



AFTERSCHOOL EXCHANGE ACTIVITY

Taking a Closer Look at Dating Violence

PREPARATION

Grade Levels: 9 – 12

This activity would be most effective if delivered in one 60-minute session.

Prerequisites

Before beginning this activity, watch the video listed below or preview the clips on the Web. Learn more about dating violence by visiting the Web sites listed at the end of this activity.

Materials Needed

Students will need:

- Sticker dots or markers in red and green

Group Leader will need:

- A copy of the video IN THE MIX: TWISTED LOVE, [LINK TO <http://www.pbs.org/inthemix/>] or the ability to project the digitized clips on a TV or a projector
- Chalk board or chart paper
- Copies of the Video Viewing Guide [LINK TO POPUP] for each student

Academic Goals

Students will:

- increase their understanding of the prevalence of dating violence
- identify common characteristics of dating violence
- increase their understanding of barriers to leaving a violent relationship, gaining empathy for rather than blaming the victim
- identify local resources for those who may be involved in a violent relationship

Social Goals

Children will:

- develop their active listening skills, allowing peers to speak and share their opinions and experiences
- develop their group speaking skills as they discuss resources or those who may be involved in a violent relationship

STEPS

Warm-up (15 minutes)

1. Prepare for the session by printing the following statements on separate pieces of paper and posting them around the classroom.

- 1 in every 3 teen relationships is violent
- 36% of teens report violence in their relationship
- 1 in every 3 adult relationships is violent
- 85% of reported cases of dating domestic violence are committed by men against women
- 15 % of reported cases of dating domestic violence are committed by women against men, women against women in lesbian relationships or men against men in gay relationships.
- 60% of children growing up in abusive homes will repeat the behavior in the future
- 1 out of every 3 women murdered is killed by a current or ex boyfriend or husband
- Women ages 16 to 24 experience the highest rates of intimate violence
- 68% of young women who experience rape know their rapist either as a boyfriend, friend or casual acquaintance.
- Forty percent of teenage girls ages 14 to 17 say they know someone their age who has been hit or beaten by a boyfriend.

(Facilitator Note: The statements do not have to be hung in any particular order. For up-to-date statistics, you can visit the National Domestic Violence Hotline at http://www.ndvh.org/educate/abuse_in_america.html)

2. When the students enter the classroom, give each person 10 red sticker dots and 10 green sticker dots (or one red and one green marker). Explain to the group, “There are 10 statements hung around the room. Your challenge is to silently go around the room and place a red dot on the statements you think are false and a green dot on the statements you think are true. Once you have visited all statements, return to your seats.”

3. Once the group has returned to their seats, announce that ALL of the statements are TRUE. Ask the group how they feel about this. Are they surprised? Explain in your own words that because the issue of violence is very present in many dating relationships, you want the group to be knowledgeable about the subject. Today’s session will involve seeing a short video and having a discussion about this very important topic.

Activity (40 minutes)

Preparing to Watch the Video

1. Explain that the group will be watching a three minute clip from IN THE MIX, a series for teens that airs on PBS. The clip features a real couple talking about the dynamics in their relationship. The group will be discussing the video and doing an activity based on the video. Some of what the couple talks about may bring on strong emotions. This is natural, but comments should be held until the group discussion. Distribute the Video

Viewing Guide and ask the students to think about the questions on the handout as they watch the video clip:

- What types of abusive/controlling behavior do you see?
- What is the emotional impact of the abuse?
- How does the abusive person view the behavior?
- How does the victimized person view the behavior?
- What difficulties would the victim face if she tried to end the relationship?
- Why might she/he stay involved in the relationship?

2. If you can't show the clip from the Web, cue the video about eight minutes into the episode, to where a young man named Michael says "When I do hit her, it's with compassion. It's not like a blow." Stop the tape when you see a group of young people in a classroom and one of them says "If you gotta hit on your woman, I don't think you should be in that relationship. One of you is going to have to get out."

