

Activity 2: Sharing what we really think

Notes for Educators and Community Leaders

Youth are influenced by what other youth do. Youth see other youth smoking, hear rumours about who is sexually active, and tell each other who drinks or was drunk. They hear inappropriate comments and jokes about girls' bodies or about people from other groups. What youth don't see and hear talked about is that most youth do not engage in these behaviours. Thus, more extreme behaviour gets attention while less visible but more healthy behaviour is overlooked.

As a result, if you ask most youth what they think most other youth are doing, you will find that they have extremely exaggerated ideas about the amount of sexual activity, bad relationships with parents or use of alcohol, cigarettes and other drugs among their peers. Along with this overestimation they will underestimate healthy behaviours such as caring about school or feeling uncomfortable about prejudicial remarks and bullying. These over- and underestimations are clearly misperceptions.

The social norms approach is a theory of behaviour that explains how we are influenced by misperceptions. Simply put, when youth think that other youth do more of something, they will be inclined to do more of it themselves, or at least measure themselves against those who do such things. And if youth think other youth don't object to problem behaviours, they will be less likely to try to change them. This leads to a question: what would happen if we helped youth tell each other the truth about themselves? Experience with this social norms approach has shown that providing accurate information about norms — through posters, group discussions and/or individual conversations — has a positive effect.

This exercise is designed to provide youth with information about the true norm (that is, what they really think) with respect to gender stereotyping, harassment and healthy equal relationships. It uses a confidential survey to give youth a chance to share what they really think about these issues, free of misperceptions and peer pressure, and then allows everyone to discuss how they really feel and what this means.

Youth take an anonymous survey (the "Snowball Survey") which asks them how they feel about certain issues and how they think other members of the class feel about these issues. They all use identical writing instruments so all the completed surveys look the same. The surveys are collected and redistributed so everyone has someone else's survey without knowing whose it was. The survey is called the Snowball Survey because youth crumple up their surveys and throw them around the room so everyone has someone else's survey. When crumpling up the surveys it's important to explain why we are doing this - it is a way of scrambling the surveys so that the class can discuss the results while ensuring that no one knows who took a particular survey. Between crumpling, throwing and retrieving the surveys, you need to tell each student to retrieve one. Sometimes one or two are missing because they end up under a table or somewhere hidden. We suggest you go on without them if they are lost. Then youth raise their hands according to what the survey says. For example, you may ask them to raise their hands if the person whose survey they took said it would be okay with them for boys or men to cry. Next, hands are raised according to what was recorded about what most other people in the class think – for instance, that boys and men should not cry. If things work out as expected, many youth will say it would be okay with them if a boy cried in public, but it would not be okay with other youth in the room. The exercise reveals that what youth think about other youth is incorrect. This can open the door to a lively discussion of what we all really feel about gender stereotyping, harassment and healthy equal relationships.

The level of safety that youth feel will determine their level of participation. It is imperative that ground rules be well established. Some suggested Ground rules appear at in the opening notes of this resource. Invite youth to visit www.whiteribbon.ca, Youth section, so they can post their comments and see what youth across Canada have to say about gender stereotyping and violence against women. We have provided a small button for youth. Please distribute these at the end of the exercise. We suggest that you distribute copies of the tip sheets for parents to your parent community and tip sheets for boys and tip sheets for girls to youth.

This activity was written by social norms and gender expert Dr. Alan Berkowitz. To learn more about this approach please visit www.alanberkoqitz.com

Healthy Living: Grade 5

Overall Expectations

- apply strategies to deal with threats to personal safety (e.g., in response to harassment) and to prevent injury (e.g., from physical assault);

Growth and Development

- identify strategies to deal positively with stress and pressures that result from relationships with family and friends;
- identify factors (e.g., trust, honesty, caring) that enhance healthy equal relationships with friends, family, and peers;

Healthy Living: Grade 6

Growth and Development

- apply a problem-solving/decision-making process to address issues related to friends, peers, and family relationships;

Healthy Living: Grade 7

Overall Expectations

- describe age-appropriate matters related to sexuality (e.g., the need to develop good interpersonal skills, such as the ability to communicate effectively with the opposite sex);
- explain how harassment relates to personal safety;

Healthy Living: Grade 8

Overall Expectations

- identify the physical, emotional, interpersonal, and spiritual aspects of healthy sexuality (e.g., respect for life, ethical questions in relationships, contraception);
- apply living skills (e.g., decision-making, problem-solving, and refusal skills) to respond to matters related to sexuality, drug use, and healthy eating habits.

