

I was on the train two days after the Paris attacks when I decided that instead of doing the lesson I had planned on conversation skills in care provision tasks, I would start with what had just happened in Paris. I was sure that some of the students would welcome it, but others would think I was being hypocritical.

'Why are we discussing Paris, but not the constant attacks happening in Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine?'

And you know what? I think they're right. Why am I only now realising that we need to discuss this? I guess it's because Paris is so close. I visit Paris twice a year. I never go to Iraq, Afghanistan or Palestine. Is that why? Maybe it's egotistical that I want to discuss Paris but not other countries. Paris is a city of peace and the Middle East has always been a conflict-ridden area. Paris is close by; Paris could have been Amsterdam.... How can I ensure that the students don't feel that I have a double standard? I can't.

I have a double standard and that is exactly what I'm going to say. 'Kids, you all know what happened this weekend and I want to talk about with you. Yes, it happens all over the world. But now it has happened on our doorstep and I'm afraid. I realise that this could have happened in Amsterdam and then we might not all be sitting here in this classroom today.

How do you feel? Do you feel like I do or not? What can we do now and in the future to prevent this from happening? Or is there any way we can prevent it?' I ask them to think about these questions and especially in terms of themselves; as Gandhi once said: 'Be the change you want to see in the world.' A female student says: 'From now on, I'm going to smile at women who are wearing a headscarf.' Another student says, 'I think I'll visit a mosque sometime and ask what Islam actually is, because I don't get it anymore.'

So the whole class brainstorms about small, simple things we can do to try and get a handle on things.