

Workshop: Active Bystander Skills to Prevent Gender-based Violence

Overview

Participants are introduced to Gender-based Violence (GBV) and expand their understanding of violence to include the impact of non-physical violence. Men and boys have a particular role in GBV prevention by challenging peer culture that condones violence.

Objectives

1. Participants will recognize various forms of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) on a continuum and connect them to their lived experience
2. Participants will brainstorm GBV prevention strategies suited to their own contexts
3. Participants will convert their strategies into active bystander skills

Activities

Introduction

Facilitators introduce themselves and one reason why they have gotten involved with MANifest Change.

Define GBV by explaining that many people face violence at some point in their lives, and that what it looks like and how often it happens is often connected to their gender. E.g. Men are more likely to experience childhood sexual abuse, LGBTQ+ folks face hate crime, and women are most likely to experience violence from a partner and harassment at work and in public. Show the [Marc Methot PSA](#) to introduce the idea that men and boys have a particular role in addressing GBV. Most of us don't commit violence, but we often don't know how to recognize it and speak up about it – our goal today is to get better at that skill.

Group Contract

Invite participants to introduce themselves and name one question they have about GBV. Don't allow any cross-talk or commentary at this point.

Note that talking about violence can be upsetting, and that some of us in the room have experienced violence and perhaps used it against others as well.

Materials

Arrange seating in a circle and have the following materials on hand:

- Scenario cards
- Yarn or string
- Laptop, projector and speakers
- Whiteboard or flipchart
- Evaluation forms
- GBV Fact Sheet

Topics of childhood sexual abuse, rape, and suicide may come up. People will have different perspectives and possibly high emotions. How can we talk about this stuff in a way so that everyone is ok during and after the session?

With input from participants, list things people can do to make the conversation safe enough. Make sure it includes keeping confidentiality, identifying support people (e.g. school social worker), allowing people to pass instead of speak, and showing curiosity instead of judging or shaming. Ask people for a show of hands or to stand up to show their commitment to the group contract.

Continuum of Violence

Begin by noting that violence can be subtle or obvious. It affects us and it affects people we know, but we don't always recognize it and call it "violence". We might not even realize that it's happening to people around us.

We can recognize violence by asking three questions:

1. **Who has the most power in this situation?** E.g. can the person in this situation leave freely? Is someone under pressure? Has everyone given their consent?
2. **What is the impact on the person in the situation?** How is their physical and mental health affected? Will other people see them differently as a result of what's happening?
3. **What is the intention of the person who is initiating the situation?** Are they trying to get something for themselves? Trying to help the other person?

Tie a string across the room and mark one end as "Clearly Violence.", the other end as "Not Violence." and the middle as "Violence?". You will divide the participants into pairs and give each group a Scenario Card. By asking themselves the three questions they will decide where to place their situation on the continuum from Clearly Violence to Not Violence.

Allow 3-5min for groups to discuss, then invite them, one by one, to place their Scenario Card on the continuum and share their reasoning. Invite discussion from the whole group after each card, and surface alternate perspectives by asking "does anyone see this differently?" Moderate the debate, referring back to the Group Contract when necessary. Visualize the conversation on chart paper (Power, Impact, Intent). In an all-male group, there will often be a better understanding of Intent than Impact. Be prepared with anecdotes and statistics to challenge ideas that minimize non-physical harm or blame victims (see Sidebar).

Summarize discussion, and conclude with the following points:

- Using the chart paper notes, point out that the group has created a working definition of violence far better than any dictionary
- Emphasize that while we may not all agree on what constitutes violence, the continuum shows us what these behaviours have in common is power and control – even small actions add up to a "culture of violence" that makes GBV seem normal and blames victims

Survivors of Violence Share About Impact

#whyistayed

#beenrapedneverreported

#corneredinottawa

www.1in6.org

[OCTEVAW Media Hub](#)

for the impact they experience

Transition to the next activity: We see examples of the “Violence?” kind daily, and this is where we can do most often do something about it and prevent harm– it’s not always about stopping a fight or sexual assault in progress.

