p>2.4 Task sheet - Readings from an international agony column.</p>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ relating issues and sharing points of view ■ discussing problems in groups 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ writing a letter to an agony column ■ relating and discussing short texts 	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ discussing their own problems, setting the context for the final task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ls discuss their own problems now, using all the previous input to give meaningful advice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ free speaking ■ giving and asking for advice 	<p>Ls' written output (Lesson 3/4 - Homework)</p>

LESSON	FOCI OF SKILLS DEVELOPMENT	MAIN ACTIVITIES	LANGUAGE INPUT	MATERIALS AND RESOURCES
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ls create their agony column together ■ designing the looks of their problem pages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ designing the agony column ■ evaluating the project and others' work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ls read each other's projects and comment on them 	Scissors, possibly folders or big (e.g. A0) sheets 5.2 Self-assessment form

PROCEDURE

LESSON 1: WHOSE PROBLEMS?

Aims of the lesson:

- to talk about and interpreting quotations, discussing advantages and disadvantages of being a teenager, practising asking for and giving advice in the ‘problems game’
- to describe a person

Materials and resources: 1.1 Handout - Quotes for the lead-in, 1.4 Role cards - The ‘problem game’

STAGE 1	Introduction – what are our problems anyway?
TIME	5 mins
SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES IN FOCUS	Reading Speaking
ORGANISATION	Pair work + whole class
AIDS AND MATERIALS	1.1 Handout - Quotes for the lead-in

TEACHER’S ACTIVITIES

1. Tell learners that you have a problem (share a problem with them).
Ask them whether they have a problem, too.
2. Hand out the quotations to Ls and ask them to read them carefully.
Quotes in 1.1 A/1

When they are done reading the quotations, ask them what they thought of them (e.g. which one was the funniest, which one they didn’t understand etc.). This way, a more general (and abstract) discussion of problems might develop.

LEARNERS’ ACTIVITIES

2. Ls collect problems

VARIATION: PROBLEM BRAINSTORM

AIDS AND MATERIALS	None
DESCRIPTION	If you feel your Ls are too shy or would not be interested in the warm-up activity, you might want to do a one-minute brainstorm. Write PROBLEM on the blackboard and ask Ls to come up with as many words and expressions they can on the topic.
STAGE 2	Advantages and the downsides of being a teenager
TIME	10 mins
SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES IN FOCUS	Speaking
ORGANISATION	Pair work + Whole class
AIDS AND MATERIALS	

TEACHER'S ACTIVITIES

1. Ask your students to work in pairs and think of as many advantages and disadvantages of being a teenager as they can.

Next, divide the blackboard into two parts and write '+' and '-' at the top. Ask students to pool ideas for both good and bad things.

Examples: bad things: having to study, not having enough money, too much pressure; good things: a lot of friends, not having to worry about 'life'.

Note: the pairwork part of the exercise is really important. Some Ls might not feel comfortable sharing any of their problems, or might be too shy to talk in front of the whole class. This stage of the exercise gives them a chance to rehearse what they would like to say.

LEARNERS' ACTIVITIES

1. Ls work in pairs and share their ideas with their partners.

Next, they tell the class and the T what they were discussing in pairs so that T can make a list on the blackboard.

STAGE 3	Asking for and giving advice
TIME	5 mins
SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES IN FOCUS	Speaking
ORGANISATION	Pair work + Whole class
AIDS AND MATERIALS	-

TEACHER'S ACTIVITIES

1. Write the following expressions on the blackboard or on a huge sheet of paper.

Use the problems the students listed on the blackboard to create actual problems from them and ask students how they would ask their friends and/or you for advice.

This exercise is useful as Ls are going to need these expressions later.

1. Asking for advice:

I want to ask your advice about something.

Actually, I have a problem.

What do you advise me to do about this?

Can you give me some general advice, please?

2. Giving advice:

My advice is to ...

Why don't you ...

If I were you, I would

If I was/were in your shoes, I would ...

