

“It is hard to fight an enemy that has outposts
in your head”

Sally Kempton

Safety in My Life



Level 2



8 to 20



60 minutes



Complexity: Level 2

Group size: 8 to 20

Time: 60 minutes

Overview: This activity uses brainstorming to reflect about what people do to avoid violence and to identify common threats to safety according to sex. It highlights gender differences in relation to violence, and addresses the absence of appropriate information for young people on the nature of interpersonal violence

Objectives:

- To recognise the differences in safety levels and concerns for men and women, and for boys and girls
- To discover the information gap for young people on the realities of gender-based violence
- To identify some ways for youth work to play a role in filling this gap

Materials: Flipchart paper and markers for each of the small groups

Preparation: Set out a circle of chairs in the middle of the room for the introduction to the activity. Put flip chart paper and markers in each of the spaces allocated for working groups.



Instructions

- 1) Explain that this activity is about sharing and compiling ideas for what people can do in order to stay safe. Participants will work initially in single sex groups: these will create lists of their own, which will then be shared and discussed with others.
- 2) Form small groups, with not more than four or five people in each. These should be single-sex groups.
- 3) Ask each group to go to one of the prepared working spaces. Ask the groups to share ideas on the subject of 'staying safe': they should think about and share things they do to avoid violence and stay safe. The groups should also discuss threats to their safety that they face on a regular basis. Give them about 20 minutes for the sharing exercise and tell them they should list their actions and threats on the flip chart paper.
- 4) Get the groups back together and ask each one to report back. Hang the flipcharts so they can be seen by everyone, and place lists from groups of the same sex next to each other.



Debriefing and evaluation

Ask for participants' first impressions of the activity and the results. A good way to begin this discussion is to ask if anyone is surprised by any of actions or items on the different lists, in particular by any striking differences or similarities between the women's group/s and the men's.

- What do you think about the differences in actions for protection by men and by women? Where do these differences come from?
- Are the lists of threats representative of the actual dangers boys and girls, men and women face in their daily lives? Why, or why not?
- Which dangers might be missing from the lists? Why do you think that such dangers did not feature in your discussions?
- Can you identify the dangers in your local context?
- What information do we receive about violence and safety from violence?
- Where does such information come from? Is it credible? Do young people take it seriously?
- Whose job is it, or should it be, to inform young people and children about violence and precautions for staying safe? How could you or your organisation contribute to making a change in this respect?
- What are the main challenges to gender-based violence in your community / country?
- Which human rights are violated in cases of gender-based violence?



Tips for facilitators

This activity requires a certain level of awareness from participants on what violence is, the forms that exist, and how these are defined. Make sure that you read the information about violence in Chapter 1 of this manual in preparation for running the activity, so that you can help participants clarify any confusion that may exist around the different types of violence that can be observed in daily life.

Lists made by participants often focus heavily on precautions against violence from complete strangers, even though there is evidence that violence is most often perpetrated by someone known to the victim.

Be aware that if most participants believe that they are safe from violence, this can often manifest itself in attitudes of victim blaming, and the activity may even strengthen prejudiced attitudes towards victims of violence. Discussions about taking precautions against violence or actively defending one's own safety might lead to some participants placing blame on victims for not having done enough to ensure their own safety. You may need to reinforce the message that perpetrators of violence are always responsible for their own actions. Violence is not caused by insufficient information or inadequate awareness of safety concerns, nor is it caused by finding oneself in a vulnerable position. People who do not manage to ensure their own safety do not "decide" to become victims. Perpetrators, on the other hand, actively decide to use violence.

Explain that violence is a social phenomenon; keeping safe from violence demands learned social skills. Make sure that you focus the discussion on the extent to which society, including social institutions from family to school, prepares young people for the most typical forms of violence they are likely to encounter.

Most of this activity is carried out in single sex groups. Pay special attention to this fact and be sensitive about people who do not identify themselves as men or women. You may even want to create a third group – OTHER GENDERS – if you feel this is necessary and will be safe for transgender people.

Suggestions for follow-up

The publication *Young People and Violence Prevention – Youth Policy Recommendations*, edited by Gavan Titley and published by the Council of Europe, provides an easy-to-understand guide to the issue of violence in the everyday lives of young people, and some ideas on how to combat it. This book is available for downloading at <http://book.coe.int/youth>.

If you want to pursue the topic further, try the activity "Power Station" from *Compass*, in which participants brainstorm acts of violence that are common in their daily lives and then look for creative ways of dealing with them. If you want to explore further the topic of gender-based violence, try using the activity 'Understanding gender-based violence', in which participants analyse different examples of violence.





Ideas for action

Suggest to the group that they research programmes that exist in the local area which are engaged in violence prevention with young people, and that they contact those involved to find out more about what they do and how. Discuss with your group how you could collectively contribute to violence prevention efforts.

Suggest to the group that they review school programmes to explore the extent to which they address these issues as part of the curriculum. If there is an obvious lack of violence prevention programmes in a given school, suggest that the group considers developing a project in cooperation with a specialised organisation to initiate a violence prevention or human rights education programme with a gender focus in the school.

Source: Adapted from Adams, M., Bell, L.A. and Griffin, P. (Eds.) (1997). *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*. Routledge, p. 122.