

Lesson #2:

Trash talking/Name calling

OPENING – Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) is a leadership program for preventing violence.

- Teacher introduces Link Crew/Peer Mentoring members.
- Presenters introduce yourselves (name, grade level, maybe some activities you do in high school).
 - Have one presenter explain what Peer Mentoring is (starting with Freshmen Orientation and going on to explain the different type of work that peer mentors do.
 - **Explain MVP:** MVP stands for Mentors in Violence Prevention. The program was founded in 1993 to motivate student-athletes and student leaders to play a central role in solving problems that have historically been considered “women’s issues”: such as rape, battering, and sexual harassment. Now the program is used for all students, not just the athletes, and it is used in middle schools, high schools, colleges, and community groups throughout the country. It aims to empower bystanders so that we all start taking a stand against violence.
 - “We received MVP training early this school year and are here to share with you what we learned.”

II. MVP Program Goals (1 minute)

- Raise Awareness **on the prevalence of violence.**
 - Challenge Thinking – **because most of this violence is accepted in society.**
 - Open Dialogue – **have the opportunity to voice your opinion on these matters and get you talking about this issue.**
 - Inspire Leadership – **or inspire you to take a stand against this violence.**
 - Emphasize our role as a bystander – **stopping violence is up to each of us.**
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Talking Trash/Foul Ball (making remarks to a girl about her appearance, sexual harassment)

Teaching a scenario: We are going to start out today with a scenario that might happen in your school.

- Have a student read the scenario. Does this kind of scenario happen?
 - Then have a student read the Train of Thought. Are these the kinds of things you might be thinking if you saw that scenario happen? What else might you think about?
 - Presenters: Read aloud each option. Tell students to pick one or a couple they might do. Or have them come up with their own option.
 - Begin the discussion of the scenario using the Teaching materials. Be flexible. If a good discussion gets going, you don’t have to use all the discussion starters.
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CLOSING QUESTIONS

1. Do you feel like you have a role as a bystander to help reduce trash talking and discrimination?
2. What are some risks for an active bystander? Can you think of a solution to this risk where you could still be a leader?

Teaching: Talkin' Trash

BACKGROUND

This scenario introduces the subject of sexual harassment. It provides an opportunity to discuss the issue of sexism and objectification in situations that do not involve explicitly physical violence. It also can open up discussion about young men's attitudes toward young women's appearance and sexuality.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

→ What is sexual harassment? What is the difference between flirting and harassment?

Working Definitions

- ***Sexual Harassment:*** Unwanted sexual advances, requests for favors and other verbal or physical contact of a sexual nature which makes the person uncomfortable or intimidated where he or she works or is a student is sexual harassment. This is particularly true where the person making the demand is the boss or the teacher, requiring sexual favors in exchange for special treatment, promotions or good grades. It can also be true with coworkers or fellow students who say sexually suggestive things or touch people inappropriately, creating what is called a "hostile environment."
- ***Flirting is wanted. Sexual harassment is not.***

→ Would those guys be saying these things if they were alone, or are they trying to show off for their friends? Why would harassing a woman be seen as something "cool" guys do?

→ By the way they dress, flirt, or talk, do women bear any responsibility for provoking men's comments or behaviors? Who decides when a situation turns abusive or harassing?

→ Has anyone here ever asked a female friend or sister how she feels when men make these sorts of comments, on the street or on campus? What did she say?

COMMON CONCERNS

X Some young men will rightfully feel like they're risking losing status with their peers if they speak up in a situation like this. (I.e. they're not "one of the guys".) This can lead to a discussion of status hierarchies in groups of men, and the role of homophobia as a silencer. Focus on the role of leadership and the need to take risks.

X Some young men might argue that some young women actually enjoy this sort of commentary from men. You can point out that the scenario explicitly states "the young woman is getting upset." Also, you can ask how they think women feel when they're subjected to this sort of treatment from men.

End the scenario by reminding the guys that sexual harassment by definition is not just harmless fun. Someone is being harmed. It's wrong and it might be a crime.

Talkin' Trash

→ You're sitting on the stairs outside of school with a few friends. A young woman walks by wearing a tight mini skirt. Some of your guy friends start making crude gestures and harassing remarks, referring to her body and clothes, and saying things like "we know you like it." The young woman is obviously getting upset.

Train of thought

Is she really upset, or does she like the attention?...Is it true what they're saying.... Does it matter?...Girls have the right to wear whatever they wantHow would I feel if the girl was my sister, or my friend?...If I remain silent, am I agreeing with my friends behavior?...What if she reports the incident?.....Will my friends ask me to lie for them?...What should I do?

Options

- 1) Keep quiet
- 2) Join in (although my heart's not in it) because I don't want my friends to think less of me
- 3) Drift off to the side, away from the activity. Later, apologize to the young woman for my friend's immature and sexist behavior.
- 4) Distract my friends by saying something like "chill out guys," and try to convince them to stop.
- 5) Leave the scene, but later talk to each guy individually and let them know that I have a problem with the way they treated this person.
- 6) Talk about the issue with a parent, a teacher or another adult I can trust.
- 7) Personal Option:

Teaching: WILD PITCH

BACKGROUND

“Wild Pitch” deals with homophobia. This scenario addresses the harassment of a homosexual young man and a potential gay-bashing episode.

