

Assembly – Offence – myfishbites.com

Offence

The word 'offence' (not the criminal kind of offence) means "annoyance or resentment brought about by a perceived insult to or disregard for oneself" according to the Oxford Dictionary. We hear about the word offence or people being offended quite a lot in the media.

Most people don't mean to offend others (to upset them) and don't like to be upset themselves either. But sometimes it gets a bit confusing. So how do we deal with this? Here's some ideas...

This assembly should be changed / developed / edited for your audience!

What do you find offensive?

Here's some tricky questions for you to think about...

Do you find certain things offensive but not others. Why?

What makes something offensive and something else a bit of banter or fun?
How do we decide what is offensive? Are we in danger of limiting free speech?
Do we offend people by saying that what they think is offensive, even stopping them from speaking or thinking a certain way? Which kind of 'offence' is most offensive?

In the past, Britain was a Christian country and believed certain things according to the Bible and teachings of Jesus. Today we have lots of different people's ideas and theories. How do we decide what is right and what is offensive? If we all have different 'truths', whose truth do we go with? Why?

Jesus (in the Bible) has given us this amazing bit of advice:

["Love others and treat them as you would want to be treated."](#)

If we all lived like that, what a good world we would have and how much better things would be.

First of all, we should avoid being offensive

When you are horrible to other people, it's like a plague. It injures people and it spreads. You may not see it but it's a bit like a toxic gas. It damages people.

In the civil war in Syria, the government were alleged to be using chlorine gas against their own people. The people were being bombed so they went downstairs to protect themselves. But when they were bombed with chlorine gas, it sinks down because it is heavier than air. So people sheltering below ground were often killed or badly injured.

In a different way, when we hurt people or even when we are offended or angry or bitter or don't forgive people, we can hurt others with our words or physically. But being offended means it can sink down deep inside and hurt us emotionally and in our mental health.

The more people are hurt, the more that hurting people hurt people. So don't be offensive and deliberately hurt other people with your actions and words. If you're hurting, talk to someone you trust and let them help you.

Second, try not to get offended about everything

(This report below was heard second hand, so if the details are not completely accurate, please forgive me. This is a general outline!)

The true account was told of a speaker who had written something on social media saying that he wanted his talks to be alive and not to be like a library. What he meant was that what he wanted his words to really come to life and not sit there like a book on a shelf that was never read. But somebody who was a librarian posted that they were a librarian and were offended by this social media post. The writer of the post (joking but to make a point) said that he was offended by the librarian's response. His point was how far do we go when getting offended – whose offence is more important?!

We should call something offensive when it is but not when it's just a different point of view.

In 2014, the actor and comedian John Cleese said that he was worried about being unable to say some things because people were too easily offended. He quoted a psychologist called Robin Skynner who famously said:

'If people can't control their own emotions then they have to start trying to control other people's behaviour.'

So, should we never be offended?

In many universities, some people believe that stopping certain kinds of speech that others may find offensive is the right thing to do. Instead of protecting free speech, some Universities are in danger of becoming places where people have freedom from speech. So you can only say things that other people won't find offensive. Pretty tricky in a diverse world when you don't know if someone may be offended. We shouldn't just say we're offended to try and stop other people having free speech.

There are things we should be offended about.

For example we should be offended when people get away with crimes. Or when there is injustice in our world. We should be offended when what we buy leads to the harm or

death of other people. We should be offended that there are more slaves in the world today than ever before.

So there are some things that we can get offended about. Especially when it leads to some good happening.

Disagree Well

It's also really important that we learn how to disagree with other people with respect. If we don't learn this skill then we won't ever really get along with people. It's important to know that we can have different opinions and that we are all valuable – a certain opinion on something doesn't define a person. Just because you disagree with someone shouldn't mean you get angry and hate the other person. Otherwise we'd hate everyone else! Sometimes we'd even hate ourselves! A healthy world is one where people can disagree and still get along.

Being offended in the wrong way damages health!

OK so you know what it's like. Someone says something and it sticks in your head. Then if you don't let it go, it starts to get bigger and bigger. You may start to say things about that person. Then you tell someone else. Then you all get angry. Then it leads to conflict and problems. Or it builds and builds inside of you and tears you up inside.

So here are three really good things to know!

1. You don't have to get offended. You can actually say to yourself, 'no, I won't get mad about this.'
2. You don't have to think about something. You can let it go. The way to do this is to forgive someone. Forgiving means you let it go and don't get mad about it. Why? Because it hurts you. And others. When you let it go, it helps you and the other person.
3. You can also get some help to get an offence sorted out with someone you trust. You don't have to paste it all over social media. Think first, wait a while, then post something if you really have to. You may even be wrong in what you're thinking! Not posting something bad may protect you too!

Video - Offence - 'A Fence'

YouTube link – https://youtu.be/u1lR6y_kH48

PS. If you don't like this assembly, please don't be offended :)