

14. From Bystander to Helper

But what can I do?



Themes	Peace and human security, Violence
Level of complexity	Level 2
Age	7 – 13 years
Duration	60 minutes
Group size	4 – 24 children
Overview	Children tell stories about times when they have been victim, abuser, bystander, or helpers in human rights situations
Type of activity	Story telling, discussion
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To clarify that everyone meets violence in life in many ways • To emphasize the responsibility to respect and defend each other • To reflect on what it means to be a 'helper'.
Preparation	Optional: make copies of discussion guide for each group.
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chart paper and markers or blackboard and chalk • Optional: Discussion guide

Instructions

- Remind the children that violence and abuse, not only physical but also verbal and emotional, is a human rights violation. Ask for examples of different kinds of violence and abuse.
- Divide the children into small groups of three or four. Explain the activity, making sure the children understand each category clearly.
 - Each partner will talk about different observations of violence and abuse:
 - when you saw someone being hurt or treated unjustly;
 - when you participated in hurting someone else or treated them unjustly;
 - when you saw someone being hurt or treated unjustly and no-one helped them;
 - when you saw someone help a person who was being hurt or treated unjustly.

Ask them to give examples in each category, one at time. Make sure that no-one will be punished for speaking up.
 - You will have 15 minutes for this part of the activity. Begin by sitting quietly for a few moments and thinking about what you want to say.

Note: If the children can read, give each pair a piece of paper divided into four squares with four situations to help guide their discussions.
- Bring the children back into one group to discuss their observations. First, ask for some of the examples of people being hurt or abused, without distinguishing those observed and those in which children participated. List these as 'violations' on a chart such as the one below.
- Then ask for examples in the 'Helper' category.
- Finally, ask for examples in the 'Bystander' category. Ask, "What could someone have done in some of these situations to be a helper, not a bystander?" Record their responses on the chart.
 - Variation: Use the list of violence and abuse generated in Step 3 and ask how someone could have helped. Record their responses.



Debriefing and evaluation

1. Read aloud the list of suggested helpful actions listed in Step 5 of the activity. Discuss how people can become helpers to protect human rights, asking questions such as these:
 - a. Which of the suggested actions would be hard to do? Which ones would be easier?
 - b. Are there any actions on the list that you think you could take?
 - c. What stops people from becoming helpers?
 - d. If more people became helpers rather than bystanders, could the human rights situation really be improved?
2. Discuss how we can help each other, asking questions such as these:
 - a. What qualities and understanding does a person need to be a 'helper', i.e. take action for human rights?
 - b. What can we do to support people taking action for human rights?
 - c. How can we encourage people in our group to become 'helpers'?
3. Conclude by acknowledging that any abuse or violence towards children, including those children who commit violence against each other, is a human rights violation. These occur in every culture and every part of the world. Emphasize that learning about human rights also involves learning how to take action to protect each other's rights. We cannot end all violence and abuse, but we can help each other in our own communities.

Suggestions for follow-up

Activities such as 'WORDS THAT WOUND', P. 202, which addresses children's actual behaviour, help to relate these discussion to real life.

Ideas for action

If your group has developed a set of rules for their interactions, discuss how 'helper behaviour' can be part of those rules.

Tips for the facilitator

- Circulate among the groups to make sure that everyone understands the task, that they are taking each category in turn, and that everyone is getting an equal chance to speak.
- Protect children's privacy by maintaining the perspective of observed experience rather than personal experiences, except for the examples of participation in violence or abuse.
- This activity should only be done with children you have worked with previously. It is important to create a feeling of a 'safe space' in the group before you begin the activity.

Optional discussion guide

When you saw someone being hurt	When you participated in hurting someone else
When you saw someone being hurt and no-one helped them	When you saw someone help a person who was being hurt

Chart

Violation	What could be done?

