

Reacting to Sexually (Un)acceptable Behavior
with the Flag System



SENSOA



Introduction

Ten years ago, a growing number of cases of sexual abuse of children and young people were reported, and left providers and caregivers with frustration: how could they have missed the signs and how can they perform a better job in safeguarding children in care? The awareness that children need better protection and that sexual education should also focus on preventing abuse without overreacting to sexually active behavior of children, existed. But how?

In 2008 Sensoa started working on the Flag System. The Flag System is a method that helps to promote healthy sexual behavior and prevent and limit sexually unacceptable behavior. The method uses objective and neutral criteria and is already developed and tested to be effective with children and young people (Lijster-Van Kampen, 2016). The Flag System is designed to help providers and caregivers to correctly assess sexually (un)acceptable behavior, promote discussion about the topic, and present an appropriate response. While the intervention is intended to be used by educators, social service providers and caregivers, anyone, children and adults, can be instructed to work with the method at their own level. Currently, also the application of the method and materials for adults is being developed.

Colofon

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TALK(S) ABOUT SEX

 **Vlaanderen**
is zorg

A brief example of the system and the flags

The Flag system provides a framework for assessment of sexual behavior utilizing a four-flag scale (green, red, yellow, and black), and then offers guidance on an appropriate response. As we will see, several factors are considered when assessing the Flag level and the appropriate response (e.g. cognitive ability of the child, whether it is a repeat behavior, whether there was a large age difference, etc.). Take a familiar event

How problematic is this situation?

Figure 1 – Four 10-year old boys are repeatedly bothering other children with sexually suggestive gestures and 'jokes'. Even after being corrected, they continue to exhibit this behavior at times when they are not being supervised.



All educators and caregivers experience comparable situations as the one in Figure 1, calling on them to quickly assess the situation and take action. They need to decide whether the behavior of these children is acceptable or abusive, and to what extent, and which reaction is appropriate in the situation.

Some essential considerations play a role in the assessment of sexual behavior by children and adolescents. In this example, questions to ask are if the boys put some

pressure on each other or threatened each other. Was it repeat behavior? How many people witnessed this incident, factors that caused this behavior? Any previous history, personality of the persons involved and their usual behavior also plays a role in judging and observing what is happening. Should we judge differently if the boys have a slight mental disability or a form of autism? Or if they have been victims of abuse themselves? Or if they have already committed an offence once? Do we rate their behavior differently if they come from Kurdistan or Ghana? Suppose the boys were girls, would we evaluate differently?

One and the same incident can also lead to very different reactions. You may think an approach based on agreements and discussion is right, but the girls' pa-

rents may expect a sanction. So how do we address this? The Flag system provides a framework for assessing and responding that provides a guide for practitioners but also gives them a framework to discuss the incident with parents and caregivers of all involved.

Assessing behavior by using six criteria

In classifying sexual behavior with the Sensoa Flag System, 3 main groups of arguments are used. The most important group of arguments refers to the possible traumatising effect of behavior: what impact will it have on people involved. The second group of arguments refers to legal arguments: is it illegal or should it be? The third category refers to rights violation such as right to education, privacy, choice, etc.. The starting point is that sexual integrity is a right, and that sexual behavior must neither harm either the person themselves or any other person concerned. The six criteria are making it more specific. A flag is assigned to the behavior based on the six criteria detailed. The behavior is only assigned a green flag if all the criteria are okay (and only then). Depending on the severity of the abuse, the behavior is assigned a yellow, red or black flag.

Mutual Consent

One of the first criteria for characterising sexually healthy behavior is mutual consent (consensus). This means that both parties must agree with full awareness. If one party leaves the other in the dark, misguides, deceives or takes them by surprise, one cannot speak of consent.

Voluntary Engagement

Voluntary engagement occurs when a person performs or permits sexual acts that he/she/they wants. If he/she/they compel another person, persuades or puts pressure on them, there is no voluntary engagement. We are not just talking about coerced sexual intercourse here, but also a coerced French kiss or another sexual act that is not wanted. This also includes subtle forms of coercion and pressure, such as persuading someone to have sex, or manipulations that people can only become aware of later. Lack of voluntary engagement can range from seduction and promises, to threats, extortion and violence.

