 Where do you stand on violence?

Suggested duration: 40 minutes

This is one activity in a sequence designed to investigate the issue of violence and extremism with a focus on the skills required to objectively consider these issues within a context of positive relationships, identity, rights and responsibilities and intercultural understanding.

The activities seek to empower students with the skills to critically analyse situations, attitudes and behaviours that influence health, safety and wellbeing in different contexts, including countering violence and extremism.

Students will develop their skills to recognise and respond appropriately to situations, which may be harmful to self and others. The activities introduce a broad range of scenarios involving violence through which students:

* understand the difference between violence and violent extremism
* analyse their own attitudes towards violence
* learn to identify warning signs and safely engage in upstander behaviour or exercise self-control
* strengthen skills in asserting oneself respectfully.

In exploring violence and extremism, the following key questions have been considered:

* What is violence and extremism? What does violence and extremism look like?
* Could our assumptions about violence and extremism be false?
* What motivates individuals to act violently?
* What are the consequences of violence and extremism?
* How can we change attitudes and behaviours in relation to violence and extremism?

The knowledge and understanding developed through responding to these key questions can be validly explored through a range of violence related scenarios. These scenarios aim to equip students with the skills they need to critically analyse potentially harmful situations and act safely and timely to promote health, safety and wellbeing.

The activity sequence includes five lessons.

1. Why violence?
2. Where do you stand on violence?
3. What do we need in life?
4. The boss of me
5. Stitch in time.

Activity focus

This activity aims to debunk myths surrounding violence. Students take a position on statements to reflect on their own values, attitudes and behaviours and where they stand in relation to the position of others.

Course outcomes

2.1 Show respect for the ideas, feelings and contributions of others in various contexts.

2.2 Challenge inequity, discrimination and harassment based on age, sex, gender, race, religion, disability and sexuality.

5.1 Critically analyse situations, attitudes and behaviours that influence independence, health, safety and wellbeing in different contexts.

5.2 Recognise and respond appropriately to situations which may be limiting or harmful to self and others.

7.2 Demonstrate the capacity to seek help for self and others.

What do we want students to know, understand or be able to do?

* Recognise and explore personal values and attitudes to violence in our community.
* Analyse how attitudes and behaviours to gender-based violence are influenced by gender expectations, society’s norms and assumptions.
* Recognise that gender-based violence is often hidden, rarely discussed and often perpetrated by someone known to the person.
* Critically analyse the attitudes of others towards violence in our community.

Suggested content

| Learning context | Content |
| --- | --- |
| Independence  Focus: Building self-concepts and independence | Personal values and beliefs   * influences on values and beliefs, e.g. technology, social and cultural norms, media, family, relationships * influence of values, attitudes and beliefs on decisions and actions in various contexts |
| Relationships  Focus: Promoting safety, equality and respect in relationships | Valuing and advocating for the rights of self and others   * changing perspectives and challenging stereotypes * respecting others * asserting a stance on a situation or decision * challenging discrimination based on race, sex, age, disability, religion, culture, gender and sexuality * upstander behaviour (online and offline)   Challenging and changing attitudes and beliefs about power, assault and relationship violence   * promoting equality and respect in relationships * preventing relationship violence and sexual assault * challenging and changing attitudes to violence, including domestic violence |

Teaching notes

Violence as a choice does not necessarily mean a considered choice. It should be noted that some individuals may react violently in specific situations, such as when their life is threatened or they act in self-defence. In some situations, an individual’s response may be affected by poor impulse control resulting from experiences of abuse or trauma or as a result of mental illness, clinical behaviour disorders, health conditions or disability. The teaching and learning activities provided do not seek to judge these actions. The activities see to address violence broadly without specific reference to individual cases or specialised instances of violence, where an individual requires specialised support.

The aim of these activities is to move students of all experiences, circumstances and capabilities along in their perceptions, attitudes, and actions including the recognition and response to violent situations. Part of this learning involves students recognising their own reactions and responses to situations and learning the skills to modify their reactions, respond appropriately and where possible choose non-violent responses to situations.