While it depicts a bystander situation, discussing this scenario can rise for some young men issues that they have never talked about rationally with their friends. Hence it partially serves as a mini consciousness-raising session about homophobia and male sexual identity. But it is important to remember that the emphasis of the MVP Model is preventing violence and harassment, not resolving complex and controversial societal debates about sexual orientation.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

→ Do you think this is a realistic scenario? Does anyone here know an openly gay male, in your family, your school, your town? (Remind people to be respectful of others, including others privacy). If you don't, why do you think that is?

→ Why do some heterosexual men beat up gay men?
What does that sort of assault say about the assailant?

→ Should people have the right to be and express who they are in public, even if that makes other people uncomfortable?

COMMON CONCERNS

X Some students and professionals may experience discomfort when addressing homophobia. This discomfort is often expressed as laughter. You also have to keep in mind that there may be gay students in the class; you can't assume in your use of language that everyone present identifies as heterosexual.

X Homophobia is deeply rooted and touches on complex issues of gender and sexual identity. Occasionally, some of the young men will try to justify their intolerance through references to their religious beliefs, social norms, evolutionary biology, etc. Whatever you may think about homosexuality, as an MVP leader you have to be prepared to address these rationalizations and keep them focused on their own responsibility for their attitudes and actions.

X Homophobia often runs so deep that some young men won't speak out against it because they don't want to risk being labeled a “fag”. This provides a good opportunity to talk about leadership and the need to take chances in standing up for what you believe in. Also you can bring up for discussion the way that men are often reluctant to speak out against sexism for the very same reason.

X Keep the discussion focused. This is a conversation that can easily be diverted away from violence and into an irresolvable debate about homosexuality. You can keep the discussion directly relevant by searching for common ground. One way to do this is by asking: “Can we all agree that harassment or violence of any sort is not an acceptable way to deal with differences?”

End the scenario by restating that sexism and homophobia are directly related: both are about gender and sexual identity, and fear of being called gay silences men who might otherwise speak out against the abuse, harassment, and mistreatment of others.

Violence against gay men and lesbians is also wrong in and of itself. Regardless of sexual orientation, everyone has the right to be free from violence or the threat of it.

WILD PITCH

→ One of the guys you hang around with constantly makes anti-gay comments. He calls lots of people “gay” in a mocking tone, and you’ve seen him write graffiti with messages like “fags die.” He’s an aggressive guy, and though you’ve never seen him physically abuse any gays or lesbians, you’re worried that he could with the slightest provocation.

TRAIN OF THOUGHT

I can’t control what all of my friends are gonna say or think. Some people are just uncomfortable with homosexuality. Isn’t that their right?...But what if he does something violent? I know that it’s attitudes like his that sometimes leads to violence...But what can I do about it? Why should he listen to me? Will he, or others, think I’m gay if I speak up about this?... **What should I do in this situation?**

OPTIONS

- 1) Do nothing. It’s really none of my business anyway.
- 2) Talk to my friend one day in private, and tell him that I’m not comfortable when he makes anti-gay remarks
- 3) Find a gay-strait alliance, either in my school or somewhere else, and ask someone in the group for advice.
Contact the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network at www.glsen.org for support or more information.
- 4) Talk to a parent, or teacher I can trust for more ideas about how to handle this situation
- 5) Personal Option:

Agree/Disagree/Unsure Instructions

Introduction:

Ask the question, “What does it mean to be a leader?” (to take risks, stand up for what you believe in, take a stand on issues, be an example for others, etc.)

Exercise:

Tell participants that you will read a statement. Explain to the students that they all will be asked to choose whether they agree, disagree, or are unsure about the statement. Tell students that they should move to the area of the room (as you designate) that corresponds with their choice. One side is Agree, the opposite side is Disagree, the middle section is Unsure. Encourage each student to choose the area which he or she believes is correct and not to follow their friends or classmates. Let students know that they will be asked to explain why they made their particular choices.

- Read the first statement. (Choose a statement from the list. You can use one or more statements, depending on time. Just do them one at a time.)
- Ask the students to move to the part of the room you designated based upon whether they agreed, disagreed, or were unsure about what the statement said.
- Ask the students why they agreed, disagreed, or were unsure about the statement.
- Allow students time to discuss, making sure to call on students from each group.
- Facilitate discussion with follow up questions.
- After discussion, give students the opportunity to change their minds and move to a different area. If any students do move, ask them to explain why they did.

Conclusion:

Discuss leadership by using the following questions as a guide:

- Did anyone here find themselves swayed by their peers’ decisions?
- Did anyone here stand alone or does anyone think it would have been hard to stand alone? Why or why not?
- How many of you think you are leaders? (Emphasize that they are **all** leaders).

Agree/Disagree/Unsure Statements

There's nothing wrong with forwarding a dirty joke.

It's okay to fight someone if you've heard that person is trash talking you.

Justin overhears his teammates talking about Lauren, the center on the girls' basketball team, and calling her a lesbian. Justin really likes Lauren, but decides not to say anything. Justin should not say anything.

It could be flirting if someone grabs your butt when you are walking down the street.

To be a man, men must be dominant and controlling in a relationship so women won't have their way all the time.

In many situations women are equal to, if not stronger than, men.

Guys can't be expected to ignore a good looking girl (they can't help it).

Only promiscuous girls get harassed. Some girls look like they are just asking for it.

A woman could discourage unwanted sexual attention if she really wanted it to stop.

If a woman is friendly to a guy, she wants to date him.

Guys are supposed to ask girls out.

Men should be the breadwinners.

A girl's self worth is determined or dependent on male attention and approval, especially when measured in terms of physical attractiveness.

A real lady would diffuse a sexual harassment situation by being polite and not raising her voice.