

Where do we set the boundaries?

Age 10+
Duration 85 minutes
Group size up to 20

Overview

In this activity, participants discuss different forms of violence, try to recognize it in everyday scenarios and raise awareness of perceptions that could be considered as violent acts.

Objectives

- To understand the prevalence of violence in society and it being perceived as something normal
- To identify different forms of violence and let people challenge their own perceptions of violence
- Emphasize the different influence violence has on each individual

Materials

- Different scenarios (6-7 papers)
- Two bigger pieces of paper
- Flip charts, markers and small pieces of paper
- Story

Preparation

Write down the scenarios and the story attached in the appendix and make signs for 'violent' and 'non-violent'

Step-by-step instructions

1. Form a circle and ask everyone to close their eyes for a while until you ask them two questions. Both times count how many people said yes and write down the numbers.
 - a. Have you ever been a perpetrator of violence? If yes, raise your hand.
 - b. Have you ever been victim of violence?Do not tell the result, save it for the end.
2. Ask: What do you think of when you hear the word violence? They should come up with either their own definitions or key words. Make sure you get answers from everyone, and leave some time for the discussion.
3. Set the group in the middle of the room, while having signs with "non-violent" and "violent" on opposite sides of the room. Read the scenarios (see appendix 1) out loud, and ask them to position themselves in the place according to the degree of violence that they could recognize in the scenario (from non-violent to violent, there can be a scale).
4. After each scenario, ask people to explain why they chose that spot in particular. After a short discussion based on each scenario, participants can change where they are stood on the scale.

5. Come back in the circle. Based on the previous scenarios, brainstorm all the possible forms of violence they can think of and write them on the flipchart. Also ask them to add some more that haven't been mentioned in the scenarios. If needed, divide them into groups of three/four people.
6. Give the participants small pieces of paper and explain that you will read a story (see appendix 2). Each time they recognise violence in the story, they should put down a piece of paper on the floor. Do not make any pauses, and keep reading until the end.

Debriefing

- How did you feel during the story?
 - How many pieces of paper did you put down?
 - Was it easy or difficult to decide whether scenarios presented non-violent or violent situations?
 - What types of violence did you identify?
 - Why is it so difficult to recognize violence?
 - What were the important moments in the story?
 - Does this happen only in a kingdom far, far away?
How would you explain the ending of the story?
7. Ask the two questions from the beginning once again. The difference in yes/no answers can be revealed at the end. Ask participants if/why they responded differently to the question at the end. If they responded yes ask them to consider whether their understanding of what constitutes violence had changed.

Appendix 1: Scenarios

1. You and your friends regularly go shopping. You arrange to meet one Saturday, as always, but nobody else shows up at the agreed time or place. You receive no message or phone call changing the plan, and nothing is mentioned back at school on Monday.
2. A friend asks you to remove a photo from Facebook. You don't see anything wrong with the photo and, despite her persistent requests you refuse to remove it.
3. You see Jamie in your children's group hitting another child. You run over, grab Jamie's arm and drag him away.
4. I played a really important football match and missed an open goal. My teammates were really annoyed and my coach said I was useless. It was a really easy goal and everyone was upset we lost the match.
5. A popular girl in your class posts a Facebook status saying that Helen has been wearing the same outfit all week. Lots of people have already 'liked' it. You don't really know Helen but you have also 'liked' the status.
6. At the start of term, my dad told me there would be consequences if I got bad school grades. After my first 'D' he locked me in my room until I did all my homework. I did not take him so seriously or work too hard. When I got an 'F' in maths he locked me in my room overnight. He warned me again, but when I failed the term, he hit me with his belt.

Appendix 2: The story

(Depending on the age of participants, some parts might be modified)

Once upon a time, there was a kingdom living far, far away. There lived a king, a queen and their son, the prince. They led a comfortable life in their huge castle, and were respected by the entire community. Due to rising sea level, suddenly, one day, the entire area was flooded. Everyone was forced to flee as quickly as possible. After weeks and weeks of wandering, the royal family arrived to a land very different from their own. In attempt to adjust to the new society, they started looking for a job and a school for their son. Unfortunately, king and queen were not able to get a job, and have been told that it is due to big cultural differences.

The prince started going to school, but for some reason it just did not feel right. He was being ignored, no one sat next to him during lunch breaks, and the other kids were constantly staring at him. The prince started thinking that it was his fault. What else could be the possible explanation for what has been going on? They were all the same age, interested in the same things, but still something was just wrong and the prince wanted to go back home. He started isolating himself, but the new situation back at home made it even worse. Not being able to find a job, his parents got into a difficult and unusual position: their financial status got worse and worse. Their used-to-be royal outfits (that also caused teasing) were now replaced by much less extravagant outfits that made the teasing even more frequent. The used-to-be carefree child, the prince, whose only responsibilities were to study and play, now became introverted, excluded, isolated and confused.

The pressure of living in the new land started to get to the family, they began to argue a lot more, and on several occasions did something they wouldn't normally do: they locked the prince in his room, in attempt to make him study harder, since the results from school were quite disappointing, and did not meet the 'royal expectations'.

Over the next years not much changed, but the prince got used to it. He finished school, went to university, was the best in the class, but something was still missing, and he was not sure anymore if it was him or the others who acted in a strange way. Fortunately, that part of his life ended as well, and he managed to find a decent job.

Despite not being well networked with his co-workers, he really liked the job. One day, he did not show up at work. Few days later, he was found asleep and never to wake up, clutching the photo of his kingdom with a note on the other side, saying: "All I wanted was to go home".