

Character and Life Skills

Video Title: Kindness: Brian's Story

Lesson Title: Discovering Interventions, Day 2

Grade Level: Middle School



Project and Purpose

Students discuss strategies for addressing bullying — particularly from a bystander perspective — and identify potential benefits and ramifications.

Essential Question

How can a bystander help in a bullying situation? How does kindness help in a bullying situation?

Note: This is Day Two of a two-day lesson. Lesson 1 is an extended pre-viewing and discussion activity. This lesson could be modified to be done on its own.

Young people are often lectured about bullying, and have come to know that there are 'correct' answers: tell an adult, just ignore it, etc. They know that real world circumstances are complex and rarely have straightforward solutions. This lesson is designed to acknowledge and bring into the open potential positive ramifications as well as potential consequences to the various strategies around dealing with bullying in order to foster open and honest discussion. Ultimately, the goal is to get students to think about ways bystanders can intervene when witnessing bullying, so as to be more likely to work to prevent bullying and protect victims of bullying through their actions.

Materials

- Agree/disagree statements from Day One, posted on chart paper or projected
- Brainstormed solutions, with possible benefits and ramifications, from Day One

Procedure

1. Recap the work done in Day One's activities. Remind students/solicit responses to remind class of:
 - Brian's story from the video
 - The agree/disagree statements
 - The suggested solutions and their pros and cons
2. Invite students to revisit the statement: "If someone is a witness to bullying and doesn't do anything, they are just as much at fault as the bully is."
 - Ask students to share their thoughts and provide evidence for their arguments.
 - Ask: Is it possible for a bystander to help, when there's a situation involving bullying?

3. Remind students of the last session's partner and whole group discussions of some of the standard strategies to deal with bullying. Ask students to discuss: Which of those strategies might a bystander use? Which strategy might be effective? Which might not? Why?
4. Explain that students will participate in an activity called "Mini Forum Theatre." (A script for giving directions is provided in italics in the bullets below.)
 - *We're going to try some of these strategies, so we can get an idea of the possible benefits, as well as acknowledge potential drawbacks.*
 - *We're going to role play a situation with a bully, the bully's target, and a bystander.*
 - *We're going to make sure to take care of our volunteer actors, so that even though they're playing out an uncomfortable scene, they are safe and can stop if they want to.*
 - *What's a common thing you've seen in hallways, or outside?*
 - *So that we make sure our actors are as comfortable as possible, we're going to choose something that isn't physical.*
 - Brainstorm a few ideas and choose a generic situation.
 - *I need two brave volunteers to start us off.*
 - Assign one student actor to be the bully and one to be the target. Use discretion here.
 - *Now, even though you're playing a bully in this situation, I'm going to ask you to not make the scene about [name of target] personally. [Name of target] is playing a character, like you.*
 - Set up signals and parameters: *The scene will start when I say 'scene.'* Anytime I say 'freeze,' stop the scene.
 - Recap the situation you've chosen. Be sure to specify the location.
 - Run the scene through once with the bully and the target.
 - Say to the audience: *Imagine you're a witness to this scene. What's one thing a bystander might do, in this situation?*
 - Solicit a response and ask the responder, *Will you come try that?*
 - Replay the scene with the bystander intervention.
 - Freeze the scene, let the actors relax, and recap:
 - *What did you see happen here? Was the strategy effective?*
 - To the target: *How did you feel when this intervention happened?*
 - To the bully: *How did you feel?*
 - *How did this strategy help?*

A note: This question is the key to forum theatre. Every solution will have possible positive and negative ramifications: the goal is to determine what positive impact each choice carries knowing that even a solution that 'fails' has a positive impact. Solicit or bring up ideas such as 'the target felt stood up for,' 'the target knew not everyone thought it was funny.' This is also important for the students who play the bystanders: there isn't a 'fail' or a 'win.'
 - Replay the scene with different bystanders and different solutions. (Trade out the bully and target if needed.)
 - If there is time, and if it seems appropriate, another situation can be tried.

- **Notes:**

- Check in with the actors playing the bully and the target: *Do you feel ok?*
- It's important that after each actor leaves the scene — whether it's the end of a bystander's turn, the bully or target have traded out, or the forum is ending — they 'de-role.' Asking them to 'shake off' the character is a good strategy.
- It's ok if the group gets a little silly — it's an uncomfortable subject. Debrief a situation that becomes goofy: acknowledge what was laughable and return the discussion to: *Was this effective?* No solution will be elegant. Sometimes a moment of levity can lead to more serious work afterwards.

Conclusion

Discuss the Mini Forum Theatre with the following questions:

- What did you experience in this session?
- What stops witnesses from speaking up or taking action?
- What solution did you see that seemed effective?
- How does talking about this relate to the idea of kindness?

Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins or other markings on the paper.