You will need:

- One survey per student (be sure to select the appropriate survey — mixed-sex groups or male-only groups or female-only groups)
- One recording sheet to keep track of your responses
- Identical pencils/pens for all youth provided by you to ensure anonymity

Activity (30 minutes)

1. Recall ground rules for all classroom discussions. Remind youth that you are counting on them to enable each student to respond as an individual and also as a responsible member of a community who is owed respect, is not measured against a stereotype and who will not participate in stereotyping. Ask the group if anyone has anything they would like to share from their journal entry last week.

Last week's journal questions were:

1. Think about a time when you saw someone being treated badly because of their 'status'?
2. What could you have done to help the situation?
3. What can you do when you see it happening again?

2. Tell the class they will take a confidential survey to find out how they feel and what they think. Emphasize that the survey is completely anonymous, and no one will be able to tell what they wrote on their survey. Remind the class that you are counting on them to answer honestly. Hand out pens or pencils that are all the same.

Instructions for the survey:

1. Choose your version: mixed sex groups, male-only groups or female-only groups.
2. Have everyone take the survey — we suggest you give everyone 10 minutes. Discourage any comments or conversations.
3. Crumple the surveys. When everyone is done, ask them all to crumple up their surveys into “snowballs.”
4. Have a “snowball fight.” Instruct everyone to stand up and throw the snowballs. Each snowball should be thrown at least three times.
5. “Defrost” the snowballs. Ask everyone to defrost a snowball gently to prevent ripping it. Remind them not to say anything if they happen to get their own survey. (If for any reason someone calls out that they got their own survey, you should have another snowball fight. Explain that this is to ensure that all answers are anonymous.)
6. Present the survey perceptions. Look at the survey perceptions by asking youth to stand and display the perceptions and behaviours expressed by the person who took the survey they are holding. For example, the first question is, “How serious do you think most youth in this class are about their studies and schoolwork?” Ask youth to stand if the person marked “very serious” for how most other youth feel.
7. Present the true norm. Now look at the reality by asking youth to stand if the person answered “very serious” for question 2: How serious are you about your studies and homework? In most cases, only a few youth stand for the first question but about half might stand up for the second question.....
8. Discuss why misperceptions occur. A large discrepancy between the number standing for the first and second questions demonstrates that studying behaviour is misperceived. Ask the youth why they think studying behaviour is misperceived. Possible explanations include that it is often an invisible behaviour done at home, that goof-off behaviour is more visible and attracts more attention, and that it is more interesting to talk about goof-off behaviour in conversation. Mention that misperceptions can either overestimate or underestimate reality. In general, people tend to underestimate less visible, healthy behaviour and overestimate more visible, unhealthy behaviour.
9. Present and record the remaining survey results. Repeat steps 7, 8 and 9 for whatever questions you want to discuss by having everyone raise hands instead of standing. It could be tedious to go over the remaining questions but you are the best judge of that. Record your class results on the Recording sheet.

Wrap-Up (20 Minutes)

Some possible questions to conclude the activity:

1. What have we learned about what our group thinks?
2. What choices, opinions and thoughts get more attention? Why?
3. What choices, opinions and thoughts are hidden?
4. When we are in a group and we hear these opinions, what happens when we are silent?
5. What would happen if we spoke up and challenged this opinion?
6. What could you say to challenge an opinion?

This Week’s Journal Questions

1. What was interesting to you about your group's survey results?
2. What choices, opinions and thoughts get most of the attention? Why?
3. What could you do to challenge an opinion that hurts a person or group of people?

Follow Up Note to Facilitator

Do you want to celebrate the positive attitudes you've just explored with your class or youth group? Visit www.whiteribbon.ca with your recording sheet. Follow the prompts for the Campaign in a Box project. Here you will be able to input your questionnaire results and print off a colour poster with your class or group's specific information. Alternatively you can use a picture of your class/group and input the results on your own poster. We suggest that you post these posters where you regularly meet with youth so that they can see the positive attitudes towards healthy equal relationships that are under-represented. Consider announcing your results with a public media release using the press release template in Section 4 of Your White Ribbon Campaign.

Female-only Groups Snowball Survey

Do not put your name or any stray marks on this survey. This survey is optional and anonymous. If you choose to do this exercise, please use the pen or pencil you will be given to circle one response for each question. When you finish, fold the paper in half and wait for further instructions.

