

‘RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE NO WAY’ PROGRAM

CHALLENGING HOMOPHOBIA AND DISCRIMINATION



Acknowledgements

The Southern Adelaide Local Health Network would like to acknowledge the work of all Peer Educators within the Relationship Violence No Way program over time that have made this work possible. We would particularly like to thank Lisa Gascoigne, Roseanna Maeder and Ian Hooper for assisting in producing this guide. Most importantly, we would like to acknowledge Shaez Mortimer for her work in leading, driving and guiding this process to ensure the unique voice, knowledge and style of the Peer Educators were made available to all violence prevention educators choosing to use these resources.

These resources have been developed and re-developed over time to respond appropriately to the needs of young people as they arise. They are freely available to promote a greater awareness of the impact of violence on the lives of young people. These resources are intended to encourage bystander intervention, and to interrupt and challenge the values and beliefs that support violence. The resources may be adapted and changed to suit differing groups of young people, as we have done over time. We ask only that they are acknowledged as the work of young people involved in this program and that they are not sold or utilised as a tool for making profit.

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Workshop outline

This workshop is designed to be run by two Peer Educators facilitating a single-sex group of 8-20 young people in a classroom/working space which is appropriate for confidential conversations. The workshop content is best delivered in a 90 minute period and Peer Educators should arrange access to teachers/group workers for behaviour management support where required. If possible, set up the room so that the participants are seated in a semi-circle facing towards a white board and have them bring a pen along to the workshop.

The content of this workshop has been designed for young people in years 8-9 (ages 12-14) although the workshop content can be adapted for older/more mature groups.

These resources are the result of the amalgamation of work by the Relationship Violence No Way (RVNW) Program team, violence prevention and youth sector resources and information. They have been adapted and developed over the life of the program in accordance with young people's responses and needs, evaluation of the program and reflection on best practice. The content in this workshop was developed by Jesse Langer and the RVNW Program team.

A supporting Peer Educators' Guide to Violence Prevention Education is available online at www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/youthhealth and should be read in conjunction with this document.

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

- > Introduce yourselves, your organisation and program and workshop content.
- > Harassment and Peer Conflict Resolution Workshop: This workshop explores young people's values and beliefs about friendships, harassment and solving problems in friendships.
- > Kurna Acknowledgement: 'We acknowledge this land that we meet on today is the traditional lands for the Kurna people and that we respect their spiritual relationship with their country. We also acknowledge the Kurna people as the custodians of the Kurna land and that their cultural and heritage beliefs are still as important to the living Kurna people today'.

2. Name game (10 minutes)

Suggestions:

- > Going on a picnic/to outer-space
 - > Have participants introduce themselves by saying their name and an item they would take with them on a picnic / to outer space. Ask participants repeat the name and items of the people who have gone before them before they say their own.
- > Body parts
 - > Have participants introduce themselves by saying their name and a body part that starts with the first letter of their name. Ask participants to repeat the names and body parts of the people who have gone before them before they say their own.
- > Tattoo Game
 - > Have participants introduce themselves by saying their name and a tattoo they would get (hypothetically) and why. Ask participants to repeat the name and tattoo of the people who have gone before them, before they say their own.
- > Action and name
 - > Ask participants to stand in a circle and have each participant say their name and do an accompanying action. Have the group repeat the name and action before moving onto the next person.

3. Group agreement (10 minutes)

It models respect for participants to involve them in creating the agreement about how everyone will interact during the workshop. It is a good idea to write the Group Agreement on the whiteboard so that everyone can see it and Peer Educators can refer to it during the workshop.

Tell the participants that this workshop is about relationships - which are something that everyone has and will have, in various forms, throughout their lifetime. Some of the content that will be discussed may be sensitive for some participants and so it's important to make sure that everyone feels safe, respected and positive during and after the workshop. Ask the group to suggest 'rules' that will help the workshop run well.

