

Students will learn about the principal of diffusion of responsibility and techniques that can help them if they are ever a victim of violence

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Title – Do Something about... School Violence Unit

Day 7: Responsibility

By – Do Something, Inc. / www.dosomething.org

Primary Subject – Social Studies

Secondary Subjects – Other

Grade Level – 9-12

Do Something about...
School Violence
10-Day Unit

The following lesson is the seventh lesson of a 10-day School Violence Unit from Do Something, Inc. Other lessons in this unit are as follows:

Day 1: Bullying

Students will be introduced to the unit and learn the definition of bullying

Day 2: What's life like in my shoes?

Students will learn about bullying in the news and take on the perspective of someone being bullied.

Day 3: Mean Girls

Students will explore the differences and similarities of female and male violence.

Day 4: School Zones

Students will talk about safety in their own school.

Day 5: Groupthink

Students will learn about gangs and the theory of groupthink.

Day 6: Stand Up!

Students will learn about diffusion of responsibility and discuss how they should play a role in protecting others.

Day 7: Responsibility (See the lesson below)

Students will learn about the principal of diffusion of responsibility and techniques that can help them if they are ever a victim of violence.

Day 8: Zero Tolerance

Students will investigate zero tolerance laws and learn about the difficulties schools face when deciding how to handle school violence.

Day 9: Still I Rise

Students will learn about how to find inner strength and cope with bullying.

Day 10: Bully Pulpit

Students will launch an anti-bullying campaign in their school.

More student resources for this cause are at:
www.dosomething.org/causes/school_violence

For more Service-Learning Curricula check out:
www.dosomething.org/oldpeople

Day 7: Responsibility

Goal:

Students will learn about the principal of diffusion of responsibility and techniques that can help them if they are ever a victim of violence.

Vocabulary:

- Bystander Apathy
- Diffusion of Responsibility

Process:

1. Describe the following scenario to students and discuss. A friend of yours is standing outside a classroom and making fun of another student. He is mocking him endlessly for the way he looks, and you can tell the teasing is starting to get to the other boy. You are standing next to your friend while the teasing is going on, but say nothing. Are you guilty of bullying as well?
2. Have students break into discussion groups about the culpability and responsibility of someone who is a bystander to bullying. What is your responsibility to stop bullying in your school?
3. Tell students about the psychological theory of **bystander apathy**. Present one of the most famous examples of this principle by telling them the story of Kitty Genovese, a 19 year old woman who was murdered in 1964 in New York one evening. Her screams were heard, and she was watched by 38 neighbors as she was beaten to death. The attack lasted half an hour. There was plenty of time to do something such as intervene or alert the police. However, Kitty's neighbors did nothing but watch. Explain to students that in large groups, responsibility to take action becomes diffused amongst the people, each one assuming the next will take responsibility. Bystander Apathy (willingness of bystanders to not get involved) occurs in groups and the larger the group the greater the apathy. People think that somebody else who is more qualified or who has a better understanding of the situation will help. The result is inaction.
4. Give each group one of the scenarios from Day 1. Have them imagine they are witnessing these events in their own school. Then have them brainstorm different ways that they could stand up to the bullies. Discuss both direct and indirect ways to confront bullies. Direct ways might include saying something to the bully or a teacher. Indirect measures might be talking to the student being bullied later and telling them that you are on "their side", not attending a party that another has been excluded from, writing an article for the school newspaper against bullying, or starting a support group for to help those that have been bullied.

5. Have students share their ideas and then choose a few of these options to perform for the class. The other students should watch and then reflect from both the perspective of the bully and the person being bullied about how this action would affect these individuals.
6. Finally, discuss how students can beat bystander apathy if they, themselves, are the victim of violence (in school or out of school). Following these directions can help to diffuse bystander apathy
 - Be specific: Rather than yell help, call out get the principal, or call 911. Some experts will say to yell “fire” because people are likely to come and look to see what is going on and the presence of another individual may disrupt the attack.
 - Be descriptive: If you can, describe the person who is committing the attack and call them by name.
 - Let them know: Yell out “no one has called 911 yet” because sometimes people do not help out because they think others have acted already.

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