Discussion of Video Clip

1. Give the group a moment to individually think about the clip that they just watched. Then, ask the group, "What emotions did you feel when watching the clip?" Some answers may include: sadness, confusion, anger at the abuser, anger at the victim, helplessness. Validate all answers by writing them on the board.

2. Ask the group to think back to the questions that were posed before watching the clip. Ask these questions to the group again, giving time to discuss each answer. Confirm or suggest that it is difficult for many people to understand why the victim, in this case a woman, would stay in the violent relationship. The Cycle of Violence can help them understand a bit more.

Discuss the Cycle of Violence

The Cycle of Violence is the term given to the cycle that abusive relationships usually follow. Learning about the cycle will help to explain why it can be difficult to get out of such a relationship.

(Facilitator Note: The cycle of violence graphic is on the Teen Relationship Website, <http://teenrelationships.org/abuse/abuse.htm>. This may help you explain the cycle for your students.)

1. Write this list of words on the board in the following order.

- Honeymoon
- Tension
- Explosion
- Honeymoon
- Love, Hope
- Fear, Denial

2. Discuss with the group the relevance of these words to violence and abuse, explaining that there is a similar pattern in most abusive relationships. In facilitating this discussion, make sure the following points are made:

Honeymoon:

Abusive and non-abusive relationships start the same, like a *honeymoon*: pleasant and fun. The *honeymoon* phase allows a couple to bond and develop strong feelings for each other. To illustrate the importance of this bond in the cycle of violence, ask the group, “If on the first or second date someone called you names, asked you constantly about your whereabouts, or hit you would you continue to date them?” Almost all participants will answer, “Of course I wouldn’t date them!” Explain that if someone is abusive before there is an emotional bond, often times the victim will quickly end the relationship. However, once there are strong feelings like love involved, it becomes much harder to walk away.

Tension:

At some point in the relationship, *tension* arises. This is a stressful period for both the abuser and the victim, but there is no violence present. Tension can also occur in non-abusive relationships but it never leads to abuse. However, in an abusive relationship during this stressful period, the victim feels like they are “walking on eggshells,” meaning if they slip up at anytime they could “set the abuser off.”

Explosion:

After the period of *tension* the couple experiences an *explosion*, meaning, one member of the couple uses, or explodes with, verbal, physical or emotional abuse toward their partner.

Return to Honeymoon:

Once the explosion resolves, the abuser often tries to repair the relationship and most often the relationship cycle starts back at the *honeymoon* phase. To illustrate this, ask the group the following questions

- *Q*: How might an abuser try to repair the relationship after an explosion?
A: By promising to never do it again, blaming their behavior on external forces like drugs or alcohol, etc.
- *Q*: Why would a victim of abuse agree to remain in an abusive relationship and start the cycle over again?
A: The victim may grant forgiveness because maybe they *love* their abuser, they *hope* the abuse will never happen again, they *fear* what the abuser will do if they end the relationship, and they are in *denial* about the seriousness of the abuse.

3. Conduct a brainstorming session about what questions might arise for a person who is trying to leave an abusive relationship. Record and validate the participants’ answers by writing their comments on the board. During the conversation, confirm or suggest the following points:

- The feelings in the Cycle of Violence: *love, hope, fear* and *denial* play an important role in why a victim may stay in a harmful relationship (see *Return to Honeymoon*, above).
 - Abusive relationships often involve escalation and threats, and may be complicated by various physical, emotional, economic, social, and sexual factors. Ask the group what kinds of threats would be used in a marriage. (I will take the kids, I won't give you any money) In a teen relationship? (I'll tell your parents we had sex, I'll spread rumors about you) In a relationship where one is a non-documented immigrant? (I'll call the INS if you leave).
 - The most dangerous time in an abusive relationship is the moment that the abused partner attempts to leave. Commonly the most violent incident, and in the worst cases, murder, occurs soon after a victim has decided to leave.
 - The complications just enumerated necessitate that everyone in the classroom have some familiarity with the resources available to survivors of abuse – to find out about their local resources, restraining orders, counseling.
4. Pose the scenario that the group personally knows the couple in the video in some way and they begin seeing signs of abuse in the relationship. What are some things that teens can do when they suspect the presence of abuse in a relationship of someone they know? Record their answers on the board and suggest the following if not mentioned by the group.
- Don't blame the victim.
 - Understand that the victim is scared and there are reasons for her or him to stay in the relationship. It is not easy to leave. Ask them to explain what would make someone scared to end an abusive relationship.
 - Remember that domestic violence takes place in all communities and is present in different classes, races, ethnicities and sexual orientations. Women are not always the victim, men are victims at times, as well.
 - Call the local police precinct to find out about local domestic violence services.
 - Speak to a trusted adult like a school counselor, family member or community leader to get outside help, even if you promised you would keep it a secret. Having your friend alive and safe is more important than him or her being mad at you.
 - Call 911 in the event of an emergency.

