

High School: Violence (Multi-Grade Pilot Unit)



Attention Educator: The lessons in the Violence Unit are grade level pilot lessons for 9th -12th grade students. We need your professional feedback to determine the appropriate grade-level for each lesson. Please send feedback and any suggestions you may have to kelly@thriveway.com. We appreciate your assistance, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Lesson 2 – Knowing About Violence & Ending the Cycle



Lesson Time:

30 Minutes

Materials Provided:

- Slideshow: Types of Violence & Potential Solutions [Download](#)

Materials Needed:

- Projector with Video/Audio Capability
- Paper and writing utensil (one per student)

Essential Question:
How can we reduce the prevalence of community violence?

Objectives:

Students will be able to....

- Better understand the varying types of youth violence.
- Recognize that gang violence and neighborhood/family violence have a significant and traumatic impact.
- Identify preventative factors that will help reduce youth violence.

Did You Know:

- Youth violence is a significant public health problem that affects thousands of young people each day, and in turn, their families, schools, and communities.
- Studies have shown that children who are exposed to violence are more likely to suffer from anxiety, depression, attachment problems, aggressive behavior, and conduct problems.
- Experiences of violence can also cause academic and cognitive problems and lead to involvement in the juvenile justice system.

Educator Tip:

As you teach this lesson be sure to talk about the seriousness of this topic and to let each one know that they can speak to you or a counselor if they have been impacted by gang and neighborhood/family violence personally. Victims of violence may experience feelings of helplessness, frustration, and anger, and may often fear further damage. Talk to students about reporting any suspicious behavior they notice at school or within their community.

Since this lesson talks about gangs and neighborhood/family violence, you may notice that some students respond by sitting quietly or becoming emotional. Be mindful of those students. Remember, this could be a sign that they may need to speak with a counselor after the lesson. Early intervention can have a lasting impact.



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Lesson Introduction: (1 minute)

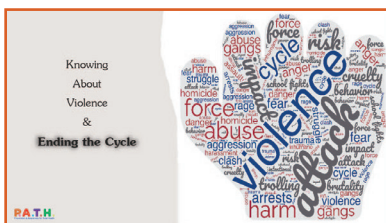
Violence has become so common in the U.S. today that many families and communities have had to learn how to live in a violent world and how to prevent more violence from occurring. Today, we will look at the various types of abuse, statistics on gang and neighborhood violence, and then brainstorm ideas for preventing this type of violence. During today's lesson, think of appropriate ways to handle yourself and help others in situations that might arise in our school or community.

Activity 1: "Types of Violence & Potential Solutions" Slideshow (13 minutes)

(Facilitator begins slideshow.)

Did you know that children as young as preschoolers can show violent behavior?^[1] What does violent behavior look like? (Allow for discussion.) Children show their anger in many different ways, but problem behavior would be that which harms the people around them. According to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, children may have tantrums, be physically aggressive toward others, make threats or attempts to hurt others (including thoughts of wanting to kill others), use weapons, be involved in fights, show cruelty toward animals, and cause intentional destruction of property or vandalism. We can often spot people's tendencies to become violent by paying attention to explosive anger, frequent blow ups, impulsive behavior, or multiple sensitive triggers.

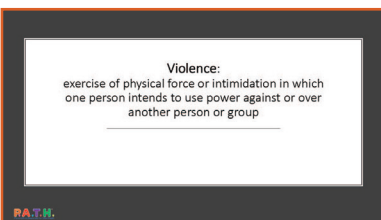
SLIDE #1



Do you think that isolation from other people can contribute to violence? (Allow for response.) Interpersonal connection is invaluable in teaching you how to relate to others, value others, and be forced to communicate with them. Some experts believe that the amount of time young people spend on social media and electronic devices, rather than face-to-face interaction, has contributed to more extreme responses when forced to the point of anger in our interactions. If this is true, then the CDC's

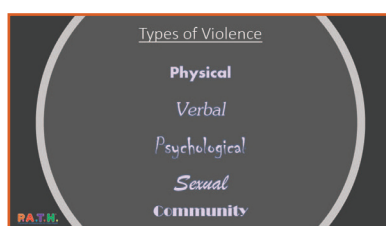
statistics may reveal a certain truth to that theory. According to the CDC, there were nearly 25,000 homicides in the U.S. in 2020 - a year that we were all separated.^[2] This was a significant increase from 2019, and it has continued to rise in the years that followed. To begin changing the trajectory of this, each of us needs to be real about what we see and be proactive in learning as much as we can about violence, its impact, and its prevention.

SLIDE #2



Not all violence is fatal, but we must acknowledge the fact that death can be an end result. The term violence is a term with a broader definition than most people realize. It is the exercise of physical force or intimidation in which one person intends to use power against or over another person or group.

