

Lesson: "Voices From Within" Lesson
From: Department of Probation
Duration: 40-50 Min
Date:

"Voices From Within" GUN VIOLENCE FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

Purpose: To analyze the impact and attendant consequences of gun violence, and to increase awareness of the circumstances that lead individuals to carry/use firearms as a way of managing conflict. This lesson aims to dissuade young adults/adolescents from using guns violence to manage conflict through the meaningful reflection and discussion of the "Voices from Within" video.

Overview: Students/probation clients will watch a short film, "Voices from Within" and then discuss the implications/impact of gun violence within their communities and on themselves. In the video, prisoners discuss violent crimes they committed, their subsequent deep feelings of sorrow and regret, and send a powerful message to the viewers about the negative consequences of carrying and using guns. The film is very emotional and educators/facilitators are encouraged to use discretion when showing this video to their students or probation clients.

Learning Target: Students/probation clients will analyze the impact of gun violence on individuals, families and communities and will question the advisability of using guns to resolve conflict and/or carrying guns for "protection." Ideally, participants would be able to articulate one action or behavior they will undertake to help curb the use of firearms in conflict resolution or deter someone from carrying a gun.

Learning Environment: This video can be watched in small groups (ideally 6-8 youth) and youth should have access to counselors or appropriate services if needed. The video can also be watched individually with a probation client. The Probation Officer should address the difficult/emotional parts of the video before showing it to the group of clients or an individual client. Facilitators will need to create a safe environment for the participants so that "unpopular" views, such as "this won't happen to me/this is not about me/I have no reaction to this," can emerge. These views are very important to address when watching and debriefing this video.

Materials:

"Voices From Within" video

Talking piece like a foam ball or other easily "throwable" object that is used to "enforce" the "one mic" talking process

Study guide worksheet

Paper and pencils/pens

Flip chart and markers

LESSON PLAN

Video Disclaimer/ Video Preparation (3-5 minutes)

Say: We are going to watch a video about gun violence. The men in the video have committed murder and are now serving very long prison sentences. They are going to talk about how they feel now about what they did in the past and how it has affected their lives. The video is very emotional and if it becomes too much for any of you at any point, please let one of us in the room (one of the group facilitators) know. It is very important that you feel comfortable and safe in this room discussing the video and the issues it raises so we are going to spend a few minutes setting up some discussion norms.

Lead discussion on norms with Newsprint. Include things like “one mic,” no judgment, etc, from the group and the facilitators and introduce the concept of the talking piece.

Warm-up/Connection (8 minutes)

Directions: *The room should be set up in a circle for the warm up and discussion. Questions should be answered in a “go-around” style. Each participant—including facilitators—should answer the questions sequentially.*

1. **Say one word that comes to mind when you hear the word “protection”**
2. **Say one word that comes to mind when you hear the phrase “gun violence.”**

Facilitator(s) should note, without discussion, any glaring omissions of words for each of the questions.

Watch Video (6 minutes)

Please be mindful that some students/probation clients may have strong emotional reactions to the video. You should have previewed the video so that you can focus on the youth’s reactions as they are watching the video.

Discussion of Video/Study Guide Worksheet (30 minutes)

Directions: *Facilitate discussion among students (or probation clients) using the following questions (please use discretion). Students/probation clients may answer the questions orally or in writing.*

1. What is your reaction to the video? How did the video make you feel? You can use one word or phrase (Again, have everyone answer this question sequentially so that you can tell the range of reactions in the room).
 - FACILITATORS – It is critical that ALL responses that do not attack or demean others in the group be accepted. Pay close attention to those youth who say they had no reaction or give off a “this is stupid” attitude. Youth who say they have no reaction should not be attacked for stating that belief but it is critical that the facilitators (or other appropriate adult) have a follow up individual conversation with them. Those youth may be too guarded and/or threatened by the video.
2. What line/statement from the video made the most impact on you?