If the participants are quiet or unsure about what to put in the group agreement, suggest these ideas, explain why they might be important 'rules' to have and get everyone's consent before adding them to the list:

> **Respect**

- > Ask: What does respect look like?

Examples: One person talking at a time, no laughing at other people's ideas, no putdowns, everyone can have their own opinion- agreeing to disagree, no homophobia, sexism or racism, etc.

> **Confidentiality - what's said in the room, stays in the room**

- > Don't use people's names, consider other people's privacy and safety.
- > Confidentiality will only be broken if there are circumstances where peer educators believe that someone is in serious harm and must notify by law (Mandatory Notification).

> **So, talk in 3rd person**

- > When you talk in 3rd person, no one can tell the difference between a question participants might have about what's being discussed, a personal story or an example from TV. This keeps everyone safe and promotes discussion.
- > Ask for examples of talking in the 3rd person. E.g.: "What if...?", "A friend of a friend of mine...", "If Spiderman and Mary Jane..." etc.

> **Right to pass a question**

> **Right to leave the room**

- > Remind participants that if they need a minute outside to calm down, they can go without asking. However, if they are gone for more than a few minutes, a peer educator will come and check on them.

> **Mobiles away and on silent**

> **Respectful swearing**

- > Ask the group if they feel okay about swearing during the workshop. Have a discussion about what everyone is comfortable with. Agree to not swear at each other.

Where to get help:

Write up on the board a couple of local services and their addresses, phone numbers and websites where young people can get help and support.

- > **Kids Helpline** Ph: 1800 55 1800 - free and confidential (doesn't appear on phone bill on some networks). Online and email counselling available: <http://www.kidshelp.com.au>
- > **Lifeline** Ph: 13 11 14 – Crisis support for young people wanting to talk to someone about anxiety, depression, loneliness, suicidal thoughts or attempts.

4. Key understandings of the 'Relationship Violence No Way' Program

1. Safety is a right - no one deserves to experience violence

- 1.1. Everyone deserves to be safe at all times and in all places.
- 1.2. If one person feels uncomfortable, the situation is not safe regardless of the intention of others.
- 1.3. Consent to sex must:
 - > Be freely and voluntarily given by all partners at all times.
 - > Not obtained by threats, coercion, or pressure.
 - > Sex needs to be emotionally, physically and legally safe and respectful for all people involved (partners) and in an environment they feel comfortable.

2. Violence is a choice

- 2.1 Abuse is about maintaining power and control over another person/people and can take many forms.
- 2.2 The use of violence and abuse in relationships is a choice and no one is genetically, hormonally, or socially programmed to do it.
- 2.3 It is the perpetrator's responsibility to stop using violence.
- 2.4 Harassment is about maintaining power and control over another person/people.
- 2.5 Revenge only makes problems worse.

3. It's never the victim's fault

- 3.1 Victim-blaming is wrong: it shames victims into silence and contributes to low rates of reporting of violence. Victim-blaming promotes myths about the causes and incidences of violence, justifies perpetrators actions and permits violence to continue or reoccur.
- 3.2 A victim of violence, no matter what form, should not be expected to leave a relationship. It is the perpetrator's responsibility to stop using violence.
- 3.3 A person's identity is not defined by the violence they have experienced. Victims/survivors of violence can and do live happy, healthy lives free from violence.

4. Gender is socially constructed

- 4.1 Gender is learnt and changes over time.
- 4.2 Traditional gender roles promote, excuse, and condone violence against women.
- 4.3 Relationship violence is predominantly perpetrated by men against women. Men are also victims of physical violence including rape and sexual assault, usually perpetrated by men.
- 4.4 Analysis and deconstruction of gender roles is essential in violence prevention.
- 4.5 Traditional rigid gender roles promote and maintain homophobia.

5. Respectful communication

- 5.1 Communication is a key part of any respectful relationship.
- 5.2 The more you understand the problem, the easier it is to deal with the issue.
- 5.3 Work on the problem together – it's OK to ask for help, it's OK to admit that you're wrong, and it's OK to say a problem is too big to deal with on your own.

