 Why violence?

Suggested duration: 60 minutes

This is one activity in a sequence designed to investigate the issue of violence and extremism with a focus on the skills required to objectively consider these issues within a context of positive relationships, identity, rights and responsibilities and intercultural understanding.

The activities seek to empower students with the skills to critically analyse situations, attitudes and behaviours that influence health, safety and wellbeing in different contexts, including countering violence and extremism.

Students will develop their skills to recognise and respond appropriately to situations, which may be harmful to self and others. The activities introduce a broad range of scenarios involving violence through which students:

* understand the difference between violence and violent extremism
* analyse their own attitudes towards violence
* learn to identify warning signs and safely engage in upstander behaviour or exercise self-control
* strengthen skills in asserting oneself respectfully.

In exploring violence and extremism, the following key questions have been considered:

* what is violence and extremism? What does violence and extremism look like?
* could our assumptions about violence and extremism be false?
* what motivates individuals to act violently?
* what are the consequences of violence and extremism?
* how can we change attitudes and behaviours in relation to violence and extremism?

The knowledge and understanding developed through responding to these key questions can be validly explored through a range of violence related scenarios. These scenarios aim to equip students with the skills they need to critically analyse potentially harmful situations and act safely and timely to promote health, safety and wellbeing.

The activity sequence includes five lessons.

1. Why violence?
2. Where do you stand on violence?
3. What do we need in life?
4. The boss of me
5. Stitch in time.

Activity focus

This activity looks at the different ideologies behind acts of violence, leading students to critically analyse whether ideologies lead people to act violently. Students will analyse some of the motivations for violence.

Course outcomes

1.1 Assess personal strengths and skills to achieve positive outcomes in a range of challenging and changing situations.

1.2 Critically evaluate services and resources to identify sources of reliable information and support.

1.3 Build positive thinking, self-belief and a sense of empowerment to take action to promote meaningful futures for self and others.

2.1 Show respect for the ideas, feelings and contributions of others in various contexts.

2.2 Challenge inequity, discrimination and harassment based on age, sex, gender, race, religion, disability and sexuality.

6.1 Assess, adapt and apply skills to develop and maintain respectful relationships and successfully participate in education, work and community contexts.

6.2 Demonstrate behaviours that model positive values, beliefs and attitudes and promote inclusion and equity for self and others.

What do we want students to know, understand or be able to do?

* Understand the ideologies that may exist behind different types of violence and radicalisation.
* Critically analyse the choice of violence in these situations and evaluate the efficacy of the strategies.
* Understand that ideologies, values or attitudes alone do not propel individuals or groups to act violently.
* Analyse own human mental, social and physical needs.
* Propose alternate ways of meeting needs and taking a stance.

Suggested content

| Learning context | Content |
| --- | --- |
| Independence  Focus: Building self-concepts and independence | Personal values and beliefs   * influences on values and beliefs, e.g. technology, social and cultural norms, media, family, relationships * influence of values, attitudes and beliefs on decisions and actions in various contexts   Self management   * responsibility for self and actions |
| Independence  Focus: Preparing for participation in community, education and employment | Building and participating in community   * respect and responsibility for others * inclusive language * inclusivity, equality and fairness |
| Mental health and wellbeing  Focus: Developing self-efficacy and mental fitness | Building resilience   * acknowledging controllable factors * empathising   Self-awareness and self-regulation   * emotional awareness and self-regulation * perspective taking   Positive wellbeing   * establishing meaning and purpose for life |
| Relationships  Focus: Promoting safety, equality and respect in relationships | Valuing and advocating for the rights of self and others   * changing perspectives and challenging stereotypes * respecting others * asserting a stance on a situation or decision * challenging discrimination based on race, sex, age, disability, religion, culture, gender and sexuality * upstander behaviour online and offline   Challenging and changing attitudes and beliefs about power, assault and relationship violence   * promoting equality and respect in relationships * preventing relationship violence and sexual assault * challenging and changing attitudes to violence, including domestic violence |

Resources for preparation

* Key words and definitions (1 copy per group printed and cut as separate cards)
* Key words and definitions – Teacher answer sheet
* Scenarios

Teaching notes

It is important for students to develop their understanding of violence and consider their own attitudes and the attitudes of others towards violence in our community. Childhood and adolescence is an important time for developing and maintaining respectful, non-violent relationships and learning to assert a non-violent stance.