You mustn't think like that.

I think you ought to ..

I think you should

Well, you could always ...

LEARNERS' ACTIVITIES

1. Ls read the list of expressions.

Next, they ask each other for advice using the expressions.

STAGE 4	The problem game
TIME	20 mins
SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES IN FOCUS	Listening Speaking
ORGANISATION	Whole class melee + Pairwork + Whole class
AIDS AND MATERIALS	1.4 Role cards - The 'problem game'

TEACHER'S ACTIVITIES

1. At this stage introduce the idea of the final project, which is going to be an advice column that the Ls in the class design and execute together.

Give Ls each a role card with a problem. Tell your students these are all real problems that come from different advice columns in the UK and the USA.

2. Next, ask them to walk around and ask as many people as they can to give them some advice. Tell them that they can take notes and that they should later be able to choose the best piece of advice they were given.

Note: call Ls attention to the functions practised earlier and try to encourage them to use these while they are doing the exercise.

LEARNERS' ACTIVITIES

2. They walk around the classroom asking their peers for advice.

The take notes and later discuss what the best piece of advice they got was

STAGE 5	Homework – describe your best friend
TIME	5 mins
SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES IN FOCUS	Writing
ORGANISATION	Whole class
AIDS AND MATERIALS	-

TEACHER'S ACTIVITIES

1. Ls write a 100-150-word description of their best friend.
Ask Ls who they would turn to if they had a problem. Elicit 'friends' (a likely answer anyway).
Next ask them to prepare a 100-150-word long description of their best friend.

If you are not sure Ls could come up with enough ideas to do this task, here are a few suggestions:

How did they become best friends?

What is it that is the most important for them in a friendship:

They could describe a common experience that is typical of their friendship.

What are the characteristics of their friend that they most like/dislike.

LEARNERS' ACTIVITIES

1. Ls answer T's questions and do the homework.

LESSON 2: TEENAGER'S PROBLEMS 1

Aims of the lesson:

- to discuss descriptions of people
- to listen to native speakers describing their friends
- to read from an international agony column

Materials and resources: 2.2 Handout - 'Listen to these friends!', 2.2. Tapescript - 'Listen to these friends' with highlighted expressions for further vocabulary enrichment, 2.4 Handout - Readings from an international agony column

Before the lesson: set the CD, make enough copies of the handout

STAGE 1	Checking homework – descriptions
TIME	15 mins
SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES IN FOCUS	Speaking
ORGANISATION	Pairwork + Whole class
AIDS AND MATERIALS	-

TEACHER'S ACTIVITIES

1. Ask Ls to read their descriptions to their partners.
Tell them that those who are listening should
 - a) try and find out who the description is about (if they can)
 - b) choose ONE thing they liked about the description (it could be a trait that is mentioned, a story or anything else that captured their attention).
2. Elicit some of the things that Ls found interesting in the other's description.

LEARNERS' ACTIVITIES

1. Ls read out their descriptions to their partners and focus on
 - a) who the description is about (if they know the person)
 - b) picking one thing they liked about the description the other has read out to them.

STAGE 2	Listen to these friends!
TIME	20 mins
SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES IN FOCUS	
ORGANISATION	Individual work, Pair work + Whole class (feedback)
AIDS AND MATERIALS	2.2 Task sheet - 'Listen to these friends!'; 2.2. Tapescript - 'Listen to these friends' with highlighted expressions for further vocabulary enrichment.

TEACHER'S ACTIVITIES

1. Ls listen to 5 short extracts on friendship by native speakers (BrE) and complete a worksheet.
2. Tell Ls they are going to listen to 5 people talking about friendship. First, ask them to listen to the tape and do Exercise 1 only.
3. Next, ask them to listen to the tape again and fill in the gaps using one suitable word.
4. Ask Ls to discuss the statements in Exercise 1. on the worksheet. First, they should do it in pairs and then in the whole group.

