

THE
13
LIFE HACKS



Hack 9
Speaking Up &
Speaking Out:
Teacher Notes

A project of



Government Criteria Alignment Chart

Framework	Criterion / Theme	Covered in Hack 9
PSHE (Health & Wellbeing)	H1: Recognise and talk about emotions	Soup metaphor task; identifying bottled-up feelings; myth-busting about weakness
	H4: Developing resilience and perseverance	Speaking up for help despite fear; practising assertive “I” statements
	H5: Skills to manage setbacks and change	Handling bullying, rejection, or misunderstanding with support
	H10: Strategies to manage pressure	Letting off “steam” by sharing emotions before they explode
	H11: Self-respect and achievement	Learning that sharing struggles shows strength, not weakness
PSHE (Relationships)	R2: Trust, respect, communication	Trust-building discussion; finding safe adults to talk to
	R9: Managing conflict respectfully	Assertive communication rules: “I” statements, sticking to facts, proposing solutions
	R13: Managing change in relationships	How trust can be lost/rebuilt; dealing with judgement fears
RSHE (Mental Wellbeing)	Importance of seeking help early	Myths that block speaking up; steps for how to ask for help
	Impact of silence on wellbeing	Soup-lid explosion metaphor; emotional pressure building
	Positive communication strategies	Assertive communication model; written expression option

Government Criteria Alignment Chart

Framework	Criterion / Theme	Covered in Hack 9
Safeguarding / KCSIÉ	Knowing when to seek support	Bullying, unsafe situations, “speak up straight away”
	Recognising mental distress	Identifying when bottled emotions are overwhelming
British Values	Individual Liberty: right to speak out	Emphasis on using your voice to express needs
	Mutual Respect: listening to others	Respectful, non-blaming communication skills
SMSC – Spiritual	Self-awareness and honesty	Speaking up first to yourself, then to others
SMSC – Moral	Responsibility to protect others	Bullying — standing up, checking in, reporting
SMSC – Social	Building trust and support networks	Identifying safe people to share with
SMSC – Cultural	Respecting different struggles	Myth-busting “nobody could understand me”

Learning Focus

This chapter equips students with two essential life skills: **speaking up** (reaching out for help when struggling) and **speaking out** (assertively expressing needs without blame). Through metaphors, myths, and practical tools, students learn that sharing emotions prevents harmful “pressure build-up,” that asking for support is a sign of courage, and that assertive communication helps resolve conflict constructively. Students also gain safeguarding awareness, recognising when to speak out for themselves or others in unsafe situations.

Key Themes

- Bottling emotions creates pressure that eventually “explodes” (soup pot metaphor)
- Speaking up for help shows courage, not weakness
- Five common myths stop people from asking for help- all can be challenged
- Trust is built through risk, and support can be found in safe adults
- Bullying is never “just a joke” - speaking up or checking in makes a difference
- Safety concerns must be shared immediately - you are not alone
- Assertive communication = three rules: “I” statements, stick to the facts, suggest solutions
- Written communication can be a powerful alternative if speaking feels too hard
- True strength is admitting “I am not okay” and taking steps toward support

Discussion Prompts

1. Bottling vs. Sharing

- “What happens when we keep emotions bottled up?”
- “Why does sharing feelings make the pressure lighter?”

2. Myths About Asking for Help

- “Which of the five myths feels most believable to you — and why?”
- “Why do you think people sometimes believe that asking for help makes them weak?”

3. Trust and Safe Adults

- “Who are the adults in your life you could speak to if things felt too heavy?”
- “What makes someone a safe and trustworthy person to open up to?”

4. Bullying and Speaking Up

- “Why do some people stay silent when they see bullying?”
- “What’s one small thing you could do if you saw someone being picked on?”

5. Assertive Communication

- “What’s the difference between being aggressive, passive, and assertive?”
- “Why do ‘I statements’ work better than blaming?”

6. Safeguarding and Safety Concerns

- “Why is it important to speak out if you or someone else is unsafe?”
- “What could you say or do if a friend told you something worrying?”

Imaginative Group Tasks

1. Myth-Busting Debate (The 5 Myths About Asking for Help)

How it works:

Split the class into five groups. Each group gets one of the “5 myths” mentioned in the workbook. (e.g. “*If I ask for help, people will think I’m weak*”). Their task: come up with a strong argument or short role-play to prove the myth wrong. After presenting, the teacher reveals the “truth.”

Why it works:

Turns abstract myths into lively debates, helps students internalise that asking for help = strength.

2. Soup Pot Pressure Game (Bottling vs. Sharing)

How it works:

Bring a lidded pot (or box) and slips of paper. Students write down stresses or feelings (real or imagined) and keep stuffing them in the pot. The teacher explains that pressure builds until it “explodes.” Then a few slips are read aloud (anonymously) to show that sharing releases pressure.

Why it works:

Makes the metaphor real, shows that sharing feelings = safety valve for stress.

3. Safe Adult Mapping

How it works:

Each student draws a quick “support circle” - writing their name in the middle and surrounding it with names (or roles) of safe adults they could turn to. In groups, they share one safe person they’ve chosen and why.