Creating a safe and supportive learning environment

There are a number of strategies that can be used to create a supportive learning environment which enables students to feel safe to learn and ask questions. They include:

* Making students aware at the beginning of Life Ready sessions that disclosing personal information that indicates they may be at risk of harm will be reported to the school principal in all instances. This includes personal disclosures related to instances of abuse, drug use, neglect or sexual activity under the legal age of consent.
* Being aware that some parts of Life Ready can be confronting and sensitive for some students.
* Enabling students to withdraw if they find issues personally confronting to protect them from making harmful disclosures. Equally, it is important to be prepared for issues that arise as a result of a student making a public disclosure in the classroom.

More information on creating a safe and supportive learning environment can be found on the [Life Ready website.](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/key-learning-areas/pdhpe/life-ready)

Evaluating resources before use

Preview and evaluate all strategies, resources and teaching and learning approaches in full before use with students to determine suitability for student learning needs, stage of development and local school context. Consider the age, maturity, cultural background, sexuality, gender, sex, health and other characteristics of students in your care. Apply professional judgements to all strategies, teaching and learning approaches and resources including audiovisual materials (e.g. videos, media clips and YouTube), interactive web-based content (e.g. games, quizzes and websites) and texts.

Use the [resource review flowchart](https://schoolsequella.det.nsw.edu.au/file/083acd3a-daca-4307-9afe-bc6c888f694a/1/final-resource-flowchart-html5.zip/index.html) to decide about the suitability of teaching and learning resources.

Materials should be reviewed in full and endorsed by the school principal before use in NSW government schools.

Communication with parents and caregivers

Some aspects of Life Ready may be viewed as sensitive or controversial, such as learning about abuse, child protection, drugs, respectful relationships, sexual health, sexuality and violence. Inform parents and carers, prior to the occasion, of the specific details of the Life Ready program, so that parents and caregivers have time to exercise their rights of withdrawing their child from a particular session. In this regard, a parents or caregiver’s wish must be respected.

Establishing how parents and caregivers will be informed about programs and involved in consultation is a school-based decision. Where parents and caregivers indicate they wish to withdraw their child from a program it is useful to negotiate which parts of the Life Ready program they are concerned about. A sample information letter is available on the [Life Ready website](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/key-learning-areas/pdhpe/life-ready).

Learning experiences

Activity one – Positioning (30 minutes)

Introducing the activity (5 minutes)

It is important that teachers refer to the teaching considerations before undertaking this activity.

* Place the position cards; strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree around the room or on the floor in correct order.
* Outline the activity and procedure to students.
  + Explain to students that you are going to read out a statement related to violence.
  + Inform students that once they have thought about the statement they need to move to the position card that best represents their thoughts about the statement i.e. do you strongly agree/agree/disagree/strongly disagree with the statement?
  + Clarify with students that statements are designed to be contestable and on a continuum in this activity and that they can change their mind at any time.

Warming up (5 minutes)

* Use the following statements as a warm up to explore student’s personal values and attitudes.
  + Warm up statement - You can still be friends with someone who has different opinions to you.
  + Students take a position near the card that represents their thoughts on the statement.
  + Invite students to share their thoughts about the statement. Try to ensure a range of views are discussed.

Take a position (20 minutes)

* Read each statement and allow time for students to consider the statement before moving to their position.
* After each statement is read out and students have positioned themselves, invite students to share their thoughts about the statement. Try to ensure a range of views are discussed. Ask students:
  + what was your thinking when you moved to the position of strongly agree/ agree/ disagree/ strongly disagree?
* To avoid having all students standing at the one position, invite a small number of students to volunteer to position themselves on the scale from the perspective of:
  + a parent or an adult
  + someone of the opposite sex
  + someone of another age, culture, religion or sexuality.
* This would only be advised where teachers are confident and skilled to reduce any risk of stereotyping, exclusion of individuals or groups or distortion of discussions.