This activity allows students to understand the different ideologies behind acts of violence, recognise the fact that ideologies do not lead usually lead people to violence, and to analyse the true motivation for violence.

Students will reflect on their own needs and discuss alternate choices to violence in meeting needs and taking a stance.

It is important that the teacher refrains from pushing their own values and beliefs, and maintains a value fair space where issues are respectfully discussed, in abstract terms, in an inclusive atmosphere. It is important for students to be informed of the content of the sessions or activities about violence to allow them to withdraw if they find these issues personally confronting. It is important to establish a safe and effective classroom environment, where ground rules are clearly communicated.

It is essential that students are encouraged to listen to and respect the values, beliefs and opinions of others. Discussions should be sensitive, objective and balanced and reflect the values of public education, school policies and Department objectives.

Teachers should ensure that opinions are expressed and evidence is presented impartially. There may be occasions when a statement of the teacher’s views may be necessary to help students formulate their own views or to answer a request from students when such a request is relevant to the discussion. In such situations, the teacher’s statement should be balanced and restrained and presented as one opinion to be considered critically along with any others.

Where teachers have concerns with the views being expressed by students they should speak with their Principal. The following news stories were used to inform the scenarios. Teachers should review the news stories before using with their classes, and choose the articles suitable for their own school context.

* Environmentalists turn to violence: <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/environmentalists-turn-to-violence/>, accessed 11 June 2015
* Teenagers radicalised by Islamic state: <http://www.mamamia.com.au/news/teenagers-radicalised-by-islamic-state/>, accessed 11 June 2015
* Why attacking a transgender woman is not just another pub brawl: <http://www.dailylife.com.au/news-and-views/dl-opinion/why-attacking-a-transgender-woman-is-not-just-another-pub-brawl-20150609-ghk8ll.html>, accessed 11 June 2015
* Fathers Day massacre remembered 30 years on: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2737489/Fathers-Day-massacre-remembered-30-years-on.html>, accessed 11 June 2015
* Parents teen committed suicide after suffering vicious bullying on Facebook demand greater protection online: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3043651/Parents-teen-committed-suicide-suffering-vicious-bullying-Facebook-demand-greater-protection-kids-online.html>, accessed 2 November 2015

Creating a safe and supportive learning environment

There are a number of strategies that can be used to create a supportive learning environment which enables students to feel safe to learn and ask questions. They include:

* making students aware at the beginning of Life Ready sessions that disclosing personal information that indicates they may be at risk of harm will be reported to the school principal in all instances. This includes personal disclosures related to instances of abuse, drug use, neglect or sexual activity under the legal age of consent.
* being aware that some parts of Life Ready can be confronting and sensitive for some students.
* enabling students to withdraw if they find issues personally confronting to protect them from making harmful disclosures. Equally, it is important to be prepared for issues that arise as a result of a student making a public disclosure in the classroom.

More information on creating a safe and supportive learning environment can be found on the [Life Ready website.](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/key-learning-areas/pdhpe/life-ready)

Evaluating resources before use

Preview and evaluate all strategies, resources and teaching and learning approaches in full before use with students to determine suitability for student learning needs, stage of development and local school context. Consider the age, maturity, cultural background, sexuality, gender, sex, health and other characteristics of students in your care. Apply professional judgements to all strategies, teaching and learning approaches and resources including audiovisual materials (e.g. videos, media clips and YouTube), interactive web-based content (e.g. games, quizzes and websites) and texts.

