

“Saying NO can be an ultimate self-care”

Claudia Black

Too Hard to Respond



Level 3



6 to 30



60 minutes



Complexity: Level 3

Group size: 6 to 30

Time: 60 minutes

Overview: This activity uses brainstorming and role-playing to address ways of responding to unwanted sexual advances, sexual bullying and harassment.

Objectives:

- To identify different forms of sexual bullying and harassment commonly faced by young people
- To practice different reactions to unwanted sexual advances or bullying
- To understand the dangers for young people, particularly women, of vague or ambiguous sexual overtures and responses

Materials: • Flipchart and markers

Preparation: Read through the instructions carefully, study or research about sexual bullying and harassment (see also chapter 4). If you know some people in the group, consider preparing one or two to volunteer in order to start the role-playing.



Instructions

- 1) Introduce the activity by asking participants if they have heard of cases of about sexual bullying or harassment. Ask them to give examples of different kinds of of sexual bullying and harassment on the flipchart.
- 2) When the group has drawn up a list, ask participants to brainstorm ideas for how they might react to different forms of sexual bullying or harassment. Note these responses down on the flip chart next to the forms of bullying / harassment. If participants come up with responses that suggest using physical violence, ask them to think about other possible ways to respond in a non-violent way.
- 3) Ask for at least two volunteers who would like to role-play a reaction to unwanted sexual advances, bullying or harassment. Give them some examples of possible scenarios, if necessary. These might include: making unwanted comments about people's appearance or looks, pressuring another person to do something they do not want using emotional blackmail (e.g. "you would do that if you loved me"), or name calling and insulting another person using homophobic language.
- 4) Give the volunteer pairs a few minutes to choose and prepare their sketch. If they have difficulty choosing a scenario, give them one yourself (see Tips for facilitators for ideas).
- 5) Ask the volunteers to act out their scene to others in the group.
- 6) Then ask the couple to play the same scene again, inviting other participants to step in and propose their own responses to the dialogue. They could do this by calling out "Freeze", at which point those playing the scene should stop, and the person calling "Freeze" should step in to replace one of the characters in the dialogue. The scene continues, with a different proposal for resolving the problem. In this way, the dialogue can be moved on in a different, perhaps more effective, or more assertive, direction. This offers a way for the spectators to play an active role in proposing alternative ways of asking for and refusing sexual intercourse.
Continue with one sketch until there are no further suggestions from the audience, or until players have been replaced a maximum of three times.
- 7) Move on to the next volunteer pair and repeat the procedure. Try to offer all participants who wish to take part in the dialogue the opportunity to do so, obviously within the limits of the time available to you. After that, continue with debriefing and evaluation.

Debriefing and evaluation

Ask participants to share with the rest of the group some of the things they feel they have learned from the activity.

- How did you feel during the activity? Was it hard to enact examples of sexual bullying and harassment? Why?



- Was it easy to respond to bullying? Why, or why not?
- Why do some people engage in sexual bullying or harassment? What do they want to achieve?
- Were any of the responses proposed violent in nature? Is this ever a good idea?
- Why is it difficult for some people to react to sexual bullying / harassment?
- Why do some people decide not to report extreme forms of sexual harassment, such as rape or sexual assault?
- What impact can sexual bullying / harassment have on young people?
- Who or what could help you in responding to unwanted sexual advances or reacting to sexual bullying / harassment and, if necessary, reporting it?
- Have you ever heard of self-defence classes / training for people who want to protect themselves from violence (e.g. Krav Maga)? What do you think about such an idea?
- Sexual bullying and harassment are forms of gender-based violence. What other forms of gender-based violence do you know?
- Which human rights are violated when people experience sexual bullying and harassment?
- What can young people do to raise awareness among their peers about sexual bullying / harassment and ways of reacting to it?



Tips for facilitators

In the first part of the activity, when you ask participants to brainstorm different forms of sexual bullying / harassment, it is important to focus on examples that are relevant for young people. You may want to help participants with this task, asking them, for example, if they have ever witnessed someone commenting on another person's appearance, or someone making sexualised comments about other people.

When young people propose a violent response to sexual bullying or harassment, ask them if it would be possible in those particular cases to react differently – without using violence – as violence has a tendency to escalate. Be aware that in some extreme cases, when harassment threatens people's lives, violence may be the only option people have at a particular moment.

Suggest that participants choose scenes to role-play which do not represent violent and extreme cases of sexual harassment (do not ask them to enact a case of rape!), but rather focus on "lighter" forms, for example:

- someone makes comments about the way you look (using sexualised language) and you react firmly saying: "It is none of your business what I wear. And... I will never accept the language you are using, so please stop, otherwise I will have to report it".

- someone wears clothing which depicts (pictures, words, drawings...) inappropriate sexual behaviour or language, and you decide to ask two friends to join you and approach the person, in order to draw their attention to the inappropriate content and asking them never to wear it again.
- someone touches you without your consent and you ask them not to, while also informing them you intend to report this to the school management.

You may also decide to focus on how to respond assertively to unwanted sexual advances. In other words, how to say NO, taking care of your own personal space and human rights, and at the same time, not using offensive words or actions.

It is sometimes difficult to recognise sexual bullying. Certain forms of communication, particularly non-verbal forms such as body language or eye contact, are often subject to very different interpretations. Even where verbal communication is involved, misunderstandings may arise – for example, a meeting between two people might be interpreted by one as a friendly chat and the other as a romantic date.

This activity may raise a lot of emotions, especially when there is a participant in the group who has experienced sexual bullying. Make sure you run this activity with a co-facilitator, so that they can take care of such a person, if this becomes necessary.

Suggestions for follow-up

Follow up by using the activity “Let’s talk about sex” from *Compass*, to explore further attitudes to sexuality, including homophobia.

You might also want to further explore issues of domestic violence through “Kati’s Story” and “Knight in Shining Armor”.

Ideas for action

Check whether there have been any information campaigns related to sexual rights, sexual violence, or date and acquaintance rape in your neighbourhood or country. Try to obtain materials (posters, flyers, free-cards) for your school or youth club, or get together and make your own campaign materials. Use the different resources to initiate a discussion on what kind of campaign would be effective, and how to prepare it. If you do establish your own campaign, whether on prevention or raising awareness, do not forget that it will be seen by any victims and survivors that attend your school or live in your community. Make sure that you provide information about services (hotlines, drop-in centres) for victims of different forms of sexual abuse or gender-based violence.

Check if there are any self-defence trainings in your neighbourhood for people who want to protect themselves from violence. If there are, ask them if you can get a demonstration training.

