

# **SUSPENSION LEARNING PACKET #: 8**

## ***DANGEROUS ITEMS***

### ***INTRODUCTION***

This is a Suspension Learning Packet. It consists of several pages of text and a Response sheet. Your assignment is to read the text and answer the questions on the Response sheet. The text includes three stories about students who broke a school rule. The Response sheet asks questions about what the people in the stories did that got them into trouble. Reading the text and answering the questions on the Response sheet will help you understand what you have done wrong and how to avoid doing it again. Read the text first and try to remember what you've read. Then read the Response Sheet and write answers to the questions.

### ***WHAT YOU DID***

You have been suspended because you brought dangerous items to school. Bringing dangerous items to school is against the rules. Consequently, you have been suspended. Whenever a student breaks the rules, he or she must face the consequences.

### ***WHAT'S WRONG WITH CARRYING DANGEROUS ITEMS***

There are several reasons why bringing dangerous items to school is wrong:

- You may hurt yourself.
- You may hurt someone else.
- Someone may take them away from you and hurt you, themselves, or others.
- Bringing dangerous items to school is against the law.

- Carrying a knife, a gun, or other weapons doesn't solve problems; it makes them worse.

School is a place to learn and work together. School is the only chance that many people have to learn what they need to know in order to make their way in the world. Without an education, most people never have the opportunity to succeed. Consequently, school must be a safe place, where people can learn without being threatened and without fearing for their safety. Nobody can learn or work together when he or she is afraid of being shot, cut, or hit.

For these reasons, you are not allowed to bring weapons to school. That includes guns of any type, knives, brass knuckles, razors, razor blades; or other objects that could pose a danger to others. It also includes drugs, chemicals or explosives.

These items are not allowed in school for the same reason that hand grenades, plastic explosives, antipersonnel mines and time bombs are not allowed in school. School is not a war zone. It's a learning zone. It's hard enough to study and learn with the bullies and other people who aren't interested in getting an education. We don't need to turn school into an armed camp. If someone wants to play terrorist, school is not the place.

### ***THREE STORIES ABOUT CARRYING DANGEROUS ITEMS***

#### **PARANOID PAUL**

Paul's motto is "I know I'm afraid, but am I afraid enough?" Paul lives in constant fear of being attacked.

One day last year, a boy brought a revolver to school. He had found it in an unlocked car in a grocery store parking lot. He bought a shoulder holster in an Army surplus store, and wore it under his jacket. Paul and the other students were standing in the schoolyard after lunch, watching the track team doing wind sprints.

Two big guys started hassling the boy with the gun. One of them pushed him down. The boy pulled the gun and got off three shots, two of which

hit one of the other boys. The other shot hit a girl who was watching the team.

The boy with the gun stared for a moment at the girl on the ground, then got up and ran away. Nobody followed him, because of the gun. As he ran away, he stumbled over some book bags where other students were sitting on the grass in the sun. When he fell, the gun went off. He died on the way to the hospital.

Paul was standing beside the girl when she was hit. She was a neighbor. That night, as he tried to go to sleep, Paul realized that he could have been killed, too. He decided that he should carry a weapon to defend himself.

The next day after school, Paul sought out Gary, who belonged to a street gang. He asked Gary if he could get him a gun. "For a price" was Gary's reply. They agree on a price. The next day, Paul took the money he was saving for a new bike and bought the gun.

That afternoon, in a scuffle on the schoolyard, the gun fell out of Paul's pocket, hit the ground, and went off. Another student was hit. Paul had become one of the persons he feared the most.

## **MOLLY MACES THE MAINTENANCE MAN**

Over the years, in the urban school Molly attended, there had been several assaults. Girls walking alone after school had been beaten up in the parking lot behind the school. Last month, a girl was injured by an older boy in the basement of the school, where she and a friend had gone to talk privately.

Enough was enough. Molly got a can of MACE and often carried it in her purse.

One day, Molly's art teacher asked Molly if she would help with an art project the next afternoon after school. She promised her that she would arrange a ride home for her, since she would miss the bus home.

Molly loved art class, so she agreed. That night, her mother and father told her that it was all right. So the next day, Molly went to school looking forward to helping with the project.