Closing (5 minutes)

Thank the group for their participation in the session. Compliment them on something that they did well as a group (speaking at one time, agree to disagree, respecting other people's opinions, etc).

As a closing, ask the participants to go around in a circle and state one or two things that they would like to remember about the session one year from today.

Extension Activities

1. Have the students conduct online or offline **research** about the laws concerning domestic violence and the services for both victims and offenders offered in your area. Have the students report back their findings.
2. Have the group **practice** asking for help. Role play scenarios where students take on the roles of concerned family or friends, victim, school counselor or domestic violence worker where the result is that someone is going to receive help in leaving a violent relationship.
3. **Brainstorm** a list of questions that the students still have concerning domestic violence. Then ask the students to visit the Teen Relationship Web site chat room (<http://teenrelationships.org/chatroom/privacypolicy.htm>) and ask the Peer Counselors in the chat room their questions.
4. **Discuss** how popular music may perpetuate or counteract dating-domestic violence. Ask the group to prepare for the next meeting by bringing a song (or a lyric sheet) that they feel either condones or critiques violent relationships or promotes respectful relationships. At the next meeting, analyze the messages given about abuse, power and respect in relationships.

Helpful Web sites:

In the Mix

<http://www.pbs.org/inthemix>

Visit this site to order the complete video “Twisted Love.” You’ll also find useful information, resources, and advice on over 50 critical teen issues.

National Domestic Violence Hotline

<http://www.ndvh.org>

Help is available to callers 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Communities Overcoming Relationship Abuse (Cora)

<http://www.corasupport.org/download/Teen-Outreach-Handouts.pdf>

Here you’ll find the handouts used with the Teen Dating Violence Prevention Curriculum.

Teen Relationships Web Site

www.teenrelationships.org

Teen site created by Cora that offers a chat room staffed by trained peer counselors.

Family Violence Prevention Fund

<http://endabuse.org/> -

The Family Violence Prevention Fund (FVPPF) works to end violence against women and children around the world.

Love is Not Abuse

<http://www.loveisnotabuse.com/>

Liz Claiborne sponsored site to help end teen dating violence.

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence

<http://www.ncadv.org/> -

The NCADV's mission is to eliminate both personal and societal violence against all women and children.

Break the Cycle

<http://www.breakthecycle.org/>

Designed to help end teen dating violence.

CREDITS

This AFTERSCHOOL EXCHANGE activity was written by Ellen Lenihan, Producer and experienced afterschool educator, and Jennifer Weidenbaum, Associate Executive Director, Girls Incorporated of New York City, in connection with the PBS series IN THE MIX. (<http://www.pbs.org/inthemix/>) This activity was adapted from the Communities Overcoming Relationship Abuse *Breaking the Cycle: A Teen Dating Violence Curriculum* (1999), written by Ms. Lenihan.



Taking a Closer Look at Dating Violence

VIDEO VIEWING GUIDE

1. What types of abusive/controlling behavior do you see?
2. What is the emotional impact of the abuse?
3. How does the abusive person view the behavior?
4. How does the victimized person view the behavior?
5. What difficulties would the victim face if she tried to end the relationship?
6. Why might she/he stay involved in the relationship?