

Boundaries and Bullying

Time:

90min class, including gathering time and opening prayer.

Class Goal:

To inform teens about safety precautions from sexual and physical abuse and harassment, to remind teens of their self-worth, and to help them cherish and respect the bodies God gave each of us.

Opening Activity: Bullying Activity (15min)

Have students line up down the middle of an empty room (clear chairs to the perimeter). Each student will need room ahead of them and behind them, as they will need to be able to take steps forwards and backwards during the activity.

Ask students to close their eyes. For each statement that is read, prompt students to each take a step forward or a step backward, if the statement applies to them.

Here are the statements we came up with:

Have you ever felt like you had to change your appearance in order to fit in (step backwards).

If you've ever excluded someone from your group of friends because of their appearance, (step forward).

If you've ever felt like you weren't good enough or smart enough (step backwards).

If you've ever teased someone for being dumb or not different, (step forward).

If you've ever felt like you had to go along with what your friends are doing, even if you knew it was wrong (step backwards).

If you've ever felt insecure about yourself because of the way you look (step backwards).

If you've ever changed your appearance, the way you talk, or act in order to avoid being judged or ridiculed, (step backwards).

If you've ever ignored someone because you thought they dressed or acted weird, (step forward).

If you've ever been the subject of a hurtful rumor, (step backwards).

If you've ever spread a rumor or story about someone without knowing whether it was true, (step forward).

If you were ever teased or called names because of your race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation (step backwards).

If you've ever told or laughed at a racist or homophobic joke, (step forward).

If you've ever been in a fight because someone made fun of you for who you are, (step backwards).

If you've ever stopped being friends with someone because of what someone else thought of them, (step forward).

If you've ever ignored someone because you thought they dressed or acted weird, (step forward).

If you've ever teased someone for being different, (step forward).

If you've ever felt alone or like no one understood what you were going through, (step backwards).

Debrief:

At the end of the activity, have the students open their eyes, while they continue to face forward. By the end of the exercise, the line is stratified with some kids up front, and some kids toward the back (those who have been bullied more).

Because they are only able to "look forward", they are only able to "see" the kids who have it better than them; it's more difficult for them to see the kids who perhaps have it "worse" than they do when it come sot bullying.

By asking questions and discussing, help the kids to understand that this is often how the bullied feel; as though they are marginalized and ignored. Encourage them to reflect on how they might need to take more notice of what their classmates are dealing with.

***Note:** This activity can be done with other types of statements. We've done it our teen ministry to discuss privilege / social justice type issues.*

Credits:

Developed by St. Monica Catholic Community Youth Ministry, under the direction of Fr. Tim Klosterman for our Confirmation program, drawing from existing materials from Virtus website.

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