Potential Follow-up Questions:

- One of the prisoners in the video asked, “Do you want to be the bad thing that happens?”
- What did he mean by that?
- 3. What is the message that you took from the video? (At this point, the questions should be answered as the talking object is passed around)
- 4. Do you think this video could positively influence other young adults/adolescents to think twice before using gun violence to settle disputes?
 - FACILITATORS:
 - First list the reasons that the video would not have the effect of making young adults/adolescents think twice.
 - Then follow up with the ways in which the video could positively influence young adults/adolescents.
 - The rationale for this is that if the two parts are not dealt with independently, one runs the risk of the first answer, if negative, would steer the conversation and discussion toward the reasons the video would not positively impact young adults/adolescents. While that’s an important piece of the feedback, we also want to get at ways in which it would positively impact behavior.
- 5. Why do you think young adults/adolescents sometimes start carrying guns? Using guns?
 - What are the risks involved? What are the consequences?
 - FACILITATORS, pay attention to risks/consequences not being listed so that you can prompt – e.g. accidental shootings (of self or others), and picking up/using the gun instinctively without thinking.
 - Of particular use is the movie theater shooting, as it is an example of someone who “was never going to use the gun he was carrying” but ended up severely injuring people and killing one of them.
- 6. Why do you think young adults/adolescents sometimes turn to violence? What are the causes?
- 7. What can be done to prevent gun violence/carrying guns?
 - What are your ideas for spreading this message to other young adults/adolescents in your community?
- 8. What is your reaction to the fact that they are spending the rest of their lives in prison?
 - Who do you think are the people who are impacted by their incarceration?
 - In what way(s)?
 - Facilitators should guide the conversation toward the losses/consequences that one would suffer by engaging in gun violence.
- 9. Who are the people in your life who would be impacted if you were incarcerated for the rest of your life?
 - If youth bring up that they’ve been incarcerated at some point, then address it by referencing “when you were locked up, who was impacted?” And then follow up with exploring the impact of lifetime incarceration.
- 10. Do you think there’s too much gun violence around you? Give an example

THE FOLLOWING QUESTION(S) SHOULD ONLY BE ASKED IF THE PARTICIPANTS HAVE AN ALREADY ESTABLISHED CLOSE RELATIONSHIP OR THERE IS OTHERWISE A LOT OF SAFETY/COMFORT IN THE ROOM TO BE ABLE TO GO TO THE MORE PERSONAL ASPECTS OF THE VIDEO.

11. Do you know someone who has been shot?
 - What was your reaction when that person got shot? How did you deal with it?
 - If feelings of revenge come up, explore the negatives of revenge, but allow for the participants to discuss the need “to do something” that often triggers revenge. Good feeling/bad way of executing it.
12. How do you think the victims of these men’s actions would react if they saw this video?

Conclusion (10 minutes)

Directions: Each youth should end the session by providing one suggestion for preventing someone to pick up a gun or use gun violence to manage conflict.

- FACILITATORS should write down the answers to the last questions on a flip chart.

- How can we summarize a positive message from today’s discussion?
 - Have everyone say something using the talking piece
- What are the challenges of getting this message out?
 - Give one idea/suggestion on how to overcome these challenges
 - Any other ways we can use the video in a positive way?
- What will you do after today to help prevent gun violence/people carrying guns?
 - One suggestion for you to spread this message to other young adults/adolescents in your community or a personal action?
 - FACILITATORS – everyone is to answer this question and facilitators should allow for the answer of “I don’t know” to be given, and for the person saying “I don’t know” ask the group to offer a suggestion for that person. Then ask “is this something you can do?” to try to get a commitment out of that person.
 - If the youth say “there’s nothing I can really do” (intimation that this is “too big of an issue for me to make a difference” make sure to stress that they should not underestimate the power of influence they probably have, especially on loved ones.
 - Another option for this question is to create small groups that can come up with commitments they share, which may be less “threatening” to the participants.

Facilitators – thank the participants for their honest dialogue and commend them for what they are going to do TO SAVE LIVES.