Equality

Equality is defined as a situation where two parties operate with the same degree of power in a relationship without being controlled or coerced by the other. This means that a certain balance between both parties regarding age, knowledge, intelligence, reputation, power, life experience, maturity and status must exist. In a sexual interaction, both parties must be equal, so that one does not dominate the other. The possibility of the abuse of power and domination – even unconsciously – is always there. The question here is when does the lack of equivalence become problematic.

Appropriate for their development or age

A behavior appropriate to age or development means that the child or adolescent exhibits a sexual behavior that can be expected in his or her age or stage of development. Illustrations of this behavior are based on what is known from research and what is summarised in the Development Chart. In the case of development, we think of a gradual process in which children and adolescents are better able to demonstrate complex and socially accepted behavior. This process runs through several phases that build on each other.

*For adults this criterion refers to level of functioning, whether temporary or permanent (disharmonic development, disability, dementia or illness) and the influence on sexual health.

Appropriate for the context

Rules can change depending on the context. For example, the school context will generally be less permissive of sexual behavior than the domestic context. Behavior is offensive when it shocks or offends others. Therefore, the context in which sexual behavior takes place is significant. In a public space, where other people are present, rules prohibit the exposure of genitalia and breasts and explicit sexual behavior (gestures, words, movements, drawings). If this behavior occurs in an intimate group or in a private setting, it disturbs nobody and no response is required.

Self-respect & impact¹

With self-respect, we mean that it is important that the child, adolescent or adult does not harm himself/herself. Sexual behavior can be harmful at a physical, psychological or social level. The person can humiliate himself, inflict pain and enter into risky situations without knowing his own wishes and limits well. The adolescent can have unprotected sex and expose him/her/themselves to danger and abuse. Also people can harm themselves by transgressing others' boundaries: They could be arrested or harm their relationships and reputation.

¹ In the adult version this criterion is replaced by 'impact' and it refers not only to harm to oneself, but also to harm to others.

Application

In reference to the situation presented at the beginning, the behavior of the 10-year-old boys can be assessed as follows:

Based on these criteria, the red flag is chosen. Various reprimands have already been given, both by the other children and by professionals. It is hands-of behavior, but because of the repetition when not supervised, the offence becomes more serious. Also the boys are in a group, the girls are only two and are anxious.

Steps for assessing, judging and responding to behaviour

The first question when confronted with a situation where possible sexual abusive behavior occurs, is: what has happened exactly? The most important thing, as an educator, is to find out as much as possible about what has happened without starting an investigation (leave this to other professionals). However, as social workers you may be expected to complete this assessment.

Describe and name the behavior

The goal is to describe the behavior as it was observed without value judgements. But objectively describing behavior that has been observed, is sometimes difficult. We are quick to interpret the behavior of others. We tend to associate the behavior with a possible cause, without checking whether it really does form the core of the problem. It is also difficult to describe the behavior without expressing a value judgement. We find a behavior pleasant or unpleasant. Such statements are subjective and make it difficult to get to the heart of the behavior. The level of experience that educational professionals have plays a major role here.

Stay with the facts

In the case of people who cannot speak for themselves owing to their young age or level of cognitive development, it is important to get as much information as possible about what has happened. Try to get as clear a picture as possible without researching. Try to stay as close to the facts as possible. If children have difficulty explaining, observe better (see Table 3)

Take a good look and ask questions

The Flag method contains lists of assessment criteria and questions (see Table 3) that can be used to provide more clarity, such as, "Do you feel good about this? What would happen if you had said 'no'?" Being more specific about which criteria are at stake, also helps to assess a situation better

Manage the criteria

Using the Flag system, the goal is to judge the behavior, not the person themselves. You base your judgement on the behavior of the person who was the initiator and/or was primarily responsible. If you also assess the behavior of others concerned, you may experience different assessments. You go through all the criteria for all the persons involved: Does mutual consent exist, was there voluntary engagement, etc.?

Assign the flag

The green flag is only assigned when all the criteria (see Table 1) are okay. The degree of boundary abuse determines the colour of the flag: yellow, red or black. Above all, the consequences resulting from the behavior must be taken into account here. There are other factors that can be considered as mitigating or aggravating, such as repetition, duration, frequency and the degree of intimacy of the sexual behavior. The question of the extent to which the person initiating the behavior should know what consequences it may have for the other is included in the assessment. If the initiator is not capable of making this assessment, the assessment is milder.