Why it works:

Normalises support-seeking, gives students a concrete map of who to reach out to.

Imaginative Group Tasks

4. Bullying Bystander Scenarios

How it works:

Groups are given short bullying scenarios (e.g. “*Someone is being excluded at lunch*”).

{See Appendix A for some scenarios.}

Each group brainstorms two responses: (1) what most people do (stay silent, laugh along), and (2) what they could do instead to speak up or support.

Why it works:

Rehearses real-life action, empowers students to act instead of freeze.

5. “I Statement” Role-Play

How it works:

Pairs role-play conflicts (e.g. “*You always take my stuff without asking*”).

{See Appendix B for conflict examples.}

One student uses blaming language, then re-tries using an “I statement” (e.g. “*I feel frustrated when my things are taken without asking, because I value my space*”). Class reflects on which felt better.

Why it works:

Practises assertiveness in a safe way, builds confidence to use it in real conflicts.

6. Safety Escalation Ladder

How it works:

Teacher introduces a “ladder” (1 = small everyday issue, 5 = unsafe situation). In groups, students place different scenarios on the ladder (e.g. “argued with a friend” vs. “a friend said they want to hurt themselves”).

{See Appendix C for scenario examples.}

Then discuss: which ones need to be spoken out about *immediately*?

Why it works:

Makes safeguarding concrete, clarifies when *not* to keep secrets.

Torah Perspectives

Theme in Hack	Source	Hebrew & English (in same cell)	Use in Lesson
Everyone faces suffering and challenges	Midrash Shmuel, Avos 6:4	כל אדם טובל סבל במהלך חייו – רק מי שמצליח לא לתת לזה להסיח את דעתו – יצליח בתורה – Everyone suffers at some point in life. Only those who don't let it distract them succeed in Torah learning.	Opens the hack by normalising struggle as part of human life.
Life is a test of how we respond	Mesillas Yesharim, Ch. 1	האדם עומד תמיד בתוך המלחמה הזוהרה – A person is always standing in the fiercest battle.	Helps students see problems as opportunities for growth.
The power of words	Mishlei 18:21	מנות נחיים ביד הלשון – Death and life are in the power of the tongue.	Highlights how speaking up can hurt or heal, encourage or discourage.
Sharing worries eases the burden	Yuma 75a	דאגה בלב איש – ישחנה – Either remove it from his mind, or speak it out to others.	Validates talking about worries, linking it to wise Torah advice.
Negative emotions are real	Mishlei 12:25	דאגה בלב איש ישחנה – Anxiety in a man's heart dejects it.	Shows that Torah recognises feelings of anxiety and sadness as real.
Anxiety drains energy	Gittin 70a	שלושה דברים מחלישין פהו של אדם – נאלי הו: דאגה, דרך, ועבירה – Three things drain a person's strength: anxiety, travel, and sin.	Links worry with tiredness, motivating students to find healthier coping.
Speaking up is wisdom	Mishlei 12:15	דרך אויל ישר בעיניו – וחקם שמע לעצה – The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but the wise person listens to advice.	Encourages seeking support and guidance instead of isolating.
Companionship is vital	Taanis 23a	או חברותא או מיתותא – Either companionship or death.	Stresses the importance of friends and social support.
Everyone is unique and matters	Sanhedrin 37a	כל המציל נפש אחת מישראל – כאילו הציל עולם מלא – Whoever saves one life is as if they saved an entire world.	Reinforces that each student's feelings and challenges are significant.
Arrogance isolates, humility connects	Rambam, Hilchos De'os 1:5	המפשיל עצמו מן הגאווה ונהנה ענו – זהו חכם – One who removes pride and becomes humble is called wise.	Encourages openness and dropping pride when sharing problems.
Pride destroys, humility builds	Orchos Tzaddikim, Shaar HaGaavah	גאווה מביאה את האדם לידי כליון – Pride brings a person to destruction.	Shows that worrying about "what people think" blocks real growth.
Growth from suffering	Berachos 5a	יסורין של אהבה – Sufferings of love, sent from Hashem out of care.	Provides meaning to struggles and reframes hardship.
Seeing the good later	Chafetz Chaim al HaTorah, Vayigash	לעתיד לבוא יתבררו כל הדברים – In the future all will be clarified as good.	Comforts students when they can't yet see purpose in pain.
Calm, respectful speech works best	Koheles 9:17	דברי חכמים בנחת נשמעים – Words of the wise spoken gently are heeded.	Demonstrates how speaking calmly and softly is most effective.

Suggested 4 lesson plan

Lesson 1: Bottling vs. Sharing

Learning Focus:

- Understand why bottling emotions builds pressure
- Learn that sharing lightens the load and prevents “explosions”
- Explore myths that stop people asking for help

Key Themes Covered:

- Bottling emotions creates pressure (soup pot metaphor)
- Speaking up shows courage, not weakness
- Five common myths stop people asking for help - all can be challenged

Discussion Prompts:

- What happens when we keep everything inside?
- Why do you think people believe “asking for help is weakness”?
- Which myth feels most common among teens?

