

From Bystander to Helper

But what can I do?



Complexity



7-13 years



60 minutes



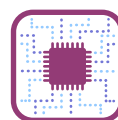
4-30



Peace



Violence



Digital Environment

Type of activity

Personal narratives, discussion

Overview

Children tell stories about times when they have been a victim, abuser, bystander, or helper in instances of violence.

Objectives

- To explore the different ways that people deal with violence
- To encourage responsibility for respecting and defending others from violence
- To reflect on what it means to be a 'helper'

Preparation

Make copies of the Discussion Guides for each group or have a larger copy that can be displayed.

Materials

- Flipchart paper and markers or blackboard and chalk
- Copies of the Discussion Guides for each group or a larger copy to be displayed

Instructions

1. Remind children that violence and abuse, not only physical but also verbal and psychological, is a human rights violation. Ask for examples of different kinds of violence and abuse.
2. Divide the children into small groups of three or four people. Hand out the Discussion Guides to each group or put a larger copy up on display. Explain the activity, making sure that the children understand the instructions and that everyone feels comfortable about expressing themselves honestly.

Discussion Guide

In your groups, discuss each of the following, and try to find examples of each of these:

- A time when you saw someone being hurt or treated unjustly
- A time when you saw someone being hurt or treated unjustly and no-one helped them
- A time when you saw someone help a person who was being hurt or treated unjustly

3. Tell children that they have 15 minutes for this part of the activity. Let them begin by sitting quietly for a few moments and thinking about what they want to say.
4. After 15 minutes, bring the children back into one group to discuss their observations. First, ask for some of the examples of people being hurt or abused, without distinguishing those in which someone helped or did not help. List these on a board or flipchart.
5. Then ask for examples in the 'Helper' category.
6. Finally, ask for examples in the 'Bystander' category. Ask, "What could someone have done in some of these examples to be a helper, not a bystander?" Record their responses on a board or flipchart.

Debriefing and evaluation

1. Debrief the activity using some of the questions such as these:
 - Why are some people violent towards others?
 - Why are some children violent towards other children?
 - What can we do to protect ourselves and others against forms of violence?
2. Read aloud the helpful actions suggested earlier in the activity. Discuss how people can become helpers to protect human rights, asking questions such as these:
 - Which of the suggested actions would be hard to do? Which ones would be easier?
 - Are there any actions on the list that you think you could take?
 - What stops people from becoming helpers?
 - If more people became helpers rather than bystanders, would this help to improve respect for human rights?
3. Discuss how we can help each other, asking questions such as these:
 - Which qualities and abilities does a person need to be a 'helper', i.e. take action for human rights?
 - What can we do to support people taking action for human rights?
 - How can we encourage people in our group to become 'helpers'?
4. Conclude by acknowledging that any abuse or violence towards children, including those children who commit violence against each other, is a human rights violation. Violence occurs in every culture and every region of the world. Emphasise that learning about human rights also involves learning how to take action to protect each other's rights. Perhaps we cannot put an end to all violence and abuse, but we can still help each other in our own communities.

Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) obliges governments to ensure that children are properly cared for and protected from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents or anyone else who looks after them. Invite children to reflect how this right is being observed or violated in their environment.

Suggestions for follow-up

Activities such as 'Bullying Scenes' and 'Words that Wound' address bullying and children's behaviour, and help to relate these discussions to real life.

Ideas for action

If your group has developed a set of rules for their interactions, discuss how 'helper behaviour' can be part of those rules.

Tips for the facilitator

This activity should only be done with children you have worked with previously. It is very important to create a 'safe space' in the group before you begin the activity.

Remind children that they can include examples of online abuse. You could even limit the activity to exploring examples of online hate speech or cyberbullying.

Circulate among the groups to make sure that everyone understands the task, that they are taking each category in turn, and that everyone is getting an equal chance to speak.

Protect children's privacy by encouraging them to speak about what they have observed, rather than what they have experienced directly.

Be very vigilant throughout the activity, and make sure that, at the end, you let children know that there are possibilities to seek help or advice if they wish to and share information on how the children can do so.

Variations

If you know the group well and you are able to work more with them after this activity, you could add a fourth category to discuss:

A time when you participated in hurting someone else, or treated them unjustly.

You could use some of the examples given by the children to organise a mini forum theatre in order to explore alternative solutions to the issue. This might also motivate them to act and become a 'helper' when they witness violence.

Optional discussion guide

A time when you saw someone being hurt	A time when you saw someone help a person who was being hurt
A time when you saw someone being hurt and no-one helped them	(Optional/Variation) A time when you participated in hurting someone else, or treated them unjustly