



Creating Peaceful Learning Environments Team



With the



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Worlds Apart... Coming Together

Part 1:

"She said, he said"

Part 2:

Together, we CAN!



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FREE OR INEXPENSIVE RESOURCES

Videos

- Bad Kids? AtlanticMediaWorks
- Love Taps, National Film Board of Canada

Paperback books

- Artz, S. (1998). Sex, power, and the violent school girl. Toronto: Trifolium Books
- Brown, L.M., & Gilligan, C. (1992). Meeting at the crossroads: Women's psychology and girls' development. Cambridge, MA: Harvard
- Garbarino, J. (1999). Lost boys. New York: The Free Press
- Gilligan, C. (1982). In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press
- Pipher, M. (1994). Reviving Ophelia. New York: Grosset/ Putnam
- Pollack, W. (1998). Real boys. New York: Owl Books
- Pollock, W.S. & Cushman, K. (2001). Real boys workbook: The definitive guide to understanding and interacting with boys of all ages. New York: Random House
- Pope, H.G., Phillips, K.A. & Olivardia, R. (2000). The Adonis Complex: The secret crisis of male body obsession. New York: The Free Press
- Salisbury, J. & Jackson, D. (1996). Challenging macho values: Practical ways of working with Adolescent boys. London: Falmer Press
- Shandler, S. (1999). Ophelia speaks: Adolescent girls write about their search for self. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, Inc.

OUTCOMES AFTER A COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

Highly motivated facilitators, both teens and adults, may press for other initiatives, perhaps involving younger community members:

- Elementary or middle school events such as bully proofing or dating-violence prevention.
- The media – local community newspapers might publicize "good news" on teens' activities, for a change.
- Developing a new common language for both desired and unacceptable behaviours. As some students said, they learned to name some of their experiences and to draw healthy boundaries.
- New school codes of conduct might emerge.
- More talk about the issues at home.

Other community initiatives might include:

- Developing skits to take to other schools.
- Running poster contests for younger children.
- Making a media-awareness, anti-violence video.
- Displaying the results of workshop productivity – holding an open house for families to attend.



Worlds Apart...

The very words of the teens in our research were used to create our videos.

This is the essence of what the girls said:

"She said" that...

- Girls are more likely to be comfortable talking about feelings and solving problems verbally, and they feel expected to do so.
- Parents, especially fathers, protect girls from learning how to stand up for themselves.
- Girls are often nasty to each other, showing indirect aggression by spreading rumours, excluding others, and saying mean things behind other girls' backs.
- Girls hesitate to report the abuse they experience.
- Adults in power relations with teenaged girls can humiliate them without being aware of doing so.
- The media bombard girls with degrading messages about what it means to be female.

This is the essence of what the boys said:

"He said" that...

- Boys feel that they are expected to be strong and suffer in silence.
- Parents expect boys to fend for themselves, to "take it" and, if necessary, respond aggressively.
- Boys are more likely to be rewarded for dealing with frustrations physically.
- Boys who experience violence are more hesitant to report it.
- There are very few positive, non-violent, male role models.
- Boys find it hard to live up to media messages about masculinity.

WHY DO WE NEED VIOLENCE- PREVENTION INITIATIVES?

Teens reported that...

- While close to half of both females and males never experience violence in their relationships, about 25% of them are victims of **verbal** abuse on a daily basis and 17% are themselves **verbally** violent daily.

Males' and females' physical violence experiences differ dramatically:

- Whereas almost 1 girl in 10 is a victim of **physical** abuse on a daily basis, 1 boy in 5 experiences **physical** violence daily.
- Only 1 girl in 17 is a **physical** victimizer but 1 boy in every 7 reports **physically** victimizing others.

Who are the victims and who are the abusers?

- For boys, it's most frequently buddies, brothers and sisters.
- For girls, it's brothers, sisters and boyfriends.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A WHOLE COMMUNITY COMES TOGETHER?

- Teens really like working together for a community goal.
- Community leaders learn a lot when they listen to teens.
- Teens can be surprised to find that others feel as they do.
- Everybody gets a chance to learn from others' experiences.
- Spending a significant amount of time achieving a community goal produces strong identification and commitment.
- New ideas emerge that can be a source of other new community initiatives.
- The maturity and wisdom of many youth might pleasantly surprise some adults.
- Teens can learn about community resources and sympathetic adults to contact in case they need help down the road.
- Creative projects might be developed, such as poetry, dance, songs, video productions, artwork, and skits representing teens' experiences of violence in their lives.