6. Bystander intervention

- 6.1 We are all impacted by violence and have a responsibility/opportunity to prevent violence.
- 6.2 If you're watching harassment you can help change the situation.
- 6.3 Bystanders can and do make a difference in preventing violence in relationships by:
 - > Being safe and supportive friends for victims;
 - > Interrupting or safely intervening in violence-supportive behaviours;
 - > Believing people who disclose violence; and
 - > Respecting and supporting a person's decision about what to do next about the violence they have experienced.

7. Acceptance of diversity

- 7.1 We take a positive, open view of relationships and sexuality in the context of respect and intimacy.
- 7.2 Homophobia is a form of discrimination that is harmful to individuals, communities, and societies.
- 7.3 We recognise that people's life experience will be different according to their experience of race, gender, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, culture, religion and the ways in which these identities combine. Therefore, people of diverse backgrounds may have a unique experience of violence in relationships. This may be attributed to community understandings, cultural expectations and beliefs and/or service providers' responses to that violence.

5. Brainstorm: Racism-Homophobia (5–10 minutes)

- > Draw a line in the middle of the whiteboard and write 'Racism' at the top of the left column. Ask group to brainstorm what is bad about racism and write their ideas on whiteboard.
- > Write 'homophobia' at the top of the right column. Ask the group to brainstorm what is bad about homophobia and write up responses.
- > Responses for each may include: it is unfair, it is against human rights, it is discrimination, it causes harassment. It makes people feel: bad about themselves, bad about their partner, shameful, unwanted, hated, evil, wrong, unworthy, unacceptable, lesser, insignificant, different, second-class, etc.
- > Finish discussion by saying that racism and homophobia are different kinds of discrimination, and that they may have very similar effects and neither are acceptable.

6. Brainstorm: How can you tell if someone is gay? (5–10 minutes)

- > Draw a circle in the centre of the board (this space is to be used later). Ask the participants to list ideas about how you can tell if someone is gay and/or ideas they've heard in society/media about what makes someone gay. Write these ideas down around the outside of the circle on the board. Ideas may include: Hairstyle, clothing, taste in music, not liking sport, being 'nerdy', being image-conscious, wearing pink, liking 'girly/manly' things, having short hair, having dyed hair, talking with a lisp, wearing make-up/not wearing make-up, being interested in fashion, being interested in drama etc.
- > Once all the ideas have been written up, if 'being attracted to the same-sex' hasn't been mentioned, tell the group there is one thing which is missing from the picture. Ask if they know it – if not, write 'same-sex attraction' in the centre circle and tell group "being same-sex attracted is the only thing that makes someone gay, and nothing else".
- > Explain that attraction is an internal feeling. Not everyone who has kissed or had sex with someone of the same identifies as same-sex attracted. Everyone experiments with their sexuality and there are many different sexualities that people may identify with throughout their lifetime.

7. Values Walk (15 minutes)

A Values Walk is an activity to explore participants' values about difference, harassment and homophobia.

The Peer Educators' aim in this activity is to create a safe, non-judgemental space to explore how certain behaviours are abusive or potential situations of harassment and homophobia. The Peer Educators also guide participants to empathise with victims of homophobic harassment by discussing the effect/impact of such harassment on their health and wellbeing.

Distribute the questionnaires and ask participants to complete the questionnaire quietly by themselves. Tell the participants not to write their name on the questionnaire.

When all of the participants have finished filling out the questionnaire, explain that we will have a discussion about each of the statements on the questionnaire. Assign different parts of the room to 'Yes', 'Maybe' and 'No' and ask participants to indicate their response by moving to the part of the room that matches their response. If the group would like to stay sitting down (or you think it would be easier to manage behavior that way), ask the participants to indicate their response by a show of hands, for example: raising two hands for 'Yes', one hand for 'Maybe' and no hands for 'NO'.