Debriefing the activity (10 minutes)

It is important to debrief the activity by asking students to consider the following questions:

* do you think everyone should share the same values and attitudes? Why/Why not?
* what factors do you think contribute to your own personal values and attitudes?
* how did other people’s views differ to your own?
* why do you think people’s values and attitudes differ?
* what factors do you think have the most influence on your values and attitudes?
* how did this activity influence your attitude around violence, including gender-based violence, date violence and domestic violence?
* in what way did this activity change your way of thinking about issues related to violence?
* what did you learn from this activity?

Possible statements:

Note: Teachers should choose statements which are appropriate for the student group and local community context.

Sometimes you can’t control how you react.

Resorting to violence is the only way to get some people to listen to your point of view.

It’s none of my business if I see others acting violently.

Angry words provoke violence.

Violence in the name of a cause to stop others suffering is acceptable.

Alcohol causes most cases of violence.

Control and abuse can happen in young people’s relationships.

Young people want to have healthy and respectful relationships.

A loving relationship has some abuse in it.

Both men and women are equally responsible for partner violence.

Rape results from men not being able to control their need for sex.

If a woman does not physically resist – even if protesting verbally – then it isn’t really rape.

It is easy for a person to leave if they really wanted to leave an abusive or violent relationship.

Only a small number of women in our community are abused in their relationships.

Domestic and family violence only happens in certain cultures and communities.

Perpetrators of violence come from violent homes.

Violence is part of being a man.

Some girls provoke guys into abusing them.

Teacher background sheet – Positioning activity

Teacher background information sheet

Violence and extremism are two social issues which young people are exposed to in their changing world, either directly or indirectly. School education is about preparing young people for healthy, fulfilling adult lives, including respectful, non-violent and equal interactions and relationships.

Violence has been defined by the World Health Organization as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation”. 2

Violence includes domestic and family violence, relationship violence, assault, sexual assault, rape, underage or forced marriage, trafficking or coercion, harmful traditional or cultural practices including female genital mutilation or honour killings.

Gender-based violence in relationships and families is often hidden and is perpetrated by someone known to the person. Gender-based violence is a term that refers to any violence that has a gender basis, and includes violence against women, such as domestic violence, sexual harassment and sexual assault.

Domestic and family violence includes behaviours that control or dominate a person, causing them to fear for their own (or someone else’s) safety. It includes behaviour that controls, intimidates, terrifies or coerces a person. It includes physical, sexual, verbal, psychological, mental, and emotional abuse; stalking; harassment; financial abuse and manipulation; denial of freedom and choice; and control of access to family and friends.

While a small proportion of men are victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, the majority of people who experience this kind of violence are women in their home, at the hands of men they know.

Men are more likely to be the victims of violence from strangers and in public, so different strategies are required to address these different types of violence.

No form of violence in our community is acceptable.

Evidence shows that:

* the use of violence is a choice: those who use violence choose where and when they do the violence; and, how they use the violence.
* violence, particularly violence against women is the product of learned attitudes and norms, and social inequalities.
* many forms of violence and extremism use fear and intimidation to change a situation rather than through respectful and peaceful means.
* females make up the majority of victims and males the majority of offenders.
* one in three women over the age of 15 have experienced physical violence.
* almost one in five women over the age of 15 have experienced sexual.
* one in four children and young people in Australia witness or live with family violence in their home.
* girls and young women aged 15 to 24 are the most likely of all age groups to experience sexual assault.
* women are mostly assaulted by men they know, often in their own home, in circumstances where they may well be subject to repeated assaults over time.
* men’s use of family violence is overwhelmingly directed towards women.
* gender-based violence was estimated to cost the Australian economy a total of $13.6 billion in 2009. The emotional and personal costs of violence against women cannot be measured: the effects reach all levels of society.
* for same-sex attracted young people (SSAY), 44 per cent reported they had been verbally assaulted, 16 per cent reported they had been physically assaulted, and 74 per cent of the assaults were reported to have happened at school.
* indigenous women and girls are 35 times more likely to be hospitalised due to family violence related assaults than other Australian women and girls.
* although there has been some attitudinal change towards violence against women, there are still key community attitudes that indicate a level of acceptance.
* it is important for students to learn about violence and consider their own attitudes and the attitudes of others towards violence in our community.