IDEAS FOR A COMMUNITY FORUM

- **Use local ideas and talent.** You will discover that your community has some amazingly rich resources once you start looking for them.
- **Teen-generated ideas.** Topics for discussion should be suggested by the teens themselves, in consultation with youth-friendly adult community members.
- **Brainstorm together** once teen leaders and community members have been identified.

Our research has found the following sessions to be especially successful:

1. **"How not to be mean."** In separate groups, an open discussion of ways to avoid subtle and not-so-subtle verbal aggression to build a more positive community spirit.
2. **"She said, he said."** Sessions with males and females apart and then together. Separately, they develop questions for the other gender; in a joint session, they respond to the questions.
3. A lively session on **"Media and their effects on teen life,"** starting with examples from TV and magazines can spark debate among males as well as females. A critical gender analysis is most informative.
4. **"Use media to express the message."** Teens select a session to create poetry, art, dance, song or a video skit that will express their violence experience. These exciting, powerful productions created by teens can be presented to the whole community to get their messages across.
5. Plan a **"Community Fair:"** Invite local organizations to mount display tables, in order to inform participants of available community services.

WHAT DO TEENS BELIEVE CONTRIBUTES TO VIOLENCE?

Societal factors include:

Community

- Communities often lack appropriate facilities and resources for constructive teen involvement.
- Teens get the message from many adults that they are not valued community members.

Media

- Impossibly unrealistic and demanding sex-typed images are projected.
- Media give the impression that violence is a valid problem-solving option.
- Quick solutions are modelled.
- There are few respectable, pro-social, non-violent, media role models.

Schools

- Teachers represent societal values and expectations that may include sex-typed behaviours.
- Schools focus more on academic matters than other student needs.
- There is insufficient respect for teens' developing awareness of what's fair and right.

Families

- Problem-solving strategies for dealing with frustration are often learned at home.
- Pressures on parents leave little time or energy for family support.
- Brothers and sisters are frequent perpetrators of violence.
- Parents have difficulty mediating sibling conflicts.



WHERE MIGHT WE START?

- **Develop an understanding of the issues**
 1. Explore available print and media resources. There are many interesting resources available. Some possibilities are listed at the end of this handbook.
 2. Establish a network of knowledgeable, caring community members.
- **Develop a team**

The team should include youth and adults.
There should be equal numbers of males and females.
- **Develop two-way communication skills:**
 1. Find our voices to speak – Learn to take a position and state an opinion.
 2. Open our ears to listen – Acquire active listening skills.
 3. Respect others' opinions – Learn to ask questions so others will want to answer; learn to give answers others are able to hear.
- **Develop a plan of action**
 1. Needs Assessment – Identify the issues that are particularly important in the community and potential obstacles for implementing a violence-prevention program.
 2. Intervention and Implementation – Based on the needs assessment, design and implement an appropriate program. Ensure that this includes a plan for responding to potential disclosures.
 3. Evaluation – Feedback through evaluations will indicate effectiveness of the program and lead to changes/improvements for future interventions.
 4. Celebration – Let everyone know about the good things that are being done in the community to address the issue of violence.

WHY SHOULD WORKSHOPS HAVE BOYS AND GIRLS APART AND TOGETHER?

When boys and girls participated in gender-separated groups, and were asked how they would like gender-integrated sessions, they said:

- Both boys and girls thought that sessions with both genders would be **more fun, more informative and more interesting**. One-half of the boys thought it would be easier to share feelings in integrated sessions; less than one-quarter of the girls felt that sharing feelings would be easier with boys present, however.

When boys and girls were grouped together in similar sessions, and asked how they would like sessions separated by gender, this is what they said:

- Only about one-third of the boys thought that separate sessions would be more fun, more informative and more interesting. One-third of the boys thought that sharing feelings would be easier in gender-separated discussions, but over one-half of the girls said that it would be **easier to express their feelings in gender-separated sessions**.

What can we learn from this?

- When it comes to fun, information and interest, mixed groupings are needed.
- The majority of girls and a minority of boys want safe spaces to share their feelings and experiences.