Respond to the persons involved in the situation

As a teacher, social worker, care worker, parent, or caregiver you want to reduce the problem behavior and stimulate healthy and social behavior. We can start with a spontaneous and immediate reaction based on the flag assigned. But it is also important to think long-term in parallel. What general basic pedagogical and counseling strategies are needed to convey "healthy" sexual behavior and resilience, and for acting in a preventative or corrective manner in the case of sexual abusive behavior?

Steps to respond to sexual (unacceptable) behavior.

The following overview shows the different steps that can be taken when immediately reacting. The overview is designed as a guide which you can follow step-by-step (based on the PLISSIT model (Anon, 1976; Self-determination model of Ryan & Deci) in Van Steenkiste & Soenens 2015) and Solution Focused Practices (Berg & Szabo, 2005):

Respond guidelines

Green flag	Name or question the behavior
	Discuss the feelings and perspective of alle involved
	Confirm, affirm and explain reasons
Yellow flag	Define what is not ok and explain reasons
	Arrive at agreements on how to proceed
Red Flag	Increase supervision
	Describe and explain future confrontations, bans and consequences
	Focus on follow-up and redress
	Write report intern/inform parents
Black flag	Follow up on consequences and limit behavior: take measures
	Draw reports and forward it

Long term strategies can include giving information and helping regulate emotions (Green Flag), coaching and rewards (Yellow Flag), supervision or psychoeducation (Red Flag) and sanctions, time-out or restorative mediation (Black Flag).

Response toward the boys

'You are making sexual gestures and jokes. The girls already made clear that they didn't like it, and we explained why you should stop doing this. Wat's going on

that is so amusing? What keeps you wanting to behave in that way? Do you think the girls enjoy this? I am concerned about the fact that you continue to do this at times you are not being supervised.

It's okay to make jokes but it's not okay to bother other children when doing so because they don't feel safe and secure anymore. This may not happen again. Have you any suggestions what can help you to stop this? If it reported once more, we will have to supervise you more strict.

We also ask to make your apologies toward the girls. We will make a report on this incident. Your parents will be informed.'

Response toward the girls

'The boys were making sexual gestures and jokes again. You already made clear that you didn't like it, and we explained why they should stop doing this. How is this for you? I am concerned about the fact that you have been repeatedly confronted with their behavior while they are not being supervised.

It's okay to make jokes but it's not okay to be bothered by it and not feeling safe and secure anymore. This may not happen again. Have you any suggestions what can help to stop this?

They also will have to make their apologies towards you. Is there anything else we can do for you? We will make a report on this incident. Your parents will be informed if it's okay for you?

What help can the Flag System provide?

At the heart of the Sensoa Flag System is the aim of adequately classifying, addressing and responding to sexual (unacceptable) behavior.

Six criteria

The six criteria of the Flag System help you to assess sexual behavior. Is the sexual behavior healthy or unacceptable and abusive? These criteria are: (1) mutual consent, (2) voluntary engagement, (3) equality, (4) appropriate for development or age, (5) appropriate for context and (6) impact².

Four flags

Based on the criteria, the behavior will be assigned to one of the four categories: green flag is acceptable sexual behavior, yellow flag is moderately unacceptable or abusive behavior, red flag is seriously unacceptable or abusive behavior and black flag is very seriously red flag behavior.

An appropriate response

How you react to sexual behavior is an important message for everyone involved. An appropriate reaction to the behavior is provided and linked to the flags, without condemning the person. It also gives special attention for the needs and comprehension of the most vulnerable.

A Developmental Chart

For children and young people, we provide a Developmental Chart to help in classifying the behavior. This Chart provides an overview describing examples of sexual expression and behavior divided up in age categories (0 to 18 years) accompanied by the appropriate flag.

Situation cards

Drawings and case studies can help to assess and address sexual (unacceptable) behavior amongst and towards children, adolescents and adults, or amongst and towards professionals and teams.

² In the adapted version of the Flag system for adults this criterion self-respect is replaced by 'impact'.

A steering wheel

A steering wheel indicates the six criteria with one symbol in each section and can be used as a visual aid when working with the Flag System. The idea is to hold the wheel in your own hands which helps develop self-control and agency in sexual health.