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Background notes for discussion of statements

Sometimes you can’t control how you react.

* Violence is often seen as an inevitable part of the human condition – a fact of life to respond to, rather than to prevent.
* Encouraged by the success of public health approaches to other environmental and behavioural-related health problems, these assumptions are changing.

Resorting to violence is the only way to get some people to listen to your point of view.

* Violence is never OK. It is a learned behaviour. It is a choice we make based on a belief we have.
* We always have non-violent choices.
* You are the only person who has control of your choices. If you feel you have tried everything, ask for help.

It’s none of my business if I see others acting violently.

* Everyone can make a difference by standing up to violence.
* If it is not safe for you to stand up to someone who is violent, you can stand up to violence by getting help, by getting out of the situation and by making yourself safe
* You can find someone who is equipped to or has a role to manage or address the violent behaviour.

Words provoke violence.

* Words may evoke the feeling of anger in those who hear them, however violence is a choice, and you have the choice to control how you act.
* Words also have the power to calm potentially violent situations.
* Words are powerful. When we use them well, they can bring people together. When we use them carelessly, they may have an unintended impact and hurt people.

Violence in the name of a cause to stop others suffering is acceptable.

* Violence towards another person is illegal in Australia and is taken and dealt with very seriously.

Alcohol causes most cases of relationship violence.

* Almost even numbers of sober and drunken people are violent.
* Alcohol and other addictive substances can lower the capacity of people to self-regulate their emotions and behaviours.

Control and abuse can happen in young people’s relationships.

* Control and abuse can occur in any relationship where there is a power imbalance.
* Young people should build and maintain healthy and respectful relationships in all contexts of life and use their power positively.
* In healthy and respectful relationships, young people can be themselves, thrive, fee safe and work to full potential.

Young people want to have healthy and respectful relationships.

* Young people should build and maintain healthy and respectful relationships in all contexts of life.
* In healthy and respectful relationships, young people can be themselves, thrive, fee safe and work to full potential.

A healthy relationship has some abuse in it.

* Healthy and respectful relationships do not have abuse.
* Safe, healthy and respectful relationships are built on joint decision making, shared responsibilities, honesty, respect, safety, support, trust and clear communication.
* There should be a balance of power in any healthy relationship.
* Power in relationships can take many different forms.

Both men and women are equally responsible for partner violence.

* 95% of all violence committed against both men and women is committed by men.
* Australian population survey data similarly show that women were more likely than men to be victims of physical, sexual and other forms of violence by a partner.
* Although the research shows that males are the main perpetrators of violence against both men and women, most men and boys are not abusive in their relationships.
* Some men’s violence may give all men a bad name.
* Males can play a key role in helping stop violence, particularly against women.

Rape results from men not being able to control their need for sex.

* Rape is an act of violence – not sexual gratification.
* Those who rape or sexually assault, do it to dominate, violate and control.
* There is no typical rapist; however the majority of sexual assaults and rapes are committed by men against women and children.
* A small number of women perpetrate sexual violence.
* Studies show that those who commit sexual violence come from every economic, ethnic, racial, age and social group.
* Perpetrators use a variety of excuses to justify the act of rape. There is never an excuse.
* Most rapes are premeditated, i.e. they are either wholly or partially planned in advance.
* Rapes committed by more than one perpetrator are always planned.
* Men can quite easily control their urges to have sex - they do not need to rape to satisfy them.

If a partner does not physically resist – even if protesting verbally – then it isn’t really rape.

* Sex forced on a date or a partner who has not consented clearly constitutes rape.
* In a date rape situation, where the perpetrator and the person being raped know each other, consent is sometimes coerced by using physical, emotional or verbal threats and tactics. This still constitutes sexual assault or rape.
* Drug facilitated sexual assault refers to non-consensual acts which take place when the victim is incapacitated due to the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, which prevents them from resisting and/or giving meaningful consent.

It is easy for a person to leave if they really wanted to leave an abusive or violent relationship.