Read out the first statement: "Is it okay to tease someone because they are different?" When the participants have moved or raised their hands, ask each group ('Never OK', 'Maybe OK' and 'OK') to explain why they have chosen this answer. Encourage discussion between the groups. Facilitate this so discussion remains respectful and everyone gets a turn to talk.

Suggested questions to guide discussion

Under each of the Values Walk questions are suggested questions to guide discussion. To make the intention of these clear, numbers relating to the relevant Key Understandings are listed after each question.

You should take some time prior to delivering the workshop to look over the Key Understandings so that during discussion with participants you are able to guide discussion back to the core principles. Please see Part 3 of the 'Peer Educator's Guide to Violence Prevention Education' for further discussion about the questioning method used in this workshop.

Is it OK to tease someone because they are different?

- > Does it depend on the way the person is different? 1.1, 3.1
- > Is it fair? 1.1, 1.2, 3.1
- > Why isn't it okay? 1.1
- > What if they can't help it if they are different? Such as race, religious belief, disability, allergies etc.
1.1, 3.1, 7.2, 7.3
- > How would it make the person being teased feel? 1.2

Is it OK to hate someone for being good at sports?

- > Is it fair to hate someone for how they are? [1.1](#), [1.2](#), [2.1](#)
- > Are gay people good/bad at sports? [7.1](#), [7.2](#), [4.1](#)

Are you a real man/woman even if you don't have children?

- > Can same-sex attracted people have children? [7.1](#), [4.5](#)
- > Is there anything biological that stops SSA people from having kids? [7.1](#), [4.5](#)
- > What happens if they have fertility problems? [7.1](#)
- > Do you know any heterosexual people who don't have kids? [7.1](#)
- > * Would you treat someone differently just because they don't have kids? [7.1](#), [2.1](#), [4.5](#)

Is it OK to stop someone from going to church if you don't believe in God?

- > Is it OK to assume that everyone doesn't believe in God? [1.2](#)
- > Could people be offended if you take this approach? [1.2](#)
- > * Should your beliefs be a reason to stop someone from doing something or believing in something? [1.2](#), [2.1](#), [2.4](#)
- > * Is it okay to force someone to change? [2.1](#), [1.2](#), [2.4](#)
- > Are you offended if someone wears a cross/crescent/om etc.? [2.1](#), [1.2](#)
- > Is it any different if someone wears a rainbow or a gay pride badge? [2.1](#), [2.4](#), [1.2](#), [7.1](#)
- > Who is at fault if someone is offended? [1.2](#), [3.1](#)
- > Do people have different values and beliefs to yours? Is that okay? [7.1](#), [7.3](#)

Is it OK to spread rumours about someone's sexuality?

- > Would it be okay to spread rumours about someone's health? [1.1](#), [1.2](#), [7.1](#), [2.1](#), [2.4](#), [6.1](#), [6.2](#), [6.3](#)
- > Does it matter if it turns out to be true or not? [1.1](#), [1.2](#), [7.1](#), [2.1](#), [6.1](#), [6.2](#), [6.3](#)
- > * Is it OK to tell people if you know that someone is gay? [1.1](#), [1.2](#), [7.1](#), [2.1](#), [2.4](#), [6.1](#), [6.2](#), [6.3](#), [4.5](#)
- > How do you know it wasn't told in confidence? [1.1](#), [5.1](#), [6.1](#), [6.2](#), [6.3](#)
- > Could the person be at risk if people found out? Could they get kicked out of home etc.? [1.1](#), [1.2](#), [7.1](#), [2.1](#), [2.4](#), [4.5](#)

If someone is gay, should they tell everyone immediately?

- > Whose business is sex and attraction? [1.1](#), [1.2](#), [7.1](#), [2.1](#), [7.2](#)
- > Do people have to tell other people that they are straight immediately? [7.1,7.2](#)
- > What if someone isn't sure? [1.1](#), [1.2](#), [7.2](#), [4.1](#), [4.4](#)
- > What if someone doesn't feel safe telling other people? [1.1](#), [1.2](#), [7.2](#), [2.1](#), [2.4](#)

Should same-sex attracted people be treated differently?

