



6. Title: What we can Do: Intervention Strategies

Short Description/Overview

This activity consists of parts of various activities which intend to help students to think about how to intervene when witnessing abuse against a woman/girl as well as to sensitize the students by challenging the dominant story of masculinity.

Themes: raising awareness on young peoples' responsibility as bystanders

Time: 45 minutes

Group size: 12- 25 participants

Objectives

- to raise awareness on students' responsibility as bystanders,
- to identify specific techniques for challenging peers' attitudes and behaviours that support violence against women
- to identify what every person can do to stop TDV

Materials Needed:

- Flipchart paper
- Scotch tape
- Markers and pens
- Worksheet
- Handout "How to be helpful to a friend"

Step-by-step:

One of the best ways to overcome the concerns and fears that keep us silent is to have a toolbox of strategies on hand for intervening when the situation arises. That way, you don't have to think so much about what to do, whether to do it, when to do it, and so on. What we will do now is an exercise which will help you begin to come up with some effective intervention strategies.

Please, divide yourselves into 6 small groups (mixed-sex groups).

If you choose to us less than 6 scenarios, divide the group of students into small groups equal to the number of the scenarios that you will use

I will give one scenario to each group where an intervention is called for. Try to imagine yourselves in these situations, discuss them within your groups and write down what you



would do. Imagine that you know the people in the scenarios but neither of them are close friends of yours –you’re just in the same group of friends.” Take about 10 minutes to answer the questions and then we’ll reconvene as a large group to discuss the strategies that you all came up with.”

As the groups are discussing the scenarios, you can walk around the room, observe, and facilitate as needed. When the time ends, bring everyone back together and ask students from each group (or one person from each group) to report on their discussions. The focus of this activity should be on generating a list of concrete intervention strategies that everyone could use, not only for incidents similar with the one discussed, but also for a variety of situations.

When discussing the strategies that each group comes up with, write them down on the flipchart. Participants will probably describe many of the strategies described in the “List of strategies” which are included in the “expected outcome”

You can use the “List of Strategies” as a guide to help you categorize students’ suggestions and add to the list any new suggestions that may be offered by the students. At the end you may prompt students to discuss any strategy that wasn’t mentioned by them, describe it and initiate a discussion on the reasons participants didn’t think to include this strategy in their list; if they accept it, add it to the list.

Stress that:

- Violence is NEVER the proper way to react to violence; discuss any violent methods of reaction
- It is a really difficult situation & it's tough to confront a guy who is abusing a woman or a young girl.
- Can you imagine how would you feel if you were the victim in these scenarios & no one did anything? Further discussion:
- If you were in an abusive dating relationship, where would you go and/or who would you seek for help?
- If a friend was in an abusive dating relationship, what would you do? What would you say to that friend?
- If your friend was abusive to his/her partner, what would you do? What would you say to him/her?
- Have you ever witnessed an abusive act? Did you say or do anything? Did anybody else do or say anything? What?
- At the end of the activity ask students: how can we change this situation?

End the activity with a conclusion similar to the following:

"You all have generated a great list of strategies for challenging others on their violence-supporting language, attitudes, and actions. Hopefully, now you feel more prepared to speak up when the situation calls for it. Remember, your comfort will increase the more you practice speaking up. One word of advice before we wrap up: don't expect miracles from yourself or miraculous results from your interventions. There is no perfect intervention, and there are no instant conversions. As far as we're concerned, every intervention is a success,



because every time we speak out, we make the world more safe, eliminating violence. Even though it's not easy to intervene, it's something that we must do."

It isn't easy to challenge someone for using violence against someone or for degrading someone as it could be dangerous, embarrassing (if you're laughed at or not taken seriously) or could cause fear of losing the person's friendship. Safety should always be considered first when confronting a violent person; it is important to avoid violence with that person. It is also important to avoid giving the victim the impression that s/he is defenseless and in need of a "protector", while on the other hand, silence gives the impression that the abuser's behavior is condoned or even acceptable. The most important thing to consider when deciding whether to intervene is one's safety. If the situation does not seem safe, or if provoking further violence from the perpetrator seems likely, then it may be better to let a comment or action go unchallenged and try to find a way to address it at a later time. At the same time, being concerned about another person's reaction is not an excuse for doing nothing. Being aware of your fears does not make it okay to give in to them. On the contrary, it allows you to try to have control over your fears so that they won't paralyze you when you need to speak out."