Since she knew she would be at school after hours, Molly carried the can of MACE with her. When school was over, Molly reported to the art class and began working on the project. Eventually, she had to go to the washroom, so she asked to be excused.

When she got to the washroom, the door was standing open. She went in, closed the door and went over to the mirror to check her hair. Just then, a man stepped out of one of the stalls. Molly screamed, jerked the can of MACE out of her bag, and sprayed the man in the face.

The teacher heard the screams. She and several students ran down the hallway to the restroom. They caught Molly as she was running out. Then the man came stumbling out of the restroom. He was the head of Maintenance. He had been fixing a toilet. That was why the door had been left open.

Molly had misinterpreted what was happening. She didn't see the little yellow sign that said "Maintenance." She also didn't notice the school work uniform the custodian was wearing. The man had to be taken to the hospital for treatment. His vision was impaired for weeks. It was all a mistake.

## **GANG WARS**

Street gangs had always been a city problem. Nobody in Leafy Arbor had any experience with gangs. There were no abandoned buildings or junk automobiles sitting in the gutters. But now, children in primary school were bringing narcotics home, and kids in middle and high school were dealing dope. Strange cars glided through the neighborhoods, and kids stayed out at night. The world was changing. Some of the guys at school wanted to change with it.

Kelly, Gary and Bubba were the first students in their school to form a gang. They had read about "The Kings" and the "Jasons," and wanted to form a gang of their own. Kelly called himself "Kung Fu Kelly" because he was into the martial arts. Bubba called himself "Big Bad Bubba" because he was a bully. Gary Shaw went by his initials, "G. B. S." It sounded grown-up.

That's when they started staying out of school so much. They formed "The Gang," so they could be tough guys, and maybe deal a little dope to their classmates. Kelly and Bubba saw a chance to make some extra money in a hurry, so they joined.

Kelly was in charge of weapons, Gary was the leader, and was in charge of recruitment. Bubba was "the Enforcer" who made gang members obey the rules.

It was a lot of fun at first. They wore gang colors (colored caps and vests with secret designs), gang clothes, and worked out a gang handshake. As they began to act like gang members, they became gang members: separated from the rest of the school, wasting study time figuring out gang activities, and making fun of the rest of the students for not knowing their secrets.

Eventually, they connected with a real gang, that had been planning to sell dope in that school. They were given an order: either get out or work for them. Nobody took the threat seriously at first. Who were these guys? Where did they come from? Who did they think they were? It had all been a game. Now it was going sour because of some creeps from some other neighborhood.

Their fantasy gang disappeared with the first drive-by shooting. Kung Fu Kelly was standing in front of the mall entrance with his girl. The shots caught him in the arm and chest. He went into shock before the paramedics arrived.

George Alvin Kelly was pronounced dead on arrival at the county hospital. He never had a chance to use any of the ninja weapons he was

carrying at the time. His gun never left his pocket. The next day, Bubba was hit. Only Gary survived. He is now a member of the other gang. What might Gary's future be?

### ***REASONS FOR CARRYING DANGEROUS ITEMS***

People give many reasons for carrying dangerous items. Here are a few of them:

- Self-defense
- To freak out my classmates
- So people will leave me alone
- Just in case there is a gang war
- To keep bullies from pushing me around
- To let them know I'm not somebody to be messed with

There are as many reasons for carrying dangerous items as there are fears among students. Girls who are afraid of being assaulted may carry cans of MACE or a small handgun. Guys who are gang members fear raids by other gangs. Small people fear bullying from big people. Younger students feel threatened by older students.

Carrying a weapon puts you in a different class, a different world. Little kids may carry cap pistols, but a few people want to carry a Beretta automatic like Mel Gibson carried in "Lethal Weapon." Some students may bring BB guns to school, or darts, or knives, or other dangerous items. But no matter what the weapon is, it can still cause harm. There is no place for such objects at school.

Weapons are trendy in some places. People who know next to nothing about guns are now carrying guns. Street crime has increased, and muggers always have knives or guns. Unfortunately, this trend has found its way into some schools.