* There are many reasons people stay in abusive relationships.
* They include fear that the violence will escalate if they try to leave, financial dependence, social stigma, lack of self-confidence, isolation, religious and moral values, love and commitment and concern for children, family pressures and lack of community support, including affordable accommodation.
* A person who is using violence against their partner typically uses a range of strategies to encourage compliance and dependence, such as monitoring their movements, destroying their self-esteem, and encouraging them to blame themselves for the abuse.
* Their confidence, support networks and skills and resources for independence may have been intentionally eroded by the abusive partner.
* These dynamics make it hard to leave abusive relationships.

Only a small number of women in our community are abused in their relationships.

* Abuse and violence is a widespread, though often hidden, problem across Australia.
* It occurs in all parts of society, regardless of geographic location, socio-economic status, age, cultural and ethnic background, or religious belief, and its often devastating effects - psychological, social and economic, short-term and long-term.

Domestic and family violence only happens in certain cultures and communities.

* Domestic and family violence is a widespread though often hidden problem across Australia.
* It occurs in all parts of society, regardless of geographic location, socio-economic status, age, cultural and ethnic background, or religious belief, and its often devastating effects - psychological, social and economic, short-term and long-term.
* Domestic and family violence includes any behaviour, in an intimate or family relationship, which is violent, threatening, coercive or controlling, causing a person to live in fear. It is usually manifested as part of a pattern of controlling or coercive behaviour.

An intimate relationship refers to people who are (or have been) in an intimate partnership whether or not the relationship involves or has involved a sexual relationship, i.e. married or engaged to be married, separated, divorced, de facto partners (whether of the same or different sex), couples promised to each other under cultural or religious tradition, or who are dating.

A family relationship has a broader definition and includes people who are related to one another through blood, marriage or de facto partnerships, adoption and fostering relationships, sibling and extended family relationships. It includes the full range of kinship ties in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, extended family relationships, and constructs of family within lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or queer (LGBTIQ) communities. People living in the same house, people living in the same residential care facility and people reliant on care may also be considered to be in a domestic relationship if their relationship exhibits dynamics which may foster coercive and abusive behaviours.

Perpetrators of violence come from violent homes.

* The use of violence is a choice: those who use violence choose where and when they do the violence; and, how they use the violence.
* Victims find that violence destroys the relationship, and many people in violent situations eventually leave.

Violence is part of being a man.

* Research shows that violence, particularly violence against women is the product of learned attitudes and norms, and social inequalities.
* Just as violence-supportive attitudes can be learned, they can be unlearned.
* Communities and governments can change the social conditions that feed violence, replacing them with social conditions that encourage respect and non-violence.

Some girls provoke guys into abusing them.

* Responsibility for violence must rest solely with the abuser.
* Many abused people try to do everything they can to please their partner and avoid further violent episodes.

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Teacher notes – Violence and extremism

Violence has been defined by the World Health Organization as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation”.[[1]](#footnote-1)

For the purpose of the Life Ready course and the following activities, violence includes domestic and family violence, relationship violence, assault, sexual assault, rape, underage or forced marriage, trafficking or coercion, harmful traditional or cultural practices including female genital mutilation or honour killings. Violent extremism is using violence to achieve goals on behalf of a group. Life Ready activities are not designed to explore the issues around state sanctioned violence, war, the use of the death penalty or violence as a sport. These examples of violence are outside the scope of the Life Ready course.

It is important for students to learn about violence and consider their own attitudes and the attitudes of others towards violence in our community. Childhood and adolescence is an important time for developing and maintaining respectful, non-violent relationships and learning to assert a non- violent stance.

In Australia only a very small proportion of the population supports the use of violence to try to achieve ideological, religious or political goals.[[2]](#footnote-2) Combatting violence is the responsibility of the whole community and is most effective as part of a whole school approach. The [Australian Government Living Safe Together website and toolkit](http://www.livingsafetogether.gov.au/informationadvice/Pages/what-is-radicalisation/what-is-radicalisation.aspx) provides information for schools to assist in building understanding of extremism and the radicalisation process and how to respond if they are concerned about a student or member of the community.

The development of a school ethos and culture that models respectful practices and is consistent in dealing with incidents of violence is as important a teaching tool as the formal curriculum.