- > Do some people deserve to be treated better than others? [1.1](#), [1.2](#), [3.1](#), [7.1,7.2](#)
- > * Do some people deserve to be treated worse than others? [1.1](#), [1.2](#), [3.1](#), [7.1,7.2](#)

Are straight people affected by homophobia?

- > Does it hurt a heterosexual person's feelings if someone uses homophobic insults against them? [1.1](#), [1.2](#), [3.1](#), [7.1](#), [4.1](#), [4.2](#), [4.4](#), [7.2](#), [4.5](#)
- > Do SSA people have heterosexual family members? Friends? Can this affect them too? [1.1](#), [1.2](#), [2.1](#), [2.4](#), [7.2](#)
- > Does homophobia, like racism, make for an equal society? Can heterosexual people be affected by inequality? [1.1](#), [1.2](#), [2.1](#), [2.4](#), [7.1](#), [7.2](#), [4.5](#)

If someone is attracted to another person of the same-sex does that mean they are gay?

- > Can someone be bisexual? Curious? Unsure of their orientation? [7.1](#), [4.5](#)
- > If a person admires or compliments someone of the same-sex, does that mean they are gay? [7.1](#), [4.5](#)
- > Can you be attracted to people in ways other than sexual attraction? [7.1](#)

Can being around same-sex attracted people turn you gay?

- > If a SSA person is raised in a heterosexual family with mostly heterosexual friends, will that mean that it will turn them straight? [7.1](#), [7.2](#), [4.5](#)
- > Is sexuality about attraction, not about who you hang around with? [7.1](#), [7.2](#)

Is teasing a straight person about being gay homophobia?

- > Is using a racial insult still racist even if it isn't said against someone who is of that race? Can it have a negative effect on a bystander of that race? [1.1](#), [1.2](#), [7.3](#), [6.1](#), [2.1](#), [2.4](#)
- > How can you be sure that someone is actually heterosexual? [7.1](#), [4.5](#)
- > Is teasing someone about their sexuality sexual harassment? [2.4](#), [2.1](#)

*These are contentious questions used to explore deeply entrenched, violence-supportive attitudes. These questions conflict with our Key Understandings about violence but the discussion they spark enable Peer Educators to explore the Key Understandings in a specific context. These questions also give young people the opportunity to challenge each other's view about violence and the tools to think critically about the violence-supportive attitudes in our society.

8. Brainstorm: If “that's so gay” is not okay, what am I supposed to say? (5–10 minutes)

- > Explain to group that most of the time things like “that's so gay” don't have anything to do with sexual attraction – homework isn't gay, buses aren't gay, and getting grounded has got nothing to do with sexuality.
- > So, when people say “that's so gay” what do they mean to say? Brainstorm and write up ideas. Cautiously remind group that swearing is okay in the group norms. Examples might be: It's unfair, it's rude, it's stupid, I don't understand it, it doesn't make sense, it's a waste of time, I'm frustrated by it, it's unfortunate etc.
- > Using 'gay' as a synonym for 'bad' is homophobic because it connects the word 'gay', gay people and gay sexualities, to something negative. Encourage participants to think about what they're really saying when they say “that's so gay” and invite them to use the other words/terms on the board instead. Encourage them to challenge other people when they hear “That's so gay” to explain what they mean in a different way.

9. Handouts (10 minutes)

- > How to challenge homophobia handout
Hand out to class, discuss.
- > How to support a same-sex attracted or a questioning friend / How to support a friend who is coming out handout
Hand out to class, discuss.

Closing (5 minutes)

- > Congratulate the group for participating in this important discussion about helping to stop homophobia.
- > Group round: What's been something you have enjoyed or learnt about in this workshop?

For more information

Electronic copies of the 'Relationship Violence No Way' Program are available online at www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/youthhealth

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