1. How serious do you think most youth in your grade are about their studies and homework?

a. not at all serious b. a little serious c. moderately serious d. very serious

2. How serious are you about your studies and homework?

a. not at all serious b. a little serious c. moderately serious d. very serious

3. Do you think most youth in your grade would say that:

"A girl should not make the first move with a guy."

a. agree a lot b. agree somewhat c. disagree somewhat d. disagree a lot

4. Do you personally agree that:

"A girl should not make the first move with a guy."

a. agree a lot b. agree somewhat c. disagree somewhat d. disagree a lot

5. Do you think most female youth in your grade would say that:

"You shouldn't show a guy that you like how smart you really are."

a. agree a lot b. agree somewhat c. disagree somewhat d. disagree a lot

6. Do you personally agree that:

"You shouldn't show a guy that you like how smart you really are."

a. agree a lot b. agree somewhat c. disagree somewhat d. disagree a lot

7. Do you think most female youth in your grade would agree that:

"It's better to watch guys playing sports than to play sports in front of a guy you like or are dating."

a. agree a lot b. agree somewhat c. disagree somewhat d. disagree a lot

8.. Do you personally agree that:

"It's better to watch guys playing sports than to play sports in front of a guy you like or are dating."

a. agree a lot b. agree somewhat c. disagree somewhat d. disagree a lot

9.. Do you think most female youth in your grade would agree that:

"When a guy is jealous or possessive, he is really showing how much he likes his girlfriend."

a. agree a lot b. agree somewhat c. disagree somewhat d. disagree a lot

10. Do you personally agree that:

"When a guy is jealous or possessive, he is really showing how much he likes his girlfriend."

a. agree a lot b. agree somewhat c. disagree somewhat d. disagree a lot

11. Do you think most female youth in your grade would agree that:

"A guy can hit a girl he is dating if he believes she is cheating on him."

a. agree a lot b. agree somewhat c. disagree somewhat d. disagree a lot

12. Do you personally agree that:

"A guy can hit a girl he is dating if he believes she is cheating on him."

a. agree a lot b. agree somewhat c. disagree somewhat d. disagree a lot

Female-only Groups Recording Sheet

1. How serious do you think most youth in your grade are about their studies and homework?
 not at all serious a little serious moderately serious very serious
2. How serious are you about your studies and homework?
 not at all serious a little serious moderately serious very serious
3. Do you think most female youth in your grade would say that:
"A girl should not make the first move with a guy."
 agree a lot agree somewhat disagree somewhat disagree a lot
4. Do you personally agree that:
"A girl should not make the first move with a guy."
 agree a lot agree somewhat disagree somewhat disagree a lot
5. Do you think most female youth in your grade would say that:
"You shouldn't show a guy that you like how smart you really are."
 agree a lot agree somewhat disagree somewhat disagree a lot
6. Do you personally agree that:
"You shouldn't show a guy that you like how smart you really are."
 agree a lot agree somewhat disagree somewhat disagree a lot
7. Do you think most female youth in your grade would agree that:
"It's better to watch guys playing sports than to play sports in front of a guy you like or are dating."
 agree a lot agree somewhat disagree somewhat disagree a lot
8. Do you personally agree that:
"It's better to watch guys playing sports than to play sports in front of a guy you like or are dating."
 agree a lot agree somewhat disagree somewhat disagree a lot
9. Do you think most female youth in your grade would agree that:
"When a guy is jealous or possessive, he is really showing how much he likes his girlfriend."
 agree a lot agree somewhat disagree somewhat disagree a lot
10. Do you personally agree that:
"When a guy is jealous or possessive, he is really showing how much he likes his girlfriend."
 agree a lot agree somewhat disagree somewhat disagree a lot
11. Do you think most female youth in your grade would agree that:
"A guy can hit a girl he is dating if he believes she is cheating on him."
 agree a lot agree somewhat disagree somewhat disagree a lot
12. Do you personally agree that:
"A guy can hit a girl he is dating if he believes she is cheating on him."
 agree a lot agree somewhat disagree somewhat disagree a lot

Male-only Groups Snowball Survey

Do not put your name or any stray marks on this survey. This survey is optional and anonymous. If you choose to do this exercise, please use the pen or pencil you will be given to circle one response for each question. When you finish, fold the paper in half and wait for further instructions.