A toolbox

To show how to proceed methodically as a professional or as a team a variety of exercises and ideas are gathered in a toolbox.³ The methodology has since been developed in several prevention programmes for children and adolescents, and materials for adults are under development.

³ Will be available on a website www.vlaggensysteem.be in dutch by end of 2022

Uses, applications, materials and evaluations

In previous years, specific applications have been made for settings and target groups such as schools (De Wilde & Frans, 2016), sports clubs (Van de Vivere & Frans, 2013), youthwork (Neyens & Frans, 2011), residential youth care (Janssens, Boet, Wentzel, & Repetur, 2017) and online sexual behaviour (Mediaraven and LINC, 2016). In addition, a special book and set of drawings was made available to address the needs of the more vulnerable groups of young people with a disability and children that have been victims of abuse (Frans, de Wilde, Janssens, Van Berlo & Storms, 2016). In all these applications a certain procedure was followed based on the Intervention Mapping Model (IMM), which is well-designed scientific working model for the mapping and the evaluation of health prevention programmes (Bartholomew et al., 2011; Bartholomew et al., 2001). The procedure was as follows:

- working with reference groups of people from settings on different levels (government, management, staff and ground workers) and additional professionals responsible for sector specific training were involved.
- making a selection and assessment of situations specific for the setting and translating into new or adapted situation cards, with specific advice for professionals working within this setting. This selection was pretested before publishing.
- producing and delivering a training of trainers, allowing existing training centres to incorporate it in their program and adopt the training to their own needs and develop expertise.
- discussing yearly evaluations, updates and opportunities in a 'Flag System partner-group', where implementing parties from Sport, Youth work, Education, Residential care and Child Care are invited, and in a regular organised networking event, where partners from the field can present new ideas on how they use the Flag System (e.g. in working with juvenile sex offenders, with foster parents, etc.)

More recently, the needs of healthcare professionals working with adults (hospitals, institutions, homecare, eldercare, psychiatry) and in Asylum Centres are being investigated, and a selection of situation cards are developed. While the Flag System for children and adolescents is more a pedagogical tool, with adults it will be used as a reflection and communication or counselling tool. In addition, reflection on the current policy can be stimulated using the Flag System situations.

Building policy

The Flag System is experienced as a game changer: by looking at sexual abusive behavior professionals must answer the question of what sort of sexual behavior they think is okay. Most professionals discover that the 'green flag' sexual behavior is not allowed nor promoted, and that institutional policy is not adapted to the (sexual) needs of the people. Each setting has its own blind spots, and if the most important risk situations are integrated in the examples on the situation cards, the discussion can change policy practice. Multiple uses are already in place: as a discussion tool for teams, as a counselling tool for parents, as a game for children and young people, as part of the training of the volunteers and professionals, as part of a trajectory of better adapting rules and agreements to the needs of the client, as a fine-tuning of professional demeanour in setting limits and protecting own boundaries, as an exercise in how to better respect privacy or to improve the treatment of victims or perpetrators, etc.

Evaluations and experiences

Some evaluations of various aspects of the deployment and implementation of the Flag System have already taken place in the Netherlands and Belgium. In 2012, an evaluation was undertaken by the University of Ghent (Van Hevele 2012; Moncarey/Vandeveldel (2014). They investigated in different settings (youth work, sport, schools, youth care) how the implementation-process was evaluated by the partners. In the Netherlands as well, an evaluation of the implementation in child and youth residential facilities was undertaken in 2015 and 2016 (Lijster-Van Kampen et al. 2017). This evaluation also included the children.

The results show that the method and theory of the Flag System are widely used when a team has received training on the methodology. Professionals claim to have more knowledge about sexual development, the consequences of sexualised violence and the causes of abusive sexual behavior. Professionals feel better equipped to assess behaviors and address them with teens and within their team. In order to talk to adolescents about sexual and sexual abusive behavior, they claim to experience greater personal effectiveness and a change to a more professional attitude. A larger number of professionals say they know how to respond to a given situation and are less uncertain about the proper educational response (Lijster-Van Kampen, et al., 2017)

Changes were observed in the rules and concepts at institutions, in the relationships between adolescents and educators and amongst professionals. In most institutions, attention to the needs of children and adolescents has increased (Lijster-Van Kampen, 2017). The young people themselves rate the drawings and explanations of the criteria and flags as positive and helpful and would like to know more about them (Lijster-Van Kampen, 2017).

