

Grade 7, Objective 7.04

Discussing the subject of sexual assault may be upsetting to some students. They may show signs of having been involved in an abusive situation. It is important to be sensitive when teaching this subject. Make sure you provide a safe environment in your classroom (ground rules, respect). We suggest that counselors in your school be given advanced notification before teaching this lesson.

Objective:

Describe factors that contribute to sexual abuse and sexual assault and dating violence.

Materials Needed:

Nerf ball or other soft object

Appendix 1 – I Am Not in My Comfort Zone!

Focus:

Without telling students why, move around the room with a nerf ball or other soft object. Toss it to a student, then indicate by nodding you expect it to be tossed back to you. Begin to throw the ball harder and at a student rather than to him or her. Stop, then ask if they “consented” to catching the ball. Ask, Did I ask your permission to toss you the ball? Did you feel as though you had a choice about whether to catch it?

Through this activity, we are trying to illustrate the concept of coercion vs. consent. Sometimes pressure to have sex is like that. A person makes an advance and assumes the other person will go along. This assumption puts the other person in the position of having to say “no” to unwanted or unwelcome advances.

Review:

In previous grades, you had lessons on several skills that will help you in this lesson. Write Refusal Skills on the board. Ask 8 students to come to the board and become two teams of four. Tell them in one minute, both teams are to write all the steps and information they remember about refusal skills while you time them. Have the audience judge which team produced the strongest list. Write Communication Skills on the board. Select another 8 students to repeat the process about communication skills. Afterwards, explain that students will rely heavily on these two skills in the next two lessons on Sexual Assault and Abuse.

Statement of Objectives:

Today we will be talking about sexual assault, sexual abuse, and sexual harassment. By the end of the lesson, you will be able to define those terms and give examples of unwanted sexual pressure and unwelcome sexual behaviors.

Teacher Input:

For this step, the teacher will show the PowerPoint, What is Sexual Assault? The presentation covers definitions of assault, abuse, and harassment. There are examples and scenarios to assist the teacher in processing an understanding of the issues.

The slides 7 - 10 titled, Classify this Action, each describe a scenario and the students are asked where on the Consent to Abuse Continuum the situation falls. Here are the answers:

Slide 7: coercion, Slide 8: pressure, Slide 9: consent, Slide 10: abuse

There are several slides about sexual harassment that include a definition and lists of both verbal and non-verbal examples of these behaviors. Stress that all of these activities are illegal and can make the target uncomfortable in the school setting.

Guided Practice:

Hot Potato (ball) activity. *One of the kinds of assault 7th graders are most exposed to is sexual harassment. Who recalls from the power point the definition of sexual harassment? Process the aspects on the board (sexual in nature, as opposed to general harassment; verbal, gestures, body language or actions; not wanted by the targeted person; designed to insult the person.) While sexual harassment is illegal and harmful, it is often overlooked until it has already done real damage. During their school years, more than 80% of girls and 60% of boys reported that they had experienced sexual harassment by students. About 25% of girls and 10% of boys reported being sexually harassed by school employees. Of those who told someone, 62% told a friend; 23% told a family member and 7% told a teacher or school authority (Herbert).*

Some people confuse sexual harassment (unacceptable and meaning to be harmful) with flirting (fun and meaning to be flattering when people are attracted to each other). Write the words sexual harassment and flirting on the board. As two students to come up and be the recorders for the answers to the questions you will ask in the next activity.

Say, I am going to give this ball to ___ (select student), and we are going to consider it a hot potato. I am going to ask you a question and whoever has the hot potato has to answer the question spontaneously, and then toss it to someone else in the room. They will continue to answer and toss until I say stop. We will review with the Recorders what we learned from our answers about the question and continue until we have our answers for all the questions. Are you ready?

How does sexual harassment make the receiver feel?

How does Flirting make the receiver feel? (5 responses)

How does Sexual Harassment affect self-esteem? (1 responses)

How does Flirting affect self-esteem? (1 responses)

Give adjectives that describe Sexual Harassment? (5 responses)

Give adjectives that describe Flirting? (5 responses)

Which is wanted? (group response)

[Type text]

[Type text] NC Comprehensive School Health Training Center

- Which is motivated by power? (group response)
- Which is motivated by equality? (group response)
- Which is not legal? (group response)

Remind students that they can use the skills learned in dealing with bullies (School Violence Prevention Act, June, 2009) to rebuff sexual harassment or assertiveness skills to tell the abuser you don't like what they said/did, and to stop it. If it persists, you can tell them it is a school policy violation and you will be reporting the next incident to a school authority.

Independent Practice:

In the final activity, the goal is to create empathy for the target and promote responsibility for the potential abuser. One strategy is to encourage the target to write a letter to the perpetrator in which they describe how the behavior made them feel.

Provide each student with a copy of Appendix 1, Dear Harasser. Explain you want them to use an "I" message to express their feelings. Provide them with sufficient time to complete their letters. Collect them, then redistribute them randomly to all students. Ask them to read four or five examples. Emphasize that it is the perpetrator's responsibility to be sensitive and caring toward others and to cease immediately any behaviors that cause discomfort.

Closure:

We know that many young people are targeted by others for assault, abuse, and harassment. Youth need to be "streetwise" to avoid being taken advantage of. The most important skills to practice for prevention are to set boundaries for oneself and respect the boundaries of others. We have learned that honesty really is the best policy when letting others know how we feel and how we expect to be treated.

I'm NOT in My Comfort Zone!

Dear _____:

I am not comfortable at school because of your behavior. These behaviors make me uncomfortable:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

When you behave this way, it makes me feel:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

You need to change these actions so we can get along as classmates and friends. Sexual harassment is inappropriate and illegal. It is not a form of flirting or amusement. I expect the behavior to stop and for you to respect my feelings.

Sincerely,