### ***CONSEQUENCES OF CARRYING DANGEROUS ITEMS***

When you carry a weapon, you cross over into another world. The rules are different in that world. You can never trust anybody. You always have to be on your guard.

When others learn that you are carrying a weapon, they will either dare you to use it, or stay away from you because they don't want to cross over into that world themselves. So if you carry a weapon, you don't have many friends--but you have a lot of enemies.

Weapons are dangerous. That's why they are called "weapons." They are deliberately designed to injure and kill. But you can also injure or kill somebody by accident. Some guns may go off if they are dropped. People can accidentally fall on knives and stab themselves.

How about something as harmless as a BB gun? BB pellets have always been one of the leading causes of eye injuries among children. Carry a weapon and eventually somebody will get hurt, even if you don't mean to hurt anybody.

Dangerous items are not limited to weapons. Pocket knives, screw drivers, ice picks, and other common household items may be dangerous if they are not handled properly. A rock can be as dangerous to an eye as a dart. A sharp piece of wood can be as dangerous as a knife. Ask any emergency room doctor in any community hospital. The point is that any dangerous item can injure or kill somebody. Because of this, dangerous items have no place in school.

Look back at the characters in the three stories you've read. Paul just wanted to protect himself from harm. But he didn't know what he was doing. As a result, Paul became the person his parents always warned him against. Paul had no idea what might happen when he started carrying the gun. He wound up doing to someone else the very thing that he most feared happening to him.

Molly knew how to point a can or MACE because it doesn't take any great talent to point an aerosol can and push the squirt head. But Molly didn't understand that she was in no danger. She panicked, and hurt somebody who was just doing his job and who was no threat to her at all. She could have blinded the man. All because she hadn't thought out the consequences of carrying a weapon, and hadn't been trained in its use.

Kelly, Bubba and Gary's story is tragic, for many reasons. First, they had no idea what they were getting into when they formed their little gang. Second,

they had no experience with the realities of gang membership and turf fighting. Their ignorance cost Kelly and Bubba their lives.

### ***WHAT YOU MUST DO IN THE FUTURE***

If you think carrying weapons and other dangerous items to school is a good solution to your problems, you don't understand how the world really works. Only in real combat situations do you fight fire with fire. And you had better know what you're doing, or you can hurt yourself.

In the short term, the best way to respond to a threat is to remove yourself from the situation. If this means running or walking away, do it. Better to be made fun of than risk your life just to call some creep's bluff.

The second best response is to remove the threat. But don't take that task on yourself. Leave it to the adults. Tell your teacher or your principal if you are being threatened or if you feel threatened. If you know about students who are bringing weapons or other dangerous items to school, report them. They are endangering lives. Let the principal and the police handle the situation. They have the training, you don't.

It takes at least two people to fight. We all know people who seem always to be in fights. Then there are others who never get into fights. Fighting with fists is bad enough. When it changes to fighting with weapons, it becomes deadly.

If you find yourself in a threatening situation, don't pull a knife or gun. Get out of there! If somebody else is carrying a gun or a knife, report him or her! Don't blow your future trying to play comic book hero. And if you're the one with the weapon, understand that once you start carrying it, it's very hard to stop. And understand also that life isn't like the movies. When you get shot in real life, you stay shot.

### ***THE LAST WORD ON GUNS***

When you carry a gun to protect yourself, you must understand that you have crossed over the line into another world. That world and the educational world don't mix. The world of education will enrich your life and make it possible for



you to fulfill your potential. That other world can grind you up and spit you out. The choice is up to you.

# STUDENT RESPONSE PACKET # 8.1

## *DANGEROUS ITEMS*

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

GRADE \_\_ HOMEROOM \_\_\_\_\_

### *WHAT TO DO*

Below are some questions about what you just read. These questions will help you learn why what you did was wrong and how you can avoid such problems in the future. Your teacher, a counselor, the principal, or your parents may read your answers. Your answers will not be graded.

For most of the questions, there are no "right" or "wrong" answers. The answers depend on you. Be honest with yourself as you write the answers. Take time to think before you write. The work you do on these Response Packets reflects your willingness to improve your behavior and attitude.

Write your answers in the spaces below the questions. If there is not enough room, write on the backs of these sheets. Be neat, spell correctly, use good grammar, and write in complete sentences.