Use the [resource review flowchart](https://schoolsequella.det.nsw.edu.au/file/083acd3a-daca-4307-9afe-bc6c888f694a/1/final-resource-flowchart-html5.zip/index.html) to decide about the suitability of teaching and learning resources.

Materials should be reviewed in full and endorsed by the school principal before use in NSW government schools.

Communication with parents and caregivers

Some aspects of Life Ready may be viewed as sensitive or controversial, such as learning about abuse, child protection, drugs, respectful relationships, sexual health, sexuality and violence. Inform parents and carers, prior to the occasion, of the specific details of the Life Ready program, so that parents and caregivers have time to exercise their rights of withdrawing their child from a particular session. In this regard, a parents or caregiver’s wish must be respected.

Establishing how parents and caregivers will be informed about programs and involved in consultation is a school-based decision. Where parents and caregivers indicate they wish to withdraw their child from a program it is useful to negotiate which parts of the Life Ready program they are concerned about. A sample information letter is available on the [Life Ready website](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/key-learning-areas/pdhpe/life-ready).

Learning experiences

Activity one – Categorising types of violence (10 minutes)

* Students work in small groups with a set of key words and definitions cards.
  + Groups work together to match the keywords to the definitions.
* Group discusses the matching of the definitions to the key words, where necessary providing examples to illustrate terms.
* Each group is provided with a copy of the scenarios.
  + Invite a student volunteer in each group to read out one of the scenarios.
  + In their groups, students discuss which categories of violence the scenario fits.
  + Repeat until all seven scenarios have been matched.
* Group discusses how they have matched the keywords to definitions.
* Clarify the final answers to ensure students understand the terms.

Activity two – Violence or violent extremism? (10 minutes)

* Students work in small groups to sort scenarios into two piles – acts of violence or violent extremism.
* Students discuss:
  + is this an act of violence or violent extremism?
  + how do the acts of extremism differ from those of violence?
  + how would you define violent extremism?

Activity three – #NotInMyName (10 minutes)

* Introduce to students one example of people standing up against violence that is carried out for ideological reasons. The video provided is one example that could be used. Teachers should assess the suitability of the example used, based on the needs and context of their student group.

Example 1:

#NotInMyName - Young British Muslims are showing their solidarity against ISIS and their actions. This video by Active Change Foundation shows how a simple message can be shared to show how ISIS is misrepresenting Islam. https://youtu.be/wfYanI-zJes

More information about the #NotInMyName movement can be found in the following article <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/09/20/notinmyname-british-muslims_n_5851500.html>

Example 2

Palestinian comedians take on life in Gaza – Article about how comedy is used to address social issues and political problems in the besieged Gaza Strip.

[http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/02/palestinian-comedians-take-life-gaza- 20142231433554315.html](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/02/palestinian-comedians-take-life-gaza-%2020142231433554315.html)

* In small groups, students discuss:
  + what might lead someone to use violence against another? What is the aim or intent of the violence in this situation? Is violence the only answer?
  + how do these behaviours impact on the rights, safety and wellbeing of others locally and globally?
  + is the violence effective in meeting the aims? What are the other ways to meet these aims?
  + what were some reasons behind these individuals and community standing up against the violence?
  + what are some positive and negative influences of technology and media on our personal identity? In what way has technology and media, including social media, influenced our ability to take a stance and express our opinions publicly?
  + propose other ways to take a stance without intruding on the rights or safety of others.

Activity four – What do we need in life? (10 minutes)

This activity requires students to have completed the activity What do we need in life?