Debriefing and evaluation

It is a personal pledge not to condone acts of violence, not to make excuses for perpetrators of violence, and not to think that any girl/woman "asks for it." It is a pledge not to remain silent. It is a pledge to challenge the people around us to act to end violence. Challenge sexist language and jokes that degrade women/girls, not only in real life but also online. Sexist jokes and language help create a climate where forms of violence and abuse have too long been accepted. Words that degrade women and girls reflect a society that has historically placed females in a second-class position. By reflecting this reality they once again put women and girls "in their place" even if that isn't the intention. One of the most difficult things for boys is to learn to challenge other boys. To challenge sexist language. To challenge boys who talk lightly of violence against women and to challenge people who engage in violence

LIST OF STRATEGIES

STRATEGY: "Ask for clarifications..."

People who express attitudes connected to a violent culture expect people to go along with them, to laugh, to agree, to join in. They do not expect to be questioned. Saying, "I'm not clear about what you mean by that. Maybe you could explain?" or some other form of clarification helps to change the dynamic and flow of conversation. Also, people are encouraged to think about the assumptions that underlie their statements and attitudes. It is especially important to question in a non-aggressive way.

STRATEGY: "Give... a face to the victim..."



This strategy re-humanizes the person being demeaned. Reminding someone that their sister, mother or girlfriend might be talked about or treated in this way often reminds people of women's humanity.

STRATEGY: "Do not accuse... State your position clearly"

Ask participants how they feel when someone points the finger at them, when someone says in an accusatory voice, "YOU....." Talk about how "I Statements" are easier for people to hear since they are about the person making the statement, about which people are less likely to become defensive. Instead of saying: "YOU are sexist and this is the stupidest thing I've ever heard", which puts the other in a defensive position, you could say: "I don't agree with what you are saying; I believe that nobody deserves to be treated like this"

STRATEGY: "Use your humor..."

This is perhaps the trickiest of all the strategies since humor can easily escalate tensions if people feel they're being mocked. However, if you use humor effectively, it can reduce the tension inherent in interventions. Be careful, though, not to be so funny that you undermine the point you're trying to make. STRATEGY: "... without words"

This strategy carries considerable weight with young people if you connect it with parents, who have the uncanny ability to communicate their displeasure with their children simply by staring at them. No words need to be spoken.

STRATEGY: "Seek others who are like you"

Studies indicate that 90 percent of boys/men are at times uncomfortable with how their male peers talk about or treat girls/women, but almost all remain silent because they believe they are the only ones who feel uncomfortable. This strategy is designed to let others know that they are not alone in their discomfort. For example, you might simply turn to the group and ask, "Am I the only one uncomfortable with this?" This strategy can also be useful when you know someone who has a pattern of expressing violence-supporting attitudes. Friends and/or family can, as a group, do an intervention. STRATEGY: "Ask for or offer help"

If you witness a violent incident it may be necessary to call the police and also ask for help from people around you. Do not intervene if you are alone and you feel that it could be dangerous.

Another useful way to offer help would be to make your presence known so the perpetrator is aware that there is an eyewitness to his action.

You could also offer your help to the victim by talking to her/him. This would help her/him feel safer, but you should also keep in mind that it would be better to talk to her/him after the incident is over.

STRATEGY: Use the "Report Abuse" Button

When you notice abusive online behavior (hate speech, abusive comments, films or photos that are miss-used or sexist) do not hesitate to report the abuse and demand that those postings are erased. Most important social networks have such a button to report abuse. You can also take a stand by posting your own comments and by pointing out such behaviour as abusive.

**Tips for facilitators**

Both the scenarios and the strategies proposed may need to be adapted in order to be relevant to the culture that it's going to be used for. You could also add more scenarios in cases where the group is composed of many students.