1. What dangerous item did you bring to school, and where did you get it?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What did you plan to do with the dangerous item you brought to school?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Have you ever brought dangerous items to school before? If your answer is "yes," what happened?

4. You read a list of five reasons why it's wrong to bring dangerous items to school. Write two more reasons.
  
5. You read a list of dangerous items that you shouldn't bring to school. List 3 additional dangerous items that people might bring to school but shouldn't.
  
6. Why do school officials react so strongly when students bring dangerous items to school?
  
7. Why do students have a right to be in school without having to fear being hurt by something dangerous?
  
8. In the stories you read, Paul was afraid that he might get hurt. What did he do to protect himself?

9. Paul's plan backfired and somebody got hurt. Why did Paul's Protection Plan not work?
  
10. Instead of buying a weapon, what should Paul have done?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. Molly didn't want to be assaulted, so she carried a can of MACE. But an innocent person got hurt. What should Molly have done?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
12. Why do you think Kelly, Bubba and Gary formed a gang? What did they expect to get out of being gang members?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
13. Write what you understand about street gangs. What are they for and who belongs to them?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
14. Why are gangs bad for schools and communities?

15. Why do you think people join gangs? What is bad about being in a gang?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
16. Why does carrying a weapon increase your chances of being hurt by a weapon?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
17. Write a paragraph that will convince us that you know the dangers of carrying weapons and other dangerous items to school.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
18. Write a paragraph telling us how you will avoid carrying weapons or dangerous items in the future.

# STUDENT RESPONSE PACKET # 8.2

## *DANGEROUS ITEMS*

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

GRADE \_\_ HOMEROOM \_\_\_\_\_

### *WHAT TO DO*

Below are some questions about what you just read. These questions will help you learn why what you did was wrong and how you can avoid such problems in the future. Your teacher, a counselor, the principal, or your parents may read your answers. Your answers will not be graded.

For most of the questions, there are no "right" or "wrong" answers. The answers depend on you. Be honest with yourself as you write the answers. Take time to think before you write. The work you do on these Response Packets reflects your willingness to improve your behavior and attitude.

Write your answers in the spaces below the questions. If there is not enough room, write on the backs of these sheets. Be neat, spell correctly, use good grammar, and write in complete sentences.

1. What dangerous item did you bring to school? Where did you get it?
  
2. Why did you bring the weapon or other dangerous item to school? Were you afraid of somebody? Or were you just showing off? What did you expect to accomplish by bringing the weapon or dangerous item to school?

3. List five reasons that people bring weapons to school.
  
4. Now write how the dangers referred to in these five reasons could have been avoided without carrying weapons.
  
5. Nobody wants to be bullied or hurt. What's the best thing to do when somebody threatens you at school?
  
6. In the story you just read, Paul carried a gun to school to protect himself from other people who carried guns. Why did his protection plan result in somebody else getting hurt?
  
7. What should Paul have done instead of buying the gun?
  
8. Why is a gun the last thing a person should carry to protect himself or herself in school?

9. You read in the newspapers that students get shot in some schools. Why is this happening and what can be done to solve the problem?
  
10. Pretend that you are your school's principal. You are going to hold an assembly and talk to all the students about having a "safe school." Write three important points you should make in your speech.
  
11. In the second story you just read, Molly wanted to protect herself and carried a can of MACE. Why did she hurt an innocent person?
  
12. What is a better way of handling potentially unsafe situations than the way Molly chose?
  
13. How was Kelly, Bubba and Gary's gang different from the other gang that threatened them and then killed Kelly and Bubba?
  
14. Why would persons like Kelly, Bubba and Gary join a gang? What would they expect to get out of it?



15. Kelly was carrying ninja equipment, plus a knife and a pistol. Why didn't any of his weapons help him? What lesson can we learn from Kelly's part of the story?
  
16. List three bad things that can happen when students bring weapons or dangerous items to school.
  
17. Tell us how you plan to stop bringing weapons or other dangerous items to school.
  
18. Write a plan to eliminate weapons and other dangerous items at school. Explain why this plan will work. Could it work for other students?