SLIDE #3



Most people only think of physical violence, but there are additional types of violence: verbal, psychological, sexual, and community. Physical violence is the one people most associate with the word violence, and it includes any force which affects a person's body. Acts of this kind include

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beating, punching, kicking, biting, burning, using weapons, or killing. Both physical abuse and physical bullying constitute physical violence. Verbal violence behaviors are threatening, blaming, name-calling, trolling, criticizing, accusing, and more. Verbal violence used to be more common in domestic relationships, but now teens often are subjected to or participate in verbal violence via social media. I would like to remind you about our previous lesson on the value of humans and the importance of supporting people and not tearing them down. Make a point to share uplifting messages on social media. If you do have negative feelings about someone, it's ok to simply scroll past, ignore, or even unfollow them to avoid the temptation of cruelty. The next type of violence is psychological. This would include any intentional act that causes psychological or mental harm. These acts usually attack and undermine the dignity of the other person, which is more inhumane than you might realize. Social media also creates a new combination of physical and psychological violence every time someone posts a fight video. We know those videos are very popular among teens and violent personality types, but we encourage you to unfollow such accounts. These are more harmful to people than you realize, and they perpetuate the cycle of violence. Finally, sexual violence. Sexual violence refers to crimes such as rape, sexual assault, and sexual abuse. We have other P.A.T.H. lessons specifically geared toward that type of violence, so we will continue to the last type of violence, which is a major focus for the rest of this lesson.

SLIDE #4



The CDC reports that community violence affects millions of people every single year. It prevents people from being active in their own communities and also limits business growth and education. There are too many people who have stories of witnessing traumatic violence or losing loved ones to violent acts. But many people have risen above a life of violence - whether by their own personal choices or through leading neighborhood movements. One example is Michael Tubbs, former mayor of Stockton,

California, who shares that he had more family members who had been incarcerated than in college. He decided to run for office in a time with extremely high crime and poverty rates. He worked to lower that rate significantly. He said that his grandmother taught him a parable that made him want to be a neighbor not a politician. Tubbs is known for the philosophy, “When we see someone different from us, they should not reflect our fears, our anxieties, our insecurities,” he says. “We should see our common humanity.”⁶ Another example of a community member taking action is Rev. Jeffrey Brown, a baptist minister of Boston, who was a young pastor wanting to reduce violence in his community. He was part of a movement called the “Boston Miracle” in which the youth crime and gang violence was drastically reduced by 63% in the 1990s.. He and others worked to teach people a way out of crime through education, training, and mentoring.⁷ Their stories are like many across the nation who have been overwhelmed by gang or neighborhood violence but took action to change it. Whether or not this is a problem in our area, we must recognize that community violence is traumatic for millions of families and leaves a lasting impact.

Activity 2: Community Violence Brainstorm & Slideshow Cont'd (15 minutes)

Did you know that youth violence is widespread in the United States and is the third leading cause of death for young people between the ages of 10 and 24?^[2]

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SLIDE #5



In order for you to see the cycle, look at this list of risk factors that contribute to violence in communities: ^[4]

- Diminished economic opportunities
- High concentrations of poor residents
- Socially disorganized neighborhoods
- Poor academic performance
- Low commitment to school and experiencing failure in school

- Involvement in gangs
- Social rejection by peers
- Harsh, lax, or inconsistent disciplinary practices
- Low parental involvement
- Low emotional attachment to parents or caregivers
- Poor monitoring and supervision of children

Discussion: Looking closely at this list, I want you to answer this question: How can any one of these things lead to problems with the others? *(Allow students to discuss. As a facilitator, point out that each of these leads to problems with the others. Make the connections between education, poverty, parental absence, violence, and other risk factors.)*

You will need a piece of paper to brainstorm things that you can think of that would help reduce and make a difference in slowing the cycle. What changes do individuals need to implement and what do communities need to do? *(Allow 2-3 minutes for students to write before sharing. Then allow students to share their lists.)* Thank you for sharing your ideas. Remember all of these suggestions and solutions as you get older and become adult leaders in your community.

SLIDE #6



The bottom line is that prevention starts by improving the well-being of the youth in the community - whatever that may look like. We already know that education is important in teaching the young people of the community the way out of poverty. Education also teaches them valuable communication skills. Additionally, community leaders can work collaboratively to develop positive youth activities and encourage interaction with the people who live in their communities. They can work

to recognize patterns of violence and implement positive interventions to shape the young children trying to grow up in these areas. Positive Youth Development has a tremendous impact on lowering violence in a community.^[5]

As an individual wanting to make a positive impact, you must be strong in handling your emotions and staying involved with healthy, safe activities. The busier you are with extra-curricular activities, including productive hobbies, clubs, sports, music, and even working, the more success you will experience. Finally, the company you keep has a greater impact than you'd probably like to admit. Know who benefits you and know who works against you.

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Closing: (1 minute)

There are plenty of people whom you know struggling with their connection to other people and may lack the ability to communicate feelings in a healthy way. We all get angry, and that is completely natural; however, when people react violently, the earlier we can redirect that, the more likely we can stop the cycle of violence. As you get closer to graduation, remember that you will always be a part of any community in which you live; therefore, this lesson goes beyond the school. As an adult, you need to become an advocate for peace and safety. Get active in supporting those who are at a greater risk of being victims of violence. Remember that every person has value, and your service to them adds to your value!

References

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