1. How serious do you think most youth in your grade are about their studies and homework?
___ a. not at all serious ___ b. a little serious ___ c. moderately serious ___ d. very serious
2. How serious are you about your studies and homework?
___ a. not at all serious ___ b. a little serious ___ c. moderately serious ___ d. very serious
3. Do you think most male youth in your grade would say that:
"It's not okay for a boy or man to cry."
___ a. agree a lot ___ b. agree somewhat ___ c. disagree somewhat ___ d. disagree a lot
4. Do you personally agree that:
"It's not okay for a boy or man to cry."
___ a. agree a lot ___ b. agree somewhat ___ c. disagree somewhat ___ d. disagree a lot
5. Do you think most male youth in your grade would say that:
"If a girl you are dating won't kiss you, you can dump her."
___ a. agree a lot ___ b. agree somewhat ___ c. disagree somewhat ___ d. disagree a lot
6. Do you personally agree that:
"If a girl you are dating won't kiss you, you can dump her."
___ a. agree a lot ___ b. agree somewhat ___ c. disagree somewhat ___ d. disagree a lot
7. Do you think most male youth in your grade would say that :
"A man should make more money than his girlfriend or wife."
___ a. agree a lot ___ b. agree somewhat ___ c. disagree somewhat ___ d. disagree a lot
8. Do you personally agree that:
"A man should make more money than his girlfriend or wife."
___ a. agree a lot ___ b. agree somewhat ___ c. disagree somewhat ___ d. disagree a lot
9. Do you think most male youth in your grade would agree that:
"If a girl is dating a guy, she shouldn't be spending time alone with other guys."
___ a. agree a lot ___ b. agree somewhat ___ c. disagree somewhat ___ d. disagree a lot
10. Do you personally agree that:
"If a girl is dating a guy, she shouldn't be spending time alone with other guys."
___ a. agree a lot ___ b. agree somewhat ___ c. disagree somewhat ___ d. disagree a lot
11. Do you think most male youth in your grade would agree that:
"A guy can hit a girl he is dating if he believes she is cheating on him."
___ a. agree a lot ___ b. agree somewhat ___ c. disagree somewhat ___ d. disagree a lot
12. Do you personally agree that:
"A guy can hit a girl he is dating if he believes she is cheating on him."
___ a. agree a lot ___ b. agree somewhat ___ c. disagree somewhat ___ d. disagree a lot

Male-only Groups Recording Sheet

1. How serious do you think most youth in your grade are about their studies and homework?
 not at all serious a little serious moderately serious very serious
2. How serious are you about your studies and homework?
 not at all serious a little serious moderately serious very serious
3. Do you think most male youth in your grade would say that:
"It's not okay for a boy or man to cry."
 agree a lot agree somewhat disagree somewhat disagree a lot
4. Do you personally agree that:
"It's not okay for a boy or man to cry."
 agree a lot agree somewhat disagree somewhat disagree a lot
5. Do you think most male youth in your grade would say that:
"If a girl you are dating won't kiss you, you can dump her."
 agree a lot agree somewhat disagree somewhat disagree a lot
6. Do you personally agree that:
"If a girl you are dating won't kiss you, you can dump her."
 agree a lot agree somewhat disagree somewhat disagree a lot
7. Do you think most male youth in your grade would agree that:
"A man should make more money than his girlfriend or wife".
 agree a lot agree somewhat disagree somewhat disagree a lot
8. Do you personally agree that:
"A man should make more money than his girlfriend or wife".
 agree a lot agree somewhat disagree somewhat disagree a lot
9. Do you think most male youth in your grade would agree that:
"If a girl is dating a guy, she shouldn't be spending time alone with other guys."
 agree a lot agree somewhat disagree somewhat disagree a lot
10. Do you personally agree that:
"If a girl is dating a guy, she shouldn't be spending time alone with other guys."
 agree a lot agree somewhat disagree somewhat disagree a lot
11. Do you think most male youth in your grade would agree that:
"A guy can hit a girl he is dating if he believes she is cheating on him."
 agree a lot agree somewhat disagree somewhat disagree a lot
12. Do you personally agree that:
"A guy can hit a girl he is dating if he believes she is cheating on him."
 agree a lot agree somewhat disagree somewhat disagree a lot

Mixed-sex Groups Snowball Survey

Do not put your name or any stray marks on this survey. This survey is optional and anonymous. If you choose to do this exercise, please use the pen or pencil you will be given to circle one response for each question. When you finish, fold the paper in half and wait for further instructions.

FEMALE ___ MALE ___

1. How serious do you think most youth in this school are about their studies and homework?

___a. not at all serious ___b. a little serious ___c. moderately serious ___d. very serious

2. How serious are you about your studies and homework?

___a. not at all serious ___b. a little serious ___c. moderately serious ___d. very serious

3. Do you think most youth in this school would say that:

"It's not okay for a boy or man to cry."