Note: the words missing are all from expressions that are very much part of spoken English. Naturally, depending on the level of your class, you might create new gaps in the text or alter the text in any way you feel suitable. Furthermore, there is a tapescript included in the Materials section which contains highlighted expressions that have been popular with Ls before. If there is time – or even later – you might focus on everyday spoken English using the highlighted expressions from the tapescript.

LEARNERS' ACTIVITIES

1. Ls listen to the tape for the first time and try to match the speakers with the extracts (Exercise 1 on the worksheet)
 2. Key to matching exercise:
1 – b, 2 – d, 3 – a, 4 – c, 5 – e
 3. Learners listen to the text again and do the gap-fill exercise.
- Key to gap-fill exercise:
1. which; 2. kind; 3. about; 4. together; 5. makes; 6. much; 7. large; 8. still; 9. have; 10. been; 11. like; 12. get; 13. from; 14. give; 15. course; 16. spend; 17. certain.

STAGE 3	Spice up your description
TIME	7 mins
SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES IN FOCUS	Speaking Writing
ORGANISATION	Individual/Pairwork, whole class
AIDS AND MATERIALS	None

TEACHER'S ACTIVITIES

1. Ls rewrite part of their description for homework using expressions from the listening text Tell Ls that the listening text is authentic English – this is how these British people would talk about their friends. Next, ask them to consider what they did for homework and see if there are any differences.
2. Ask Ls to look for expressions/words that they liked or thought would be useful but would not have thought of before.
3. Finally, ask them to change some of the things they have written or add new things based on the transcript.

Note: this is an awareness raising exercise. The primary goal is to make Ls see how real spoken English works. To help you, some of the expressions Ls have found useful are highlighted.

LEARNERS' ACTIVITIES

2. Ls read the transcript and look for words/expressions they think would be useful.
3. Next, they modify, complement their descriptions using some of the expressions they have chosen.

STAGE 4	Homework – teenage problems from the English-speaking world
TIME	Reading
SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES IN FOCUS	All (however, T could choose from a variety of texts to meet Ls needs and abilities)
ORGANISATION	Individual
AIDS AND MATERIALS	2.4 Task sheet - Readings from an international agony column

TEACHER'S ACTIVITIES

1. Ls get extracts from an international teenage magazine, which they read at home.
2. Tell Ls that they are going to read letters that were sent to an international teenage magazine.

Note 1: tell them that they are going to present the problems to their fellow Ls, so they should read the letters carefully. Stress that their task is not only to read and 'understand' what the letters say but they also have to be ready to a) present the issue in the letter and b) discuss possible issues related to the letter they got.

Tell Ls that they do not have to write down what they would like to say, they can take notes (just bullet points) and use them in the next class. Also, tell Ls that they are required to present the problem they read about using only their notes. They will not be allowed to use the letters in the following class!

Note 2: In the Materials file there are 12 letters altogether. You might give the same letters to every second L in the class, thus you can choose the letters that best suit your group's interest as well as linguistic competence.

LEARNERS' ACTIVITIES

1. Ls read the letters from the magazine and prepare a short presentation for next class.

LESSON 3: TEENAGER'S PROBLEMS 2

Aims of the lesson:

- to relate issues and share points of view
- to help Ls use all the input so far to write their own letter

Materials and resources: Written work that the Ls have created for the class)

Before the lesson: Make sure Ls have their homework – both their letters and their presentations

Classroom arrangement: -

STAGE 1	Teenagers of the world (checking homework)
TIME	30 mins
SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES IN FOCUS	Speaking Reading Writing
ORGANISATION	Whole class melee, pairwork + whole class
AIDS AND MATERIALS	Ls homework

TEACHER'S ACTIVITIES

1. Ls walk around the classroom and tell each other what they have read. Tell them that their tasks are to
 - a) tell the story to the others using only their notes – stress that they are not to read out the letter to the others,
 - b) collect possible solutions to their problem from each L they talk to
 - c) come up with a suggestion for each of the issues the others present (this is to ensure that they listen to each other and engage in genuine discussion)
 - d) take notes of all the solutions suggested by the others
2. Next, ask Ls to sit down and choose the solution(s) suggested by the others they liked the most.