Factors that support implementation include a sense of ownership, the adaptability of the tool, its practicality, the high degree of independence and its integration into the general pedagogical or treatment concept (Moncarey & Vandeveldel, 2014). The ongoing need for a practical tool gives The Flag System the attention and credibility that is needed to change the way we think, talk and act about sexual health and sexual abuse. Professional journals put it this way:

'This book is a must-have for all organisations and services in the sector of care and counseling. Not to sit on the shelf but to use it constantly, either for prevention or cure. This is an authoritative standard. All groups should have a copy always on hand' (Sociaal.net)

Implications for Practice

If people want to use the Flag System as a pedagogical tool, a lot of the material is or will be available on Flagsystem.org or Vlaggensysteem.be (handouts, situation cards, toolbox, powerpoints). Also, a Training of trainers is available and recommended. To make your own Flagsystem to apply it to new settings and to work out additional materials, check the conditions on www.flagsystem.org.

Sources

Frans, E., (2018). *Sensoa Flag System. Reacting to sexually (un)acceptable behavior of children and young people*. Antwerpen: Garant/Sensoa.

This article is based on a chapter in 'The Routledge International Handbook of Social Work and Sexualities' edited by S.J. Dodd (2021); 'Reacting to sexually (un) acceptable behavior with the Flag System' by Erika Frans (pp442-457)

The web page for the Handbook:

<https://www.routledge.com/The-Routledge-International-Handbook-of-Social-Work-and-Sexualities/Dodd/p/book/9780367358662>

The webpage for electronic access including to individual chapters:

<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/edit/10.4324/9780429342912/routledge-international-handbook-social-work-sexualities-sj-dodd>

Handouts & appendix

Objectives

Professional level

Professionals feel more competent in supporting healthy sexual behavior in a positive way and curbing sexual behavior that is unacceptable

Professionals

- Can appropriately assess sexual behavior
- Are able to discuss sexual behavior with all parties involved
- Can demonstrate an appropriate response

Target Group level

Children, young people and adults are sexually resilient

They

- Are able to assess when sexual behavior is okay and when it's not
- Are able to communicate appropriately about sexual boundaries
- Can respond appropriately when unacceptable sexual behavior takes place

Organisational level

Senior practitioners ensure that the preconditions needed for sustainable and sound organisational policy in relation to sexual health and prevention of unacceptable sexual behavior are and remain in place.

The organisation

- Has a vision of how sexual health can be promoted and how unacceptable sexual behavior can be prevented
- Is able to finalize this policy in a number of sustainable measures and interventions
- Is responsible for the regular evaluation and adjustment of policy

4 flags

Green behaviour

According to the Flag System, green (acceptable) behaviour applies when (1) there is clear mutual consent, (2) no form of pressure or coercion and (3) both parties are equal. The behaviour also needs to be (4) appropriate for the sexual development and (5) appropriate for the context in which it takes place and (6) not causing harm to the child or the young persons involved.

Yellow behaviour

Yellow (moderately unacceptable) behaviour applies when either (1) there is no clear mutual consent or (2) when moderate coercion or pressure is used, or (3) when there is moderate inequality in terms of age, maturity, intelligence. Also behaviour that (4) is not completely age-appropriate, (5) is not completely appropriate for the context or (6) that may be harming to oneself or others, is categorised as yellow behaviour. Yellow behaviour is quite 'normal' in the development of healthy sexual behaviour, because exploring and pushing the boundaries is all part of the development process.

A yellow flag may be:

- a one-off sexual incident, verbal or physical, but not involving penetration;
- there is no clear-cut rejection;
- the inequality between the persons involved is not great, or it involves less sexually explicit touching or contact (fondling, for example);
- hardly any coercion or persuasion is used, the persons involved can easily extricate themselves from the incident;
- no secrecy is enforced;
- the persons involved experience it as being unpleasant or annoying, but do not experience fear;
- the context is relatively safe;
- the behaviour is not entirely appropriate within the context or a certain degree of caution is required;
- there is a minor discrepancy in terms of age and development;
- there is a small risk associated with this or a negative feeling or potential danger.

