



Work formats of Sensoa Flag System for
children and young people

SENSOA

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Colophon

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SENSOA
TALK(S) ABOUT SEX

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Introduction

Children and adolescents exhibit sexual behaviour throughout their development. That sexual behaviour is usually okay, but can sometimes cross a line. It's not always easy to talk about sexual or sexually transgressive behaviour to children and young people. As a professional, you can use the Sensoa Flag System's six work formats in this booklet to talk to children and young people.

The Sensoa Flag System is a method that uses six objective criteria to assess sexually (transgressive) behaviour:

- Consent
- Voluntary engagement
- Equality
- Developmental or functional level
- Context
- Impact

We first consider whether the criteria are okay, not (quite) okay or unclear. Then, based on this assessment, we assign the sexual behaviour a coloured flag. Behaviour is assigned a green flag when all the criteria are totally okay. We assign sexual behaviour a yellow, red or black flag when one or more criteria are not okay.

[How does the Sensoa Flag System work?](#)

It can also be useful for children and young people to work with the Sensoa Flag System criteria. The criteria can help them discuss situations around sexually (transgressive) behaviour. The aim is not for children and young people to eventually assign a flag to a situation, but to engage in a discussion about the topic.

How to use the Sensoa Flag System work formats?

- For each work format, you get an overview of the objectives, possible target groups and the materials you need.
- There is no correct order in which you go through these work formats. You choose a work format where the goals best match the needs of your target group.
- We often use the situation maps and drawings of the Sensoa Flag System. Choose in advance situations and drawings that are recognisable to your group.
- The drawings may arouse emotions in some people and discussions may arise. Never let emotions take over but do take the time to identify them. [Use the Sensoa Flag System criteria](#) to get to the root cause of these emotions. Also consider how you can make professionals feel more comfortable.
- Sexual integrity and sexually transgressive behaviour are sensitive topics. Children or young people have been through a great deal sometimes.
- The assessments of the Sensoa Flag System examples are a first step. The examples of incidents in your own work context may be more complex. Your assessment may therefore take more time and may be different from the situation map examples.

More about the Sensoa Flag system:

[What is the Sensoa Flag System?](#)

[Educational material about the Sensoa Flag System](#)

[Discover how to integrate the Sensoa Flag System into your policy](#)

[Developmental chart: look up which behaviour is appropriate for age or developmental level](#)

Work formats

Empathy exercise



Target group:

Children and young people.



Objectives:

- To explore thoughts and feelings in a sexual situation.
- To be able to empathise with the various people involved.
- To be able to talk about one's own experience.

Number of people:

Individually or in a group.

Tools:

[Sensoa Flag System situation cards with drawings](#) that correspond to the age of the children or young people you work with.

Working method:

Step 1:

Select the most popular situation card.

Step 2:

Ask about what the drawing on the situation card brings to mind:

- What do you think about it? What pleasant and less pleasant thoughts do you have about it?
- What do you feel about it? What positive and less nice feelings do you have about it?
- What is figure X feeling in this situation? How do you notice that?
- Say you were figure X in this situation, what would you think about it?
- And what if you were figure Y, Z, etc.?
- Would you want this to happen to you? Why, or why not?
- Has something like this ever happened to you? Do you want to talk about it?

Sexual situations can be very confusing and can have different meanings for each of us. It is good to take the time to consider their thoughts and feelings and to encourage them to talk about these.

Okay or not okay?

**Target group:**

Children and young people, young people with mild additional learning needs.

**Objectives:**

- Judging whether a situation is okay or not okay.
- To be able to explain why certain sexual behaviour is okay and not okay, or is not possible or permissible.

Number of people:

Individually or in a group.

Tools:

[Situation cards with drawings.](#)

Working method:

Step 1:

Give the situation cards to the children or young people. Have them determine whether the situation is okay or not okay, and have them explain why.

Step 2:

- Discuss the following questions with the children or young people:
 - What do you see in this drawing?
 - Is this okay or not okay?
 - Why, or why not?

Crossing the line?



Target group:

Children and young people, young people with mild additional learning needs.



Objectives:

- Assessing to what extent behaviour crosses the line.
- Recognising criteria that cause a situation to cross the line.

Number of people:

Individually or in a group.

Tools:

- [Situation cards with drawings](#)
- Several cards per criterion

Working method:

Step 1:

Give the children or young people a maximum of 7 situations that cross the line. Ensure some variation in situations that get a yellow, red and black flag. Have the children or young people rank the situations from mildly transgressive to seriously transgressive. Ask them to note down the arguments for this ranking.

Step 2:

Have the children or young people go through their ranking and say why they find something (not) okay. Tell them that some of these situations are examples of sexually transgressive behaviour. Ask them why they think a particular situation is okay or not okay.

Step 3:

Have them apply the six criteria of the Sensoa Flag System to (some of) these situations.

Ask some questions about the various criteria:

- Why is this important?
- What could happen if you didn't bear that in mind?
- Is that always the case?
- Do you have any examples of this?
- Have you heard about these incidents before?
- How do you feel about that yourself?
- What do you feel about it?
- What can you learn from that?

Practise with the criteria 'Consent', 'Equality' and 'Voluntary Engagement'



Target group:

Children and young people with mild additional learning needs.