LEARNERS' ACTIVITIES

1. Ls walk around the classroom sharing the information in their texts as well as gathering any possible advice from their peers.
2. Ls compare their findings in pairs

3. Finally, ask Ls to work in pairs and discuss whether their partner agrees with the solution picked by them (Note: The aim of this stage is to make sure that all the Ls get a chance to share their findings with someone. Also, some Ls might be encouraged by this ‘practice’ stage and be more willing to participate in the group discussion stage that follows.

STAGE 2	Discussion – them and us (what are the answers?)
TIME	10 mins
SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES IN FOCUS	Listening Speaking
ORGANISATION	Whole class (feedback)
AIDS AND MATERIALS	None

TEACHER’S ACTIVITIES

1. Ls and T discuss how these problems are different from what they are experiencing in their lives. First, ask some of the Ls to share with the whole group the problem and the solution they had.
2. Next, ask Ls whether they experience the same problems or how their problems differ.
(Note: You might come up with examples from literature or movies – e.g. the Dutch movie of ‘rich guy falls in love with poor girl’ style, where the poor girl’s horrible and really poor flat is a well furnished two-bedroom flat with a well-equipped kitchen; basically what equals to a ‘normal’ flat in Hungary.)

LEARNERS’ ACTIVITIES

STAGE 3	Homework – bring your own problem
TIME	5 mins
SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES IN FOCUS	Writing
ORGANISATION	Individual
AIDS AND MATERIALS	None

TEACHER'S ACTIVITIES

1. Tell Ls to write a letter to an agony column – based on the examples they have read.

Ideally, the letters should be at least 100 words in length. Ask Ls what they would like to include in their composition. Below is a list of possible topics, which may be altered based on Ls' ideas (or anything else that seems appropriate):

briefly setting the scene (a short introduction of who they are)

describing the problem

explaining/illustrating the problem

asking for advice, formulating a question

Important: Tell Ls NOT to write their name on the letter!!! Remind Ls that if they have no problem they want to discuss, they could write about a problem of someone they know. Also remind Ls that they are going to discuss their problems with the other Ls, which raises different issues. (You might tell them to hand in a printed version so that they would not recognise each other's handwriting. Be careful not to force Ls to expose personal issues they would not feel comfortable discussing.)

LEARNERS' ACTIVITIES

1. Ls produce a letter to the agony column (at home).

LESSON 4: LET'S FIND A SOLUTION

Aims of the lesson:

■ to discuss their own problems, setting the context for the final task

Materials and resources: None (apart from the writings that the Ls create for the class)

Before the lesson: You'll need Ls' written output (Lesson 3/4 – Homework)

STAGE 1	Redistributing the problems
TIME	5 mins
SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES IN FOCUS	Speaking
ORGANISATION	Whole class
AIDS AND MATERIALS	Ls' homework

TEACHER'S ACTIVITIES

1. Ask Ls to hand in the homework (their problem). Put all the letters in a box, or something similar and ask each student to take a letter at random.

Tell Ls that they are going to answer that letter in the final stage of the project.

LEARNERS' ACTIVITIES

1. Ls hand in their letters and take one from the box.

STAGE 2	Idea hunt
TIME	30 mins
SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES IN FOCUS	Speaking
ORGANISATION	Whole class
AIDS AND MATERIALS	Ls' homework

TEACHER'S ACTIVITIES

1. Ls ask their peers for advice.

Tell Ls that the next exercise is crucially important for the project. Ask them to read the letter they got carefully, then all the Ls should get up and talk to as many people as they can, asking them for ideas.

Tell Ls to take notes as it might prove very useful for them in completing the assignment later!

