

## Challenges to Prevention Programming

### Scenario 1

You set up a meeting with the school counselor of your local elementary school to discuss programming for next year. You tell her that you would love to implement the *Second Step: Bullying Prevention Unit* with her fourth- and fifth-grade students. She says it seems like a nice program, but bullying isn't an issue in her school.

How can you respond?

- Emphasize that this is a prevention education program, so we want to provide this education before the violence occurs.
  - Bullying is most prevalent in middle school, so this is the perfect time.
- Explain the other things that this curriculum addresses, such as empathy and assertiveness.
- Mention other schools where you've implemented this program and highlight the successes from that implementation.

### Scenario 2

You set up a meeting with the school principal of your local high school to discuss programming for next year. You tell him that you would love to implement *Safe Dates*, a program which educates on healthy relationships, with the sophomore class. He says it seems like a nice program, but he doesn't want to give the kids permission to have sex.

How can you respond?

- Explain that this program promotes healthy relationships in general, including between friends.
- Emphasize that this is a prevention education program, so we want to provide this education before the violence occurs.
- Share key points of research, which supports that quality education on healthy relationships actually prevents things like sexual assault and teen pregnancy.
- Mention other schools where you've implemented this program and highlight the successes from that implementation.

### Scenario 3

You are presenting an awareness program for Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month that addresses red flags of unhealthy or abusive relationships. In between classes, the teacher whose classroom you are in says, "I'm really glad you're here today. So many of these girls have no respect for themselves and just allow these men to control their lives. I see so many of them making stupid decisions every day, staying with boys that treat them like dirt."

How can you respond?

- Use language which holds the ones abusing accountable for their actions.
  - “It’s so important for everyone to be equipped with the skills to develop and maintain healthy relationships. There is never an excuse for one person to abuse another.”
  - “It can be very difficult to leave an unhealthy or abusive relationship. At Family Refuge Center, we recognize that the safety of our clients is most at risk when they choose to leave.”
- Relate to them by sharing your prior misconceptions if you’ve had them and personal experience if you feel comfortable to do.
  - “I used to feel the same way when a friend of mine remained in an unhealthy relationship until I realized some of the dynamics of abuse which contributed to her decision such as manipulation by her partner and fear of retaliation.”

#### Scenario 4

You are invited to table at a teen health fair at your local middle school. You have pride flags left over from June so you bring those with you, along with information on healthy LGBTQ+ relationships. After the event, the coordinator sends you a panicked email saying a handful of angry parents are calling him demanding an explanation as to why their children were given flags that support the LGBTQ community.

How can you respond?

- Provide the facts regarding the higher risk of violence victimization and suicide that those who identify as LGBTQ+ face.
- Attempt to find shared ground. Some may cite things like religion as their reasoning for opposition of this information, but a shared ground should be that you all do, in fact, care about the safety of the children in your community, so they need to all feel supported and represented.
- Schedule a meeting with those in charge, such as the coordinator, principal, or PTO to discuss their concerns, the importance of inclusion, and how to proceed moving forward.
  - Be sure to mention how this reaction from parents could contribute to further isolation of and harm to the students who identify as LGBTQ+, so any “damage control” needs to have them at the center.
- Continue your inclusive awareness and education! Reactions like this show how much it is needed.

### Scenario 5

You are having a discussion with a local business leader about collaborating for an upcoming awareness event. He asks you what has been going on lately in your organization, and you answer that your staff recently attended a training on oppression and privilege to better serve people of color in your community. He chuckles and says, “You know, I really think this so-called privilege ordeal has gotten out of hand. Everyone has their own struggles, but we’re all dealt the same cards.”

How can you respond?

- Provide facts, such as the higher risk of violence victimization that people of color face and the disproportionate incarceration of people of color.
- Relate to them by sharing your prior misconceptions if you’ve had them and personal experience if you feel comfortable to do.
  - “I used to have some of the same thoughts until I learned more about the privilege I have. White privilege doesn’t mean your life hasn’t been difficult. It just means that the color of your skin hasn’t been one of the reason it’s been difficult.”
    - You can also offer to provide trainings and resources that helped you to better understand these things.
- The internet CAN be your friend here. There are so many articles and social media posts where people have explained privilege, oppression, and intersectionality in ways that are easily explained and understood. You can research some of these to have ideas of other ways to respond.
- Continue your inclusive awareness and education! Reactions like this show how much it is needed.