Objectives:

- To be able to remember the three criteria 'Toestemming' (Consent), 'Gelijkwaardigheid' (Equality) and 'Vrijwilligheid' (Voluntary Engagement) using the mnemonic TGV (the first letters of these 3 criteria, partly in Dutch).
- To be able to explain the three criteria.
- To be able to assess the three criteria.

Number of people:

Individually or in a group.

Tools:

- [Situation cards with drawings](#)

Working method:

Step 1:

The Sensoa Flag System uses six criteria to determine whether sexual behaviour is okay or not okay. It is not always easy for young people to assess the six criteria. In this exercise, the focus is on the first three criteria 'Toestemming' (Consent), 'Gelijkwaardigheid' (Equality) and 'Vrijwilligheid' (Voluntary Engagement). You can summarise these using the mnemonic 'TGV' (first letters of the three criteria). Explain that a TGV (Train à grande vitesse) is a high-speed train that, in order to reach its destination, wants to leave as soon as possible.

Explain to the youngsters that before a train is allowed to leave all lights must be green. When the lights are red, the train must stop immediately. If the train driver is in any doubt, he should make the train stop and find out what is going on.

Explain to young people that if they have sexual contact on- or offline, they may also want to rush in straight away. Just like a TGV. The train driver then first checks if the lights are green. If the train has left and there is any doubt, the train driver should make the train stop and find out what the problem is.

Explain the criteria of 'Consent', 'Equality' and 'Voluntary Engagement' to young people. Also give them the opportunity to explain what the criteria mean to them. It helps to make the criteria visible (e.g. on a board) and let young people create their own words or drawings to accompany them.

1. **Consent** means that everyone agrees for it to happen.

Ask the young people how can they express their consent? How can they do this verbally (e.g. with words or sounds)? Or how can they show it non-verbally (e.g. with gestures)?

2. **Equality** means that everyone is about the same age and has equal power.

- Ask the young people how they interpret 'about the same age' because this is a vague concept. Explain that sexuality is not always easy because there is a lot of nuance needed. You can explain 'about the same age' with guiding questions based on interest, living environment and body development. Some examples:
 - Does an 8-year-old girl have approximately the same body development as a 14-year-old girl? Why, or why not?
 - In the playground, does a 9-year-old boy play more or less the same games as a 15-year-old boy?
- Ask the young people how they interpret the concept of power. Power can be explained with the following guiding questions:
 - Do your teacher and the principal at school have the same power?
 - Does someone who owns your intimate photos have more power at that moment?

Note: if you own an intimate photo, you basically have more power than the other person. This is okay until the moment you share the photo with someone else without that person's permission.

3. **Voluntary** engagement means no one is under pressure, everyone participates of their own free will.

- Ask the young people how they feel that they are under pressure or coercion? How do they feel this physically? What can they do about it?

Step 2:

Take one of the situations as an example and go over the first three criteria. Do this with two colours: green or red. Again make the link to the TGV high-speed train here.

Go over each criterion:

- In your opinion, is there consent?
 - Yes → light turns green → you may proceed
 - No → light turns red → you have to stop
- Is everyone in the situation equal?
 - Yes → light turns green → you may proceed
 - No → light turns red → you have to stop
- Is everyone participating voluntarily?
 - Yes → light turns green → you may proceed
 - No → light turns red → you have to stop

Only if all three lights are green is the train allowed to leave. If one of the three lights is red, the train cannot leave because the situation is not OK.

If young people are in doubt about a situation, for example because information is missing, the light turns red. When in doubt, don't do it or first question the person or your trusted person.

This working method is taken from the workbook 'Praten over sexting in het buitengewoon onderwijs', published by Child Focus and Sensoa.

Know your criteria



Target group:
Young people.



Objectives:

- To explore the six criteria of the Sensoa Flag System.
- To be able to explain why this is important.

Number of people:

In small groups.

Tools:

- [Situation cards with drawings](#) depending on the criterion you want to discuss
- Several cards per criterion

Working method:

Step 1:

Give each small group a number of situation cards and a card with a criterion. Ask them to assess only that criterion in the various situation cards. For example: 'How do you evaluate the criterion 'mutual consent' in these situations?'

Step 2:

Ask some questions to find out how they arrived at this assessment. For example, the facial expressions of the people in the drawing or the fact that people are smiling or looking sad. Correct where necessary and explain why you are doing this.

What would you do?



Target group:

Children and young people.



Objectives:

- To be able to respond to a situation of sexually transgressive behaviour.
- To give and receive tips on how you can handle this.
- To be able to indicate 5 reliable people you know who you can turn to.

Number of people:

In small groups.

Tools:

- Selection of [situation cards with drawings](#).

Working method:

Step 1:

Sit in a circle with a small group of children or young people. Put the situation cards upside down. Show the group a drawing and have them think about:

- How you can respond if this happens to you.
- How you can respond if you see this happening.

Make sure there is sufficient focus on:

- the response to the person behaving this way;
- the response to the person experiencing the behaviour;
- information on who they can contact to report the behaviour.

Step 2:

Have the children or young people think about who they can contact if this should happen to them:

- Discuss who is a reliable person and who is not.
- Discuss what that trusted person should do to help you.