Group Activity:

• *Pressure Pot Experiment* — pass around a balloon being inflated bit by bit to show how pressure builds until it bursts. Compare to holding in emotions.

Workbook Pages:

Lesson 2: Trust & Support Networks

Learning Focus:

- Identify safe people and supportive friends
- Explore how trust is built through risk
- Recognise that bullying and exclusion are never “just a joke”

Key Themes Covered:

- Trust is built through risk; support can be found in safe adults
- Bullying is never “just a joke” — speaking up makes a difference
- Love and support matter more than family “setup”

Discussion Prompts:

- Who do you trust when you’re struggling?
- Why is it sometimes scary to reach out first?
- What can you do if a friend is being bullied or excluded?

Group Activity:

• *Bullying Bystander Scenarios* (Appendix A) — groups brainstorm typical vs. better responses.

Workbook Pages:

pp. 64–66

Suggested 4 lesson plan

Lesson 3: Speaking Out Assertively

Learning Focus:

- Learn the difference between aggressive, passive, and assertive communication
- Practise “I statements” for everyday conflicts
- Explore written communication as an alternative

Key Themes Covered:

- Assertive communication = three rules: “I” statements, stick to the facts, suggest solutions
- Written communication can be a powerful alternative
- True strength = admitting “I’m not okay” and seeking support

Discussion Prompts:

- What’s the difference between blame and assertiveness?
- Why do calm, factual words usually work better than shouting?
- Have you ever written something down instead of saying it — did it help?

Group Activity:

- “*I Statement*” *Role-Play* (Appendix B) — pairs act out conflicts at home or school, first with blame, then re-do with “I statements.”

Workbook Pages:

pp. 67–69

Lesson 4: Safeguarding & Taking Action

Learning Focus:

- Recognise the difference between small problems and unsafe situations
- Understand when it is essential to break silence and seek help immediately
- Consolidate learning through quiz and word search

Key Themes Covered:

- Safety concerns must always be shared immediately
- Not all challenges can be “fixed” — some must be accepted and lived with
- Struggles can lead to growth, strength, and new purpose

Discussion Prompts:

- How do you know when a problem is “big enough” to speak out about?
- Why might someone keep unsafe secrets, and why is that dangerous?
- How can speaking up protect not just you but also your friends?

Group Activity:

- *Safety Escalation Ladder* (Appendix C) — groups place scenarios from 1–5, discuss which must always be shared right away.
- *Multiple-Choice Quiz + Word Search* (consolidate all Hack 9 themes).

Workbook Pages:

pp. 70–72

Appendix A

Bullying Bystander Scenarios

- A student drops their books in the hallway, and another student kicks them while others laugh.
- At lunch, a group deliberately saves no space at the table for one classmate.
- Someone makes fun of another student's accent when they answer a question in class.
- A student's new haircut is mocked loudly by others in the corridor.
- During a sports game, one player is always left out and never passed the ball.
- A group starts passing notes about someone in the class.
- Someone gets called hurtful nicknames every day by the same people.
- A student's lunch is taken and passed around the table as a joke.
- In drama class, a student volunteers for a role, and the class laughs and says they're "rubbish"
- Someone posts an embarrassing photo of a classmate online and others share it around.

Appendix B

- **Borrowed Items (Home/Friends)**
"You always wear my clothes without asking."
- **Chores (Home)**
"You never help clean up after supper."
- **Screen Time (Home)**
"You're always on your phone when we're supposed to spend time together."
- **Exclusion (Friends)**
"You never invite me when you go out with the group."
- **Group Work (School)**
"You don't do your part in projects, and we get marked down."
- **Noise (Home)**
"You always play music so loudly when I'm trying to sleep."
- **Teasing (Friends/School)**
"You always make jokes about me in front of others."
- **Privacy (Home/Friends)**
"You went through my things without asking."
- **Being Ignored (Friends)**
"You never reply to my texts, even when I really need you."
- **Timekeeping (Friends/School)**
"You're always late when we agree to meet up."

Appendix C

Level 1 – Small Everyday Issues

1. You argued with a friend about what game to play.
2. Your sibling borrowed your charger without asking.
3. A friend rolled their eyes when you spoke in class.
4. You felt left out of a group conversation.

Level 2 – Ongoing Problems

5. A classmate keeps teasing you in lessons.
6. Your friend keeps ignoring your texts.
7. Someone always takes your seat on the bus.
8. Your sibling keeps borrowing your clothes without returning them.

Level 3 – Bigger Concerns

9. Someone in your group chat is sending mean messages.
10. You see a friend skipping meals regularly.
11. A classmate is spreading rumours about another student.
12. Your friend often looks upset but says “I’m fine” when asked.

Level 4 – Serious Concerns

13. A student says they don’t feel safe going home.
14. You notice bruises on a friend that they try to hide.
15. Your friend talks about running away from home.
16. Someone tells you their parents are constantly shouting and punishing them.

Level 5 – Safeguarding Red Flags

17. A friend tells you they want to hurt themselves.
18. Someone online is asking your friend to keep secrets or share photos.
19. A peer shares that they’ve been physically harmed by someone at home.
20. A younger student says an adult has been touching them in a way that feels wrong.