



THINK: Violence in the news

16 DAYS OF
ACTIVISM



Learning aims

- To think about the way that violence against women and girls is represented in the news.
- To create a positive news story about a loving and respectful relationship.

Preparation and Materials

- Collect old newspapers and magazines. Have a look through them and pick out some stories about violence against women and girls. Make copies of a news story to hand out to participants.
- Copies of handouts:
 - Myth and reality cards (these can be found in the activity – IDENTIFY: Global myths on violence).

THINK:

Some of the stories about violence against women and girls in the news may prompt participants to think about things that have happened or are happening to them. Some participants may be affected by the content of this session. It may make them think about violence that they have experienced or witnessed. Ensure that everybody leaves the activity knowing where to access helplines, support services or relevant websites. Identify any issues or disclosures that need to be followed up and act upon this information immediately. Follow the local child protection procedure and ensure you create a safe and supportive environment.

KNOW:

Children and young people receive messages in the news that glamorize or normalize violence. Try to spend some time looking at the way the media represents violence against women and girls as preparation for this session. Check news, magazines, television, movies, as well as blogs and comments on news articles.

Provide a safe space to challenge these messages and look beyond the headlines. Cultural or religious reasons can be used to justify, excuse, minimize or silence violence against girls and women around the world. This results in violence being normalized and accepted as an everyday occurrence. This can lead to women being blamed for violence they experience, for example because they are considered to be acting or dressing inappropriately. A woman or girl is never responsible for the violence and abuse that she experiences – there is no excuse for abuse.

INVOLVE YOUNG MEN:

Where do young men receive messages about masculinity? Ask young men to think about this and to start to critically assess the messages that they receive. This is a long-term process and you will not be able to change their opinions immediately but you can examine how men are portrayed in the news and what this says about masculinity. Is this an accurate and fair portrayal? Who writes the news? How do young men want to be talked about? Also encourage young men to empathize with women and girls in the news.

TAKING IT FURTHER:

Organize a workshop with local media or write a letter to discuss the representation of women. Think of recommendations for how the media should represent violence against girls and young women.



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1. Prepare – Safe session

Create a safe and supportive environment (refer to the leader's curriculum handbook). Remind the group of the code of conduct and make sure it is stuck on the wall. Remind them who they can talk to about their own experiences of violence. Show them the displayed helpline numbers, support service contacts or websites. Explain the limits to confidentiality.

Explain the learning aims and what the session will be focusing on.

Give them the opportunity to take time out and leave the session. Check in time – ask participants to talk about their mood and how their day has been.



2. Violence in the news: To identify how relationships are represented in the media

Begin by holding up a news story that you have found that talks about violence against girls and young women; read this out to the group and point out the different messages that it gives about violence against women and girls. Hand out the copies that you made of the news stories and ask participants to discuss them in the small groups. Ask the groups to feed back on the news story. Record any messages that they have identified, ask them if they think that these messages are true. Do they justify violence? Do they recreate myths about violence? The leader needs to unpack some of the myths about violence.

Write the key discussion points on the flip chart or board: What form of violence is this? What messages does the story say about violence against girls and young women? Discuss how the media represents women and men and girls and boys. Link the conversations back to any group work that you have done on gender stereotypes. Are women portrayed as weak victims or are they blamed for the violence? Are men portrayed as strong? Are there any voices of girls in the stories? Does the article mention the existence of any laws? Is there an indication as to whether these have been implemented?



3. Positive news: To identify characteristics of a respectful relationship

If you can, find a news story about a respectful relationship. Alternatively ask the group to think about a respectful relationship that they know. Get participants to consider what makes that relationship respectful. List these positive messages on a chalk board or on a large piece of paper. Ask participants to work in small groups to create a one minute positive news story or a mime that tells about a loving and respectful relationship. Take time for each group to present their positive news story.

Give young people opportunities to think about their own sexuality and gender and the sort of relationships that they would like in the future. Encourage them to challenge the ideas of what is considered "nice" in a relationship, as there may be normalized or romanticized concepts of masculinity, femininity, and control and power issues.

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4. Close the session

What have participants learned from this activity and how will this learning affect their lives now and in the future? Encourage young people to keep an eye on the news and make notes or collect any stories about violence against women and girls.

Remind participants who they can talk to about their own experiences of violence. Hand out leaflets with local support services numbers on it. Also remember to follow up any concerns. Follow the child protection policy and procedure.

Find out how the group is feeling following the session. Give the group the opportunity to talk to you at the end of the session.