The intervention strategies activity will help young people begin to develop ways of speaking up that are thoughtfully strategic. When addressing speaking out in these situations, it is critically important to let people know that you are serious about safety concerns. Having said that, do not dwell too much on the fears and risks of intervening. Doing so runs the risk of scaring potential allies into silence. Make sure that you always return to the positive message that we can overcome our fears and find a way to take action and that you are not encouraging the participants in any way to engage in risky behaviours.

As this activity specifically asks students to imagine intervening in circumstances where they are used to remaining silent, there may be some resistance to developing strategies. Sometimes, students will resist developing strategies by explaining that if they found themselves in such a situation, they wouldn't intervene. Respond by asking them to think hypothetically. What could they say that might make a difference?



Worksheets

Scenario 1

You meet your friend to go to the cinema and you have the impression that she was crying just before. Sometime in the past, she had told you that her boyfriend screams and swears at her, insults and humiliates her, and he always wants to know where she is and with whom; she even had to give him all her internet passwords so he can check who she writes to. It also seems that she has some bruises on her arms.

What are the reasons TO INTERVENE in this situation?

What are the reasons NOT TO INTERVENE in this situation?

What do you think you would do? What would you say? How do you think you would intervene?

Group Choice:

How do you imagine that others would respond to your intervention:

Her boyfriend?

Your friend?



Scenario 2

There is a rumor that a boy that you know raped a girl. You discuss this matter with two of your best friends and one of them defends the accused by saying things about the girl such as: “she was asking for it... she sleeps around... look at how she dresses... and have you seen her Facebook and the pictures she has there with boys she has dated? It’s so clear that she was asking for it... someone should actually post a message in our Facebook group about her so that all will know that she was asking for it”.

What are the reasons TO INTERVENE in this situation?

What are the reasons NOT TO INTERVENE in this situation?

What do you think you would do? What would you say? How do you think you would intervene?

Group Choice:

How do you imagine that others would respond to your intervention:

A friend of yours who defends him?

The victim?



Scenario 3

You are at a party and as you are leaving you see a boy trying to pick up a girl who is drunk. She is not just tipsy, she is completely drunk, she can not even walk. It seems to you that the girl is reluctant to follow him.

What are the reasons TO INTERVENE in this situation?

What are the reasons NOT TO INTERVENE in this situation?

What do you think you would do? What would you say? How do you think you would intervene?

Group Choice:

How do you imagine that others would respond to your intervention:

The boy?

The girl?



Scenario 4

You are with your friends; one of them is getting ready to leave saying that he cannot stay any longer because his girlfriend is waiting for him. The others start to tease him: "How low have you sunk? A woman twists you around her little finger." "Why do you allow her to lead you by the nose?" ...and more comments ...even worse... One of them, goes further, saying: "If my girlfriend dared to do this, I would beat her to a pulp."

What are the reasons TO INTERVENE in this situation?

What are the reasons NOT TO INTERVENE in this situation?

What do you think you would do? What would you say? How do you think you would intervene?

Group Choice:

How do you imagine that others would respond to your intervention:

The male friend of yours who receives the comments?

The rest of your friends who are commenting?



Scenario 5

It is Saturday and you are out with your friends. A male friend of yours sees a beautiful girl and makes some comments about her body and is harassing her.

What are the reasons TO INTERVENE in this situation?

What are the reasons NOT TO INTERVENE in this situation?

What do you think you would do? What would you say? How do you think you would intervene?

Group Choice:

How do you imagine that others would respond to your intervention:

Your friend?

The girl?

The rest of your friends?



Scenario 6

As you are entering a café you hear a couple arguing and suddenly the man throws the woman against the wall. None of the witnesses to the incident seem to intend to do anything about it. A little later the situation gets out of hand... the man is becoming more and more violent towards the woman...

What are the reasons TO INTERVENE in this situation?

What are the reasons NOT TO INTERVENE in this situation?

What do you think you would do? What would you say? How do you think you would intervene?