* Students either brainstorm the human needs they had identified in the What do we need in life? activity, or take a moment to familiarise themselves with the needs they wrote on the pyramid worksheet in that activity:
* Human needs:
  + physiological needs
  + safety needs
  + belonging/Love
  + esteem
  + cognitive needs
  + aesthetic needs
  + self-actualisation
  + transcendence

Activity five – What do they personally hope to gain? (15 minutes)

* Each group chooses one scenario for the remaining activity.
* Groups’ use the needs identified in the activity What do we need in life? to compare to the scenario.
* Students analyse what human needs the individuals or groups in the scenario were personally lacking and hoping to gain. Justify with discussion points to support the argument. The following key questions will facilitate discussion and justification:
  + what is the issue that the individual/group in the scenario wants others to be aware of?
  + the desire to satisfy human needs can be a motivating factor in one’s choice of action. Which needs are the individuals or groups in the scenario lacking and hoping to satisfy?
  + which do you think is the strongest motivating factor leading to their choice of violence – the desire to satisfy one of their human needs, or to have their message heard?
* Groups propose non-violent ways of satisfying these needs and achieving the ideological aims without intruding on the rights or safety of others:
  + is the violence effective in meeting the aims?
  + what possible non-violent ways could the group achieve the ideological aims without intruding on the rights or safety of others?

Activity six – Respecting the values and beliefs of others (10 minutes)

* Groups present to the whole group their analysis and their proposed non-violent approaches to satisfy human needs and individual/group’s ideological aims.

Keywords and definitions – Teacher answer sheet

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Term | Definition |
| Ideological violence | Violence in the name of political, racial/cultural, religious causes. |
| Gender based violence | Violence directed against people on the basis of their sex. |
| Gang related violence | Violence committed as part of asserting power and belonging to a group of organised criminals. |
| Issue based violence | Violence enacted in the desire to push certain causes, such as animal liberation, environmentalism. |
| Separatist violence | Violent struggles in seeking independence based on race, culture or ethnic background. |
| Radicalisation | Change of thought, ideals and behaviour to significantly differ from most of society. |
| Violent extremism | The umbrella term used to denote violence, which is used to achieve goals on behalf of a group or cause. |

Keywords and definitions – Student cards for printing

Ideological violence

Gender based violence

Gang related violence

Issue based violence

Separatist violence

Radicalisation

Violent extremism

Violence in the name of political, racial/cultural, religious causes.

Violence directed against people on the basis of their sex.

Violence committed as part of asserting power and belonging to a group of organised criminals.

Violence enacted in the desire to push certain causes, such as animal liberation, environmentalism.

Violent struggles in seeking independence based on race, culture or ethnic background.

Change of thought, ideals and behaviour to significantly differ from most of society.

The umbrella term used to denote violence, which is used to achieve goals on behalf of a group or cause.

Scenarios with links to online articles

Scenario 1: A campaigner torches 4 wheel drives as a protest to their perceived damage to the planet.

<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/environmentalists-turn-to-violence/>

Scenario 2: A teenager is recruited online to join a war overseas.

<http://www.mamamia.com.au/news/teenagers-radicalised-by-islamic-state/>

Scenario 3: A group seeks independence from a country based on their different culture and ethnicity.

<http://www.britannica.com/topic/ETA>

Scenario 4: 5 men bash a transgender woman outside a pub.

<http://www.dailylife.com.au/news-and-views/dl-opinion/why-attacking-a-transgender-woman-is-not-just-another-pub-brawl-20150609-ghk8ll.html>

Scenario 5: A shootout between rival clubs leaves seven dead, including an innocent girl.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2737489/Fathers-Day-massacre-remembered-30-years-on.html>

Scenario 6: A security guard is shot in an attempted armed robbery.

<http://www.news.com.au/national/security-guard-dies-after-being-shot-in-sydney-cbd-armed-robbery/story-e6frfkvr-1225876333631>

Scenario 7: A teenager is abused online.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3043651/Parents-teen-committed-suicide-suffering-vicious-bullying-Facebook-demand-greater-protection-kids-online.html>

Teacher notes – Violence and extremism

Violence has been defined by the World Health Organization as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation”.[[1]](#footnote-1)

For the purpose of the Life Ready course and the following activities, violence includes domestic and family violence, relationship violence, assault, sexual assault, rape, underage or forced marriage, trafficking or coercion, harmful traditional or cultural practices including female genital mutilation or honour killings. Violent extremism is using violence to achieve goals on behalf of a group. Life Ready activities are not designed to explore the issues around state sanctioned violence, war, the use of the death penalty or violence as a sport. These examples of violence are outside the scope of the Life Ready course.