Note 1: this exercise is the same as the one in the first lesson – giving and asking for advice – but this time it is ‘for real’. This means they have the means and the vocabulary now to be able to discuss their real problems and give real advice.

Note 2: the exercise has the added excitement of discussing someone else’s real problem – without knowing who they are.

LEARNERS' ACTIVITIES

1. Ls carefully consider the problem they are given. Next, they walk around and ask their peers for ideas.

STAGE 3	Discussion and setting the final task
TIME	10 mins
SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES IN FOCUS	Speaking Describing feelings
ORGANISATION	Whole class
AIDS AND MATERIALS	–

TEACHER'S ACTIVITIES

1. Ls and T discuss any problems they might have encountered and Ls are given their final assignment.

LEARNERS' ACTIVITIES

1. Ls say how they felt about the advice given by the others.

TEACHER'S ACTIVITIES

2. Ask Ls whether they got any useful information and whether they feel they were helped .

Next, tell the Ls that their assignment for this project will be to write an answer to the letter they received. Their answer should be about 150 words long and they should try to make it really useful for the person who wrote the letter.

Important: as Ls are going to create the final version of the agony column in the next lesson, it might be useful to give them guidelines as to the completion of the assignment. Some examples might include:

Ls should use the same size paper (e.g. A4)

Hw should be handwritten/typed

Drawings/pictures can be included

If there is time, or some students are interested, they could design the cover of the column as well.

Note: the exercise is designed in a way that Ls do not have to reveal which their letter is. Leave it at that (i.e. do not tell the class who wrote what).

LEARNERS' ACTIVITIES

2. Next, they write the answer to the letter they got as their assignment.

LESSON 5: WRITING THE AGONY COLUMN

Aims of the lesson:

- to create Ls' agony column together,
- to design the looks of their problem pages
- to read each other's projects and comment on them

Materials and resources: Scissors, possibly folders or big (e.g. A0) sheets, 5.2 Self-assessment form

Before the lesson: Prepare scissors and large sheets, as well as some blu tack or sticky tape and correcting fluid

STAGE 1	Creating the column
TIME	20 mins
SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES IN FOCUS	Speaking Reading Writing
ORGANISATION	Groups
AIDS AND MATERIALS	Scissors, possibly folders or big (e.g. A0) sheets, correcting fluid

TEACHER'S ACTIVITIES

1. Tell Ls to work in groups (in a class of 16, form 3 or 4 groups) and ask them to design their agony column using their own answers together with the letters they received.

The following steps are needed:

- deciding upon the arrangement of the letters
- designing the column
- putting it all together

Note: Tell Ls that it is also their last chance to edit the texts they have received.

In order to do that, give them some correcting fluid so they can correct any mistakes and still preserve the looks of the column.

LEARNERS' ACTIVITIES

1. Ls work in groups and create their agony columns.

STAGE 2	'Publishing' the columns + evaluating the project
TIME	25 mins
SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES IN FOCUS	Listening Speaking
ORGANISATION	Groups
AIDS AND MATERIALS	Adhesive (e.g. blutack) + sheets for feedback poster, 5.2 Self-assessment form

TEACHER'S ACTIVITIES

1. Ls put their columns on the wall and read the others'.
Teacher's activities

Ask Ls to put their columns up on the wall somewhere.
Tell them to walk around the classroom reading what the others have posted and find ONE positive thing about each of the posters.

2. When they are ready, encourage discussion of the posters using the positive comments they have gathered. This way, all the posters will not only be commented upon but commented upon positively.
3. Put 4 huge empty sheets on the wall in different parts of the classroom and ask Ls to write their comments on them.

Depending on how long this takes, you might start discussing the project and Ls reactions to it as well. This can be done with the help of the self-assessment sheet.

LEARNERS' ACTIVITIES

1. Ls publish their work in the classroom.
2. They write their positive comments on sheets of paper.
3. Finally, they evaluate the project using the evaluation sheet.