Red behaviour

We talk about red (seriously unacceptable behaviour) if there is either (1) no clear consent on the part of both of those involved or (2) if manipulation, blackmail or power is used to force sexual contact or (3) if there is significant inequality between those involved. The following is also deemed to be seriously unacceptable: (4) sexual behaviour, which is not observed in most children or young people until a later age, (5) which is not appropriate for the context or, (6) which causes physical, emotional or psychological harm to the children involved.

This often involves more intrusive sexual acts, touching, exposure, or a repetition of less explicit sexual behaviour (such as touching breasts)

A red flag may therefore be:

- one-off intrusive sexual touching or one-off intrusive sexual contact;
- repeated less intrusive sexual touching or contact;
- great inequality between the persons involved;
- it becomes clear that coercion, violence, blackmail or pressure is being used, the child or the young person is not able to extricate him/herself from the sexual behaviour, secrecy is enforced;
- there is fear;
- there is no supportive, safe context, the victim is left to his or her own fate;
- there is no privacy, there are onlookers;
- there is a real risk, it's dangerous;
- there is a huge discrepancy between the behaviour and what is appropriate for the degree of sexual development.

Black behaviour

According to the Flag System black (very seriously unacceptable) behaviour applies if (1) there is either clearly no consent on the part of both involved or (2) if the sexual contact is forced with threats, aggression or violence or if (3) there is great inequality between the two parties. Also if the behaviour (4) is completely out of kilter with what is usual at this age, (5) is inappropriate for the context, or (6) results in severe physical, emotional or psychological harm for the child or young persons involved, we talk about black behaviour.

In case of repeated red behaviour and when there has been a positive educational response indicating that one might assume that the person involved ought to know that this is unacceptable, then we also talk about a black flag.

A black flag may be:

- repeated red behaviour;
- repeated intrusive sexual touching or contact;
- equality is not in evidence or an adult or group is involved in this;
- the relationship of dependency is intense or there is severe coercion, threat or violence;
- the victim has repeatedly experienced fear, and his or her needs are being ignored;
- the offender reasonably ought to know that he/she is inflicting harm on the victim;
- the behaviour is not appropriate for the context;
- the danger is great, the consequences may be serious;
- there is a significant discrepancy with the developmental chart.

Tips when assigning flags

Assessing the level of seriousness is not always so easy and there are many factors, which may lead you to decide that in this situation it is necessary to adapt the flag. Thus some tips:

- Always start the assessment by working through the criteria, which makes the assessment process more objective.
- Work through the list of specific characteristics for each flag.
- Check with the Developmental Chart.

Guidelines on how to use the Developmental Chart

The Developmental Chart is a supplementary working tool. It may help you to correctly assess sexual behaviour at a particular age. You are given an overview of what is known in scientific literature about sexual behaviour in children and young people. Sexual development is covered extensively here, and aspects such as knowledge, developing norms and values, body image, etc. can also be found in it. The research sources are referenced in it.

In drawing up the chart every attempt has been made to use the following logic:

- What applies in at least 20% of children and young people and is okay according to all the criteria? This involves behaviour in which the boundaries in relation to mutual consent, voluntary engagement and equality have not been overstepped, which are logically associated with their developmental phase and which are also okay for the context and the self-respect of the person exhibiting the behaviour. The descriptions are set out under the green flag.
- Where one of the criteria is not okay, for example if the behaviour does not sufficiently take place in private, or if there is excessive inequality between the persons involved, you will find it as an example under one of the other flags.
- When moderately unacceptable behaviour (yellow) is repeated, the flag becomes red. Here we work on the assumption that the person's environment has had a corrective effect.

Also included in the Developmental Chart:

- ! signals: Examples are included of unacceptable sexual behaviour, which may potentially be a signal pointing to abuse. Circumstances, which may raise concerns, and which may arouse negative emotions such as fear or shame in the child, are also given a !. The exclamation mark stands for 'caution' and examples of this are set out under the yellow and red flag. Because these situations need to be assessed with

greater care, an exclamation mark is added. But also a green flag ! is possible, when the context is hostile (f.i. for homosexual boy to come out).

- Emotional development: the scale for emotional development SEO-R (Claes & Verduyn, 2012) describes emotional development in phase around 13 areas. We include in the developmental chart examples from the most relevant areas relating to sexuality such as 'dealing with your own body', 'dealing with emotionally significant other people', 'dealing with peers', 'communication', 'differentiating emotions', 'moral development' and 'regulating emotions'.