TIPS FOR FACILITATORS OF SMALL-GROUP SESSIONS

The **role of a facilitator** is to create an environment that not only provides an opportunity for group members to learn, but also motivates and challenges them to do so.

- **Be prepared.** Know the material, have all needed equipment on hand and always have a backup plan.
- **Know the group.** This includes the size, gender makeup and age of participants. Have name tags or play "name games" that may develop rapport between facilitators and participants.
- **Create a friendly and safe environment.** for learning and healthy exchanges. Establish guidelines to help set the tone for discussions.
- **Emphasize the importance of group confidentiality** regarding personal aspects of discussions.
- **Develop good communication skills.** This involves active listening, sending clear messages and using appropriate body language. Keep in mind that communication is 20% verbal and 80% non-verbal.
- **Make workshops interactive.** Learning should be fun, so use activities, games, role-plays and small group work – not lectures! Use energizers to keep the group motivated.
- **Develop trouble-shooting skills.** Learn how to handle difficult situations and challenging participants.
- **Summarize key messages.** Wrap up the session with a quick overview of what was covered and always try to end on an "up" note. (A game is always good!)
- Remember that **enthusiasm, flexibility, creativity and sincerity** can go a long way.

HOW ARE VOLUNTEERS RECRUITED?

- **Start with "the converted"** – youth-friendly community leaders, youth workers, social and health service professionals, transition house workers, parents, newly graduated students, community police, Boys' and Girls' Clubs, faith community leaders and counsellors.
- Remember the value of finding the most **respected leaders** in the community. Ask them for names of other like-minded people.
- Develop **youth leaders.** Encourage them to recruit others.
- Recruit an equal number of **male and female facilitators.** It is especially important that males be credible, non-violent role models.
- Have a **pizza party** and pop for young people and don't forget to get chocolate chip cookies!
- Hold a **pot-luck** gathering for community members.
- Get **businesses in the community to donate** resources. Their commitment pays off in community "buy-in."
- Find an **attractive community place** to hold the event. In smaller communities, schools are often the best, or only place.

YOUTH AND ADULTS COMING TOGETHER: THE CHALLENGE

- **Skills Training.** We all need to learn skills to provide effective leadership for community action, and to ensure all are equal contributors. Facilitator training is one place this can happen.
- **Trust.** Invest time and effort at the start of the project to develop trust between youth and adults.
- **Realistic expectations.** Adults and youth must have realistic expectations of each other and the project at hand. Youth need to be aware of how slowly some things change. Adults need to recognize small successes and celebrate.
- **Mutual respect.** This means listening to what others have to say and valuing their contribution to the group. Youth and adults are both part of the solution.
- **Leadership.** Adults can provide initial leadership. As youth become more skilled and confident, they can take on more responsibility.
- **Appreciation.** Youth need to appreciate adult advice, experience and insight. Adults need to appreciate fresh views youth bring to the table, which may be just what is needed to find more effective solutions to the problem.
- **Share control.** This is often difficult for adults who are used to having authority over youth (i.e. parent-child, teacher-student relationships).
- **Freedom of expression.** Youth forms of expression need acceptance (i.e. hair, clothes, tattoos and piercings). A diverse group of youth must be involved in a project to make it a success.
- **Fun.** To get youth involved – and keep them involved – activities have to be fun. Meeting location and times need to be convenient.

To insure that youth and adults work well together, understanding and effort are required on both sides.

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN DEVELOPING INITIATIVES

- Large assemblies can successfully introduce and conclude an initiative **but small, lively, discussion groups** facilitate participation, interaction and learning.
- Provide opportunities for **coed and gender-separate sessions.**
- Coed sessions are more effective when both **male and female facilitators guide the activities.**
- **Youth need to be partners** in developing and facilitating workshops. Youth listen to their peers.
- **Facilitation training** in experiential learning, communication and group management will ensure that leaders have the skills needed to work together and deliver effective workshops.
- Divide groups according to **age or grade.** It can be intimidating for younger adolescents to participate actively when grouped with older teens.
- **Get feedback** and change the program as directed by participants. Giving youth a voice increases relevance and participant involvement.
- **Repeat the intervention regularly.** Violence prevention is not accomplished with one-time, quick fixes.
- **Involve members of the community** as facilitators, sponsors and supporters of violence-prevention initiatives.