Active Bystander Skills

Show ManUp PSA and explain that high school guys in Ottawa learned about the impact of GBV on Rehtaeh Parsons from Glen Canning and decided to make GBV unacceptable at their school. Alternatively highlight some of the pledges to end VAW found at www.MANifestChange.ca.

It’s not easy, though – if you see something happening, what are some reasons you might not take action? Brainstorm list of barriers, which often include:

- fear of making things worse,
- fear of misreading the situation as violence when it’s actually not (embarrassing),
- fear of getting hurt yourself – isolated, mocked, or assaulted
- it’s someone else’s job to deal with it (e.g. security, the friends of the people involved)
- it’s a private matter and not my business to get involved

These are all reasonable fears. Active bystander skills allow us to deal with these barriers because an effective bystander:

- approaches in a friendly and calm way (is curious rather than accusing)
- offers the person experiencing the violence more choices (rather than imposing an intervention on them)
- stays safe and calls for help if it seems too risky to get personally involved or the situation escalates

Refer to an example scenario from the previous activity and illustrate the Five D’s:

1. Discover – most people don’t get involved in preventing violence because they are in a hurry on their way somewhere; slow down and observe, gather intelligence
2. Distract – approach the person acting violently or the person experiencing the violence with an innocent question that interrupts and changes the tone
3. Be Direct – tell the person using violence what you are seeing and that you are worried about the impact on them or that the behaviour is not ok
4. Delegate – get help, whether its brainstorming with other bystanders what to do next or calling security or police
5. Delay – wait until the situation winds down and then approach the person experiencing the violence to see if they are ok and offer support

Give another scenario (from the previous activity, the OCTEVAW RISE app or a

Bystander Resources

www.MANifestChange.ca

www.draw-the-line.ca

OCTEVAW R.I.S.E. Active Bystander App

[The White Ribbon Campaign: It Starts With You, It Stays With Him](#)

#ItsOnUs

I Can MANifest Change Facilitator Manual

situation that participants have brought up themselves). Invite participants back into pairs for 5 minutes and have them come up with a possible action for each of the five D's.

Have one member from each pair line up across the room. Give them the role of the active bystander. Have their partner stand across from them in a second line and give them the role of the person using violence. On the count of three, all pairs try out a couple of their strategies simultaneously (this way no one is performing in the spotlight). Pause the "hassle line" role play every 3 minutes or so to get feedback from participants on what worked and what didn't. Have the bystander approach someone experiencing violence. Have them switch roles.

Closing

Return to the seated circle format. Thank the participants for teaching each other and for taking the risk of practicing active bystander skills. This is one of the most effective ways to prevent GBV in our families, at school, with our friends.

Review supports for participants, which might include the school social worker, the MANifest Change brochure which lists services for men in Ottawa, and offer to chat with people one on one afterward if time allows. Draw-the-line.ca and the RISE app offer more ideas about how to effectively prevent GBV.

If time allows, take comments or go around the circle so people can share closing thoughts. Possible prompts:

- Were you able to get answers to the questions you started with at the beginning of the workshop?
- What did you learn from each other that was new or unexpected?
- What support do you need from others in this room in order to put your bystander skills into action in the coming weeks?

Collect participant contact information if applicable.

Administer evaluation forms.

Adaptations

Scenario Cards should be adapted to the participants, e.g. sports team, high school Phys. Ed class, university residence, fraternity, Gender Studies students, after-school youth program. Always include a mix of online and in person situations. Scenarios should reflect that most violence experienced by women comes from someone they know, and rarely a stranger.