It is important for students to learn about violence and consider their own attitudes and the attitudes of others towards violence in our community. Childhood and adolescence is an important time for developing and maintaining respectful, non-violent relationships and learning to assert a non- violent stance.

In Australia only a very small proportion of the population supports the use of violence to try to achieve ideological, religious or political goals.[[2]](#footnote-2) Combatting violence is the responsibility of the whole community and is most effective as part of a whole school approach. The [Australian Government Living Safe Together website and toolkit](http://www.livingsafetogether.gov.au/informationadvice/Pages/what-is-radicalisation/what-is-radicalisation.aspx) provides information for schools to assist in building understanding of extremism and the radicalisation process and how to respond if they are concerned about a student or member of the community.

The development of a school ethos and culture that models respectful practices and is consistent in dealing with incidents of violence is as important a teaching tool as the formal curriculum.

Key messages

Domestic and family violence is a gendered crime.

* Females make up the majority of victims and males the majority of offenders.
* Although the research shows that males are the main perpetrators of violence against both men and women, most men and boys are not abusive in their relationships.
* Some men’s violence may give all men a bad name.
* Males can play a key role in helping stop violence, particularly against women.

Violence is a choice

* The use of violence is a choice: those who use violence choose where and when they do the violence; and, how they use the violence.
* Violence as a choice does not necessarily mean a considered choice. It should be noted that some individuals may react violently in specific situations, such as when their life is threatened or they act in self-defence.
* In some situations, an individual’s response may be affected by poor impulse control resulting from experiences of abuse or trauma or as a result of mental illness, clinical behaviour disorders, health conditions or disability. The teaching and learning activities provided do not seek to judge these actions.
* The activities aim to address violence broadly without specific reference to individual cases or specialised instances of violence, where an individual requires specialised counselling and support.

Violence can be learned and unlearned

* Research shows that violence, particularly violence against women is the product of learned attitudes and norms, and social inequalities.
* Just as violence-supportive attitudes can be learned, they can be unlearned.
* Communities and governments can change the social conditions that feed violence, replacing them with social conditions that encourage respect and non-violence.

There is no simple profile of a violent offender or extremist

* People who demonstrate violent behaviours, engage in acts of violent extremism or join violent extremist groups come from all kind of backgrounds and have various motivations.
* Teachers should avoid discussions that promote stereotypical views or exclusion of particular individuals or groups in society.

Education about violence, extremism and radicalisation is the responsibility of the community

* All forms of violence and extremism use fear and intimidation to change a situation rather than through respectful and peaceful means.
* It is our community and our responsibility.
* Australia’s diversity has given rise to a rich culture with a strong commitment to political and personal freedoms, respect for human rights and the rule of law.
* Regardless of their background or motivation, individuals who are prepared to commit or support violence against individuals or the community threaten our shared values.
* Community initiatives designed to address factors that can lead to violence and extremism and help at- risk individuals, can play an important part in strengthening our communities.

Additional resources

Australian Government, Living Safe Together Toolkit <https://www.livingsafetogether.gov.au/informationadvice/Pages/what-is-radicalisation/what-is-radicalisation.aspx>

Domestic Violence NSW <http://www.domesticviolence.nsw.gov.au>

White Ribbon – Australia’s campaign to stop violence against women <http://www.whiteribbon.org.au/schools>

Building Respectful Relationships: Stepping Out Against Gender Based Violence (Vic DoE) <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/Pages/respectrel.aspx>

Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria <http://www.dvrcv.org.au/>

1. World Health Organisation, Global campaign for violence prevention; last viewed 15 Feb 2016 <http://www.who.int/violenceprevention/approach/definition/en/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Australian Government, <https://www.livingsafetogether.gov.au/informationadvice/Pages/what-is-radicalisation/what-is-radicalisation.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)