Group Choice:

How do you imagine that others would respond to your intervention:

The perpetrator?

The victim?



Handout: **How to be helpful to a friend**

If you know someone who's abusing a girlfriend or boyfriend, here's how to help:

- ☒ Listen and be patient. It's hard for anyone to admit he/she has a problem.
- ☒ Tell your friend very clearly that his or her behavior isn't cool.
- ☒ Tell your friend that violent behaviour is wrong, and that ASSAULT IS A CRIME!
- ☒ Encourage your friend to get help. He/she can't solve the problem alone. Offer to help find a counselor he/she can trust, and offer to go with him or her to meet the counselor.
- ☒ Help your friend take responsibility for his/her behaviour by naming abuse when you see it or hear it. Tell your friend that blaming drinking, drugs, or his/her partner for his/her abusive behaviour, are excuses.
- ☒ If your friend grew up in a violent home, try to get him/her to talk about how that has affected his/her own relationships.
- ☒ Tell your friend that abuse is learned behaviour, and they can learn to change.
- ☒ Be supportive of your friend's partner. Let her/him know that s/he doesn't deserve to be abused.
- ☒ Let your friend know the facts about Abuse and Violence. Let him/her know that unless he/she gets help, he/she will lose the people they care about.
- ☒ Call a violence hotline to find out what you can do to help your friend. You can remain anonymous if you wish.
- ☒ Get written information on relationship abuse and share it with your friend and your friend's partner (take into account issues related to the safety of your friend's partner).
- ☒ Be a role model for healthy relationships by treating your partner and friends with respect.

Who to turn to for help and support

Friends, Parents, Women's Shelters/Transition Houses, Sexual Assault Centres, Mental Health Clinics, Coaches, Guidance Counsellors, Clergy, Family Resource Centres, Police

**If you know someone who's being abused, here's how to help:**

- ☑ Be there. Listen without giving advice, unless it is asked for; instead, talk to your friend about the choices s/he has and let your friend know that you believe her/him.
- ☑ Tell your friend that s/he doesn't deserve to be hurt and that it's not her/his fault. No one deserves to be treated badly.
- ☑ Don't pressure your friend to break up with her or his partner, and don't put down her/his boyfriend or girlfriend. This may drive your friend away.
- ☑ Honour your friend's feelings and don't tell your friend how s/he should feel. Recognize that it is still possible to love someone who hurts you.
- ☑ Don't make judgments! Find out what your friend wants to do about her/his relationship and support her/him. You can be helpful without telling people what they should and shouldn't do.
- ☑ Your friend may be confused - may change her/his mind. That's okay!
- ☑ Don't be a drama queen. If you overreact, you may make your friend feel worse. That's not helpful.
- ☑ Don't ask unnecessary questions. This isn't a time to be nosy.
- ☑ Watch your body language and respect your friend's right to personal space. Not everyone wants to be hugged.
- ☑ S/he may feel "guilty" for telling you. S/he may feel embarrassed.....or even angry. Be prepared for many different feelings and/or reactions.
- ☑ Encourage your friend to get help. Offer to help find a counselor s/he can trust and offer to go with your friend to meet the counselor.
- ☑ Call a hotline for dating violence or intimate partner violence to find out what else you can do to help your friend. You can remain anonymous if you wish.
- ☑ For reporting online violence check for and use the "report abuse" button – most online social networks have one. You may also report any cyber-abuse to the Cyber-Crime Police Unit (add contact details)
- ☑ Be supportive! Help your friend become informed - get written information on relationship abuse and share it with your friend (be extremely careful - provide written information only in cases where you are sure that your friend won't be exposed to greater danger if the abuser discovers the information); if not convey the information to your friend verbally.
- ☑ Don't confront your friend's partner even in case that your friend thinks it would be helpful. It could make a bad situation even worse. Don't do anything that would risk your own safety.
- ☑ Allow your friend to make her or his own decisions, and respect those decisions even if you don't agree with them.
- ☑ Don't criticize your friend for staying or trying to make it work again. Just remind her/him that you'll be there for her/him.