If after using the flags and the criteria you have arrived at an assessment, but want to double-check, you can search the age category in the Developmental Chart for a comparable example.

Overview of Characteristics by Flag

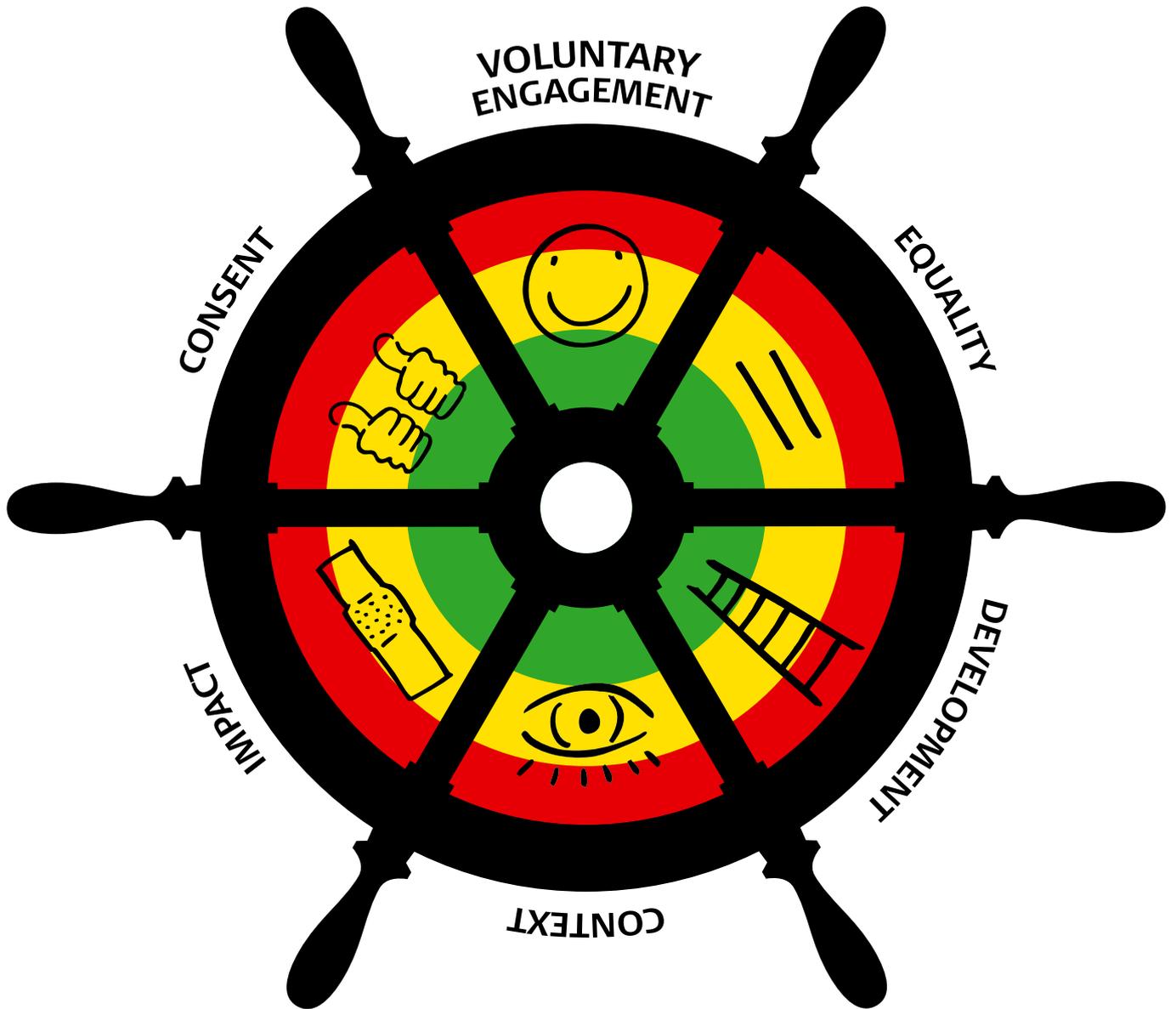
Basic Criterion	green	yellow	red	black
Mutual consent	Agreement was communicated	No clear agreement	Clear rejection	Clear rejection
Voluntary engagement	No form of coercion, pressure or blackmail takes place	Little compulsion or persuasion	Significant coercion, violence or blackmail; lack of opportunity to escape the situation	Repeated compulsion, violence or blackmail
Equality	Persons are equivalent in terms of development, age, power or number	Imbalance is not significant	Serious imbalance	Large imbalance (adult or group), dependency or superiority
Appropriate for development or age	The behavior matches the development phase	Small deviation in terms of development	Large deviation in terms of development	Large deviation in terms of development
Appropriate for context	The behavior matches the context	Behavior does not quite match the context	Behavior does not match; violation of private sphere	Repeatedly inappropriate in the context
*impact ⁴	The behavior has no harmful consequences for the persons involved	Risk of negative consequences for the persons involved	Real negative consequences for the persons involved	Great danger for the person; serious consequences for persons involved

