



Voices Activity

(25 minutes)

Purpose: To provide an opportunity for participants to hear students' statements about how they felt when they were targets of bullying. As statements are read aloud, participants better understand the cumulative impact of being a target of bullying.

Requirements:

Materials: *Voices Statements*: cut into strips; basket, box or large envelope

Note: Depending on the size of the group, not all participants will receive a strip with a statement to read aloud.

Directions:

- Before the training session, photocopy the *Voices Statements* and cut the statements into strips so that each strip of paper contains one quotation.
- Place the *Voices Statements* in a basket (box or envelope) and give the basket with all the statements to a participant who will be the first statement reader. Before the statements are read aloud, acknowledge to the group that they will be hearing some statements that may be hard to listen to and read aloud.
- Instruct participants to take a statement from the basket and read it aloud. Tell participants to keep the basket on their lap until after they have read their *Voices Statement*. Instruct participants to allow a few moments of silence after each statement is read before passing the basket to the next person. **NOTE:** If a participant draws a statement that he or she feels uncomfortable reading, allow the person to exchange the statement for a different one or to pass altogether.
- Continue passing the basket and reading statements aloud until all of the statements have been read.
- Ask participants to form pairs or triads with the person or people sitting nearest to them. Instruct the group to take about 5 minutes to share their responses to hearing the *Voices Statements*.
- Reconvene the whole group and lead a discussion using some or all of the discussion questions that follow.

Large Group Discussion Questions:

- How did you feel as you listened to the *Voices Statements*?
- Which statement(s) had the most impact on you? Why?
- Have you ever had an experience similar to one expressed by one of the statements read aloud? Does the experience continue to influence you today? If so, in what ways?
- Have you ever been called a hurtful name by someone who said, "I'm only kidding?" How did that response make you feel?
- What did you learn from this exercise?

VOICES STATEMENTS

- They called me a queer and dyke.
- They would say, “You look stupid. Why do you have that on? I hope you know you look dumb.”
- I don't really know why they call me names in the first place; I've never done anything to them.
- If I see you are making fun of somebody, I should probably say, “Don't make fun of people like that. Think about how it makes them feel.” But I don't because they might make fun of me now.
- I've always been kind of afraid to stand up, because I'm afraid that something will happen to me.
- They'll just come up to you and go like “You're a lesbian, aren't you?”
- The first week I was in school, I already got called a faggot 50 times.
- If someone is right next to your ear going “Faggot, faggot, faggot”, through the entire day, you just want to turn around and sock them.
- When all this stuff was going on, I couldn't pay attention to anything. I would just be sitting there doing math, and I'd keep on writing down, I hate this person, I hate this person, I hate the world, I hate my life.
- I felt that I needed to ditch school everyday or just like kill myself or something -- anything to get out of it. I just couldn't take it anymore.
- It makes me feel like I'm not supposed to be here, that I should be somewhere else and that I just don't belong here.
- This has happened to me a hundred times. I'm right in front of a teacher and something happens and they don't do anything about it.
- Teachers don't do anything. They say that you should ignore it and it's not their problem.
- A few years ago I reported it, and no one did anything about it. I just don't do it now.
- Teachers and staff don't see my being bullied for being a lesbian as a big deal. They see words such as “dyke” and “queer” as common teenager slang, and even use the terms themselves on occasion.
- Most teachers refer to students as “acting gay” when students do something stupid... so telling a teacher makes no sense because they don't care.
- I tried once a few years ago to report an incident, but all they said was “go back to class.”
- I have heard some of my teachers making inappropriate comments about being gay/bisexual and so I felt I could not approach them.
- I didn't report the harassment because I was afraid I would not be heard and the kids would find out. Then I'd be beat up again.
- I'm too afraid to say anything. Most of the time, it seems as though the school staff doesn't care. Worse yet, I'm afraid they might say something to my parents. They don't know that kids bother me this way in school.
- They assume that because of my sexual orientation that I know that I'm going to get harassed, so I can deal with it. Like I brought it on myself, or something.
- They told me that maybe if I acted more like a girl that I wouldn't get harassed so often.
- People accuse me of being gay as though it's the worst thing in the world, like being an ax murderer.