Further Adaptions for Sports Teams

- Highlight the Ottawa Sens' Marc Methot PSA. Ask if the situation he describes is realistic. Is his response realistic?
- Frame active bystander skills as team play – you don't want to leave the person experiencing violence isolated and alone; figure out who else is on your team to assist (Delegate bystander strategy)
- Coach the participants through the role play with direct feedback and challenge them to refine their active bystander skills

Include links to resources like [DeAndre Levy's Player Tribune article](#) and connect coaches/teachers to [It Starts With You, It Stays with Him](#)

Sample Scenario Cards

Rape Joke

After practice, a few players and the head coach are chatting in the parking lot. A well-known pro athlete has been in the news, charged with domestic abuse. The coach comments that you can't do or say anything these days without being attacked for being politically incorrect. One of your teammates takes the opportunity to crack a joke in which rape is part of the punchline.

Insults

Your friend is on his phone, checking out his latest matches on his favourite dating app. A masculine-looking person has messaged your friend (who is only interested in women) and he writes back "do the world a favour and kill yourself, freak".

Uninvited Questions

There is a man having a cigarette outside of a campus building. You recognize him to be Graham who you know as a trans man who has recently started his transition. Since Graham is a friend of a friend, you nod at him in acknowledgement as you light your cigarette. Soon, a large man exiting the building heads towards Graham. The man is about to pass Graham, when he does a double take and stops to stare at him. Graham says, "Hi." The man proceeds to aggressively interrogate Graham as to whether he is male or female.

Keeping an eye on her

A friend has given his girlfriend a cell-phone. He insists on paying the bill, and also insists that she check-in with him several times a day. He appears irritated and upset when he hasn't heard from her in more than a couple hours.

"No" means "try harder"

You notice a fellow student in your class will not stop sitting beside someone and commenting on their sexuality, dress, and making inappropriate comments. At first you thought it was harmless flirtation and that the person receiving the comments was flattered. After a few classes however you notice that the body language of the person receiving the attention shows that they are clearly not interested. One day you notice that they tried to change seats, but the other student followed them and kept up their flirting.

Bringing someone home drunk

You notice your roommate has brought home someone from the campus pub. The person is obviously incredibly intoxicated and you are concerned for both of them that consent might be an issue if things go any further.

Making threats

You overhear a friend's phone conversation with his partner in which he says angrily, "If I find out you've been talking to him again, you'll be sorry!"

Street Harassment

You are walking to class with your friends when one of your friends whistles at a new girl in your school and says loudly “Look at that ass, girl! I’d hit that. Come on, smile for me!” She smiles and walks away quickly.

Auntie’s new boyfriend

You notice that your younger cousin seems nervous and jumpy around your auntie’s new boyfriend. When you ask her what’s wrong, she tells you he is always staring at her bottom and once he tried to have sex with her when he was drunk.

Exchanging Nudes

Someone you have been chatting with on Facebook for a while wants to exchange nudes. You decide together to each send a nude. You haven’t ever met in person but things just got more exciting and you both feel closer to each other than ever before.

End of the night

Your friend is hosting a party at his house and as things begin to wind down in the early morning, you are one of the last people to leave. The only other people is a guy you recognize from class and a girl you don’t know. She is clearly super drunk, protesting and saying she’s not ready to quit dancing. He picks her up against her will and carries her outside to her friends who are waiting for her to go home together.

At the bar

You are standing at the bar when the guy next to you points out a woman on the dance floor. He says she is obviously “asking for it” and comments on her revealing outfit.

Slapping

You just finished hitting the gym late one night after class. On your way to catch the bus you witness two people, a girl and a guy whom you presume are dating, in the middle of a heated argument. All of a sudden the guy slaps the girl in the face. She is crying and tries to walk away but he grabs her by the hand and begs her not to leave apologizing over and over again.

Viral Video

Multiple people have been posting the same video on social media over the past few days. Finally, curious to see what it is, you watch it. After a few seconds it becomes apparent that people having sex in the video; more specifically, it appears unconsensual and the woman is extremely drunk. In the comments section, someone who seems to be the woman in the video is asking the poster to remove it.