___a. agree a lot ___b. agree somewhat ___c. disagree somewhat ___d. disagree a lot

4. Do you personally agree that:

"It's not okay for a boy or man to cry."

___a. agree a lot ___b. agree somewhat ___c. disagree somewhat ___d. disagree a lot

5. Do you think most youth in your grade would say that:

"A girl should not make the first move with a guy."

___a. agree a lot ___b. agree somewhat ___c. disagree somewhat ___d. disagree a lot

6. Do you personally agree that:

"A girl should not make the first move with a guy."

___a. agree a lot ___b. agree somewhat ___c. disagree somewhat ___d. disagree a lot

7. Do you think most youth in your grade would agree that:

"When a guy is jealous or possessive, he is really showing how much he likes his girlfriend."

___a. agree a lot ___b. agree somewhat ___c. disagree somewhat ___d. disagree a lot

8. Do you personally agree that:

"When a guy is jealous or possessive, he is really showing how much he likes his girlfriend."

___a. agree a lot ___b. agree somewhat ___c. disagree somewhat ___d. disagree a lot

9. Do you think most youth in your grade would say that ;

"A man should make more money than his girlfriend or wife."

___a. agree a lot ___b. agree somewhat ___c. disagree somewhat ___d. disagree a lot

10. Do you personally agree that:

"A man should make more money than his girlfriend or wife."

___a. agree a lot ___b. agree somewhat ___c. disagree somewhat ___d. disagree a lot

11. Do you think most youth in your grade would say that:

"A girl shouldn't show a guy that she is smart because he might begin not to like her."

___a. agree a lot ___b. agree somewhat ___c. disagree somewhat ___d. disagree a lot

12. Do you personally agree that:

"A girl shouldn't show a guy that she is smart because he might begin not to like her."

___a. agree a lot ___b. agree somewhat ___c. disagree somewhat ___d. disagree a lot

13. Do you think most youth in your grade would say that:

"A guy can hit a girl he is dating if he believes she is cheating on him."

___a. agree a lot ___b. agree somewhat ___c. disagree somewhat ___d. disagree a lot

14. Do you personally agree that:

"A guy can hit a girl he is dating if he believes she is cheating on him."

___a. agree a lot ___b. agree somewhat ___c. disagree somewhat ___d. disagree a lot

Mixed-sex Groups Recording Sheet

TOTAL NUMBER OF FEMALE TOTAL NUMBER OF MALE

1. How serious do you think most youth in this school are about their studies and homework?
 not at all serious a little serious moderately serious very serious
2. How serious are you about your studies and homework?
 not at all serious a little serious moderately serious very serious
3. Do you think most youth in this school would say that:
"It's not okay for a boy or man to cry."
 agree a lot agree somewhat disagree somewhat disagree a lot
4. Do you personally agree that:
"It's not okay for a boy or man to cry."
 agree a lot agree somewhat disagree somewhat disagree a lot
5. Do you think most youth in your grade would say that:
"A girl should not make the first move with a guy."
 agree a lot agree somewhat disagree somewhat disagree a lot
6. Do you personally agree that:
"A girl should not make the first move with a guy."
 agree a lot agree somewhat disagree somewhat disagree a lot
7. Do you think most youth in your grade would say that:
"When a guy is jealous or possessive, he is really showing how much he likes his girlfriend."
 agree a lot agree somewhat disagree somewhat disagree a lot
8. Do you personally agree that:
"When a guy is jealous or possessive, he is really showing how much he likes his girlfriend."
 agree a lot agree somewhat disagree somewhat disagree a lot
9. Do you think most youth in your grade would say that ;
"A man should make more money than his girlfriend or wife."
 agree a lot agree somewhat disagree somewhat disagree a lot
10. Do you personally agree that:
"A man should make more money than his girlfriend or wife."
 agree a lot agree somewhat disagree somewhat disagree a lot
11. Do you think most youth in your grade would say that:
"A girl shouldn't show a guy that she is smart because he might begin not to like her."
 agree a lot agree somewhat disagree somewhat disagree a lot
12. Do you personally agree that:
"A girl shouldn't show a guy that she is smart because he might begin not to like her."
 agree a lot agree somewhat disagree somewhat disagree a lot
13. Do you think most youth in your grade would agree that:
"A guy can hit a girl he is dating if he believes she is cheating on him."
 agree a lot agree somewhat disagree somewhat disagree a lot
14. Do you personally agree that:
"A guy can hit a girl he is dating if he believes she is cheating on him."
 agree a lot agree somewhat disagree somewhat disagree a lot