Key messages

Domestic and family violence is a gendered crime.

* Females make up the majority of victims and males the majority of offenders.
* Although the research shows that males are the main perpetrators of violence against both men and women, most men and boys are not abusive in their relationships.
* Some men’s violence may give all men a bad name.
* Males can play a key role in helping stop violence, particularly against women.

Violence is a choice

* The use of violence is a choice: those who use violence choose where and when they do the violence; and, how they use the violence.
* Violence as a choice does not necessarily mean a considered choice. It should be noted that some individuals may react violently in specific situations, such as when their life is threatened or they act in self-defence.
* In some situations, an individual’s response may be affected by poor impulse control resulting from experiences of abuse or trauma or as a result of mental illness, clinical behaviour disorders, health conditions or disability. The teaching and learning activities provided do not seek to judge these actions.
* The activities aim to address violence broadly without specific reference to individual cases or specialised instances of violence, where an individual requires specialised counselling and support.

Violence can be learned and unlearned

* Research shows that violence, particularly violence against women is the product of learned attitudes and norms, and social inequalities.
* Just as violence-supportive attitudes can be learned, they can be unlearned.
* Communities and governments can change the social conditions that feed violence, replacing them with social conditions that encourage respect and non-violence.

There is no simple profile of a violent offender or extremist

* People who demonstrate violent behaviours, engage in acts of violent extremism or join violent extremist groups come from all kind of backgrounds and have various motivations.
* Teachers should avoid discussions that promote stereotypical views or exclusion of particular individuals or groups in society.

Education about violence, extremism and radicalisation is the responsibility of the community

* All forms of violence and extremism use fear and intimidation to change a situation rather than through respectful and peaceful means.
* It is our community and our responsibility.
* Australia’s diversity has given rise to a rich culture with a strong commitment to political and personal freedoms, respect for human rights and the rule of law.
* Regardless of their background or motivation, individuals who are prepared to commit or support violence against individuals or the community threaten our shared values.
* Community initiatives designed to address factors that can lead to violence and extremism and help at- risk individuals, can play an important part in strengthening our communities.

Additional resources

Australian Government, Living Safe Together Toolkit [www.livingsafetogether.gov.au/informationadvice/Pages](https://www.livingsafetogether.gov.au/informationadvice/Pages/what-is-radicalisation/what-is-radicalisation.aspx)

Domestic Violence NSW [domesticviolence.nsw.gov.au](http://www.domesticviolence.nsw.gov.au/)

White Ribbon – Australia’s campaign to stop violence against women [whiteribbon.org.au/schools](http://www.whiteribbon.org.au/schools)

Building Respectful Relationships: Stepping Out Against Gender Based Violence (Vic DoE) [education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/Pages/respectrel.aspx)

Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria [dvrcv.org.au](http://www.dvrcv.org.au/)

Position cards

Teacher can photocopy, cut out and laminate.

AGREE

DISAGREE

STRONGLY AGREE

STRONGLY DISAGREE

Positioning activity – Teaching considerations

Key messages

* Create a safe and supportive environment
* Share thoughts not feelings
* There are no right or wrong answers
* Respect each other’s differences
* Feel free to move or change your mind
* Use appropriate and inclusive language.

| Do | Do not |
| --- | --- |
| * Set boundaries and expectations * Use inclusive language * Listen to what students are saying * Encourage everyone to share thoughts rather than feelings * Rephrase student thoughts without judgement * Thank students for sharing * Use the ‘teachable moment’ * Invite analysis * Reflect questions back to students * Use other situations to expand values continuum * Invite students to move if they change their minds | * Give research or facts * Judge the student * Show your opinion * Try to change values or beliefs * Give advice * Pressure students to share their thoughts |

1. World Health Organisation, Global campaign for violence prevention; last viewed 15 Feb 2016 [www.who.int/violenceprevention](http://www.who.int/violenceprevention/approach/definition/en/) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Australian Government, [www.livingsafetogether.gov.au/informationadvice](https://www.livingsafetogether.gov.au/informationadvice/Pages/what-is-radicalisation/what-is-radicalisation.aspx) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)