⁴ In the adult version the criterion self-respect is replaced by 'impact' and it refers not only to harm to oneself, but also to harm to others.

Summary Guideline for Action

Reaction to/Aim	Green	Yellow	Red	Black
Put a stop or do not put a stop to behavior	Do not stop	Stop or reverse behavior	Stop behavior	Stop behavior
Find words/adopt a clear position/address subject Think empathetically	Name what happened, question Discuss the feelings of all concerned	Name what happened, question Discuss the feelings of all concerned	Name what happened, question Discuss the feelings of all concerned	Name what happened, question Discuss the feelings of all concerned
Know which behavior is okay and understand reasons why	Confirm, explain reasons	Confirm positive behavior, explain reasons	Confirm positive behavior, explain reasons	Confirm positive behavior, explain reasons
Know which behavior is not okay and understand reasons why		Define what is not okay and explain reasons	Define what is not okay and explain reasons	Define what is not okay and explain reasons
Arrive at agreements and determine how further critical support should be given		Arrive at agreements, what is not okay and how to proceed	Arrive at agreements, increase supervision; focus on follow-up and redress	Arrive at agreements, increase supervision and limit freedom of movement; focus on follow-up and redress
Clearly apply ban and demonstrate consequences			Describe and explain confrontation, bans and consequences	Describe and explain confrontation, bans and consequences
Know boundaries and stay safe			Write report	Take measures
Reporting				Write a report and forward it

Steering wheel



Examples of Observations and Questions

Observation of behaviour by the intermediary	Direct questions for the young people or children involved
Consent	
Do the persons involved look relaxed and happy? Is there pleasure? Is there sufficient calm? Do the persons involved look at/listen to one another (is a positive form of communication possible)?	Did you ask whether it was okay? Did you say that it was okay? Have you demonstrated that you approved/did not approve? How? Do you have the impression that the other person saw this or heard/understood?
Voluntary engagement	
Are you aware of previous forms of coercion, blackmail or threatening behaviour? Has verbal pressure or violence been exercised? Is there any manipulative behaviour? Has physical violence been used (pushing, pulling, shouting)?	Have you/the other person insisted on something? How? Have you promised or received a reward? Did you feel that you could say no? What would have happened if you had said no? If the other person said no? Was it nice, pleasurable? What was pleasurable?
Equality	
Is there any striking inequality in terms of physical strength, biological development, mental maturity or intelligence? Is there any inequality in terms of position, status, popularity or power?	Was one of you the boss? Or did you both have an equal say in this situation? Who took the initiative? Did you feel that you could stand up against the other person?
Appropriate for their development	
Where in the developmental chart does this specific behaviour lie? Is there an explanation why the behaviour of the persons involved fails to conform to the developmental chart?	Have you ever done this before? How and with whom? Have you seen other children doing this? What experience have you had of this?
Appropriate for the context	
Are there clear and explicit rules about which behaviours are possible in what context? Is privacy possible?	Have you secluded yourself so that other people were not able to see you? Did you make sure that you could not be disturbed? How? Are there places where you are allowed to do this? Where are they?
Impact	
Is there a chance of any risk to your health? Is there a social disadvantage or advantage? Is there some danger? Is the young person aware of the dangers or negative consequences for him/herself- for the others involved? Is it repeat behavior? How intimate is the behavior?	Do you feel regret, shame, guilt or sadness? Are you suffering or are you worried about the consequences? Are you happy? Do you feel good about this? Do you feel supported? Are there negative feelings?