

VIOLENCE - Recognize it, Prevent it, Stop it

Students will be able to evaluate what creates a violent confrontation, what could be done to prevent it, and what could be done to stop it all together

APPROPRIATE AGE

For students 11 years-of-age and older. Could be modified for younger students.

DURATION

The lesson should take approximately 3-5 hours to complete. Most classes spread the lesson over 3-5 days or 2-3 block periods.

1-2 hours: Reading articles for background and discussion

1 hour: Viewing of Dateline, "The Party's Over"

1-2 hours: Culminating discussion

OPENING

Objective: Students will be able to evaluate what creates a violent confrontation, what could be done to prevent it, and what could be done to stop it all together.

MATERIALS:

Available at www.maranfoundation.org

[Memorial pieces written by students, friends, teachers, and family](#)

[Newspaper articles about the Deanna Maran story](#)

[Student writing by Deanna](#)

[Photo Gallery of Memorial](#)

[Photo Gallery of Deanna Maran](#)

MOTIVATION:

The purpose is to give a human face to Deanna Maran, to create a relationship between the students, Deanna and her story.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW MATERIAL

Directed Lesson Sequence/Guided Practice

FIRST 2-3 HOURS:

Give the students time to investigate background for the story. At this stage in the lesson you are simply setting the stage. They will evaluate what they are discovering during the culminating activity.

Read article from The Los Angeles Times:
[“A Westside Story . . . “ by Michael Cieply](#)

Read memorial pieces

[Deanna Maran Memorial – Santa Monica High School Greek Theater Memorial Pieces](#)

View Dateline video
“The Party’s Over”

Email us if you need a copy of the video - info@maranfoundation.org

Some suggested ways to structure student research:

Courtesy of Anna Richter, English Teacher

Giving response homework where they all get a variety of articles and then have time to read them in class and begin response journals at the end of class, which should be finished for the next day for a ten minute sharing/discussion. It really helps get kids in touch with their feelings instead of reading about a tragic story and then rushing off to Algebra. It puts the story in their hearts.

Another research activity could have something to do with Reciprocal Teaching for generation of discussion questions

Yet another could be brainstorming and discussing times they have personally witnessed/been involved with violence and the link from Deanna’s story that made them remember this time. They could work in groups on this and make symbolic posters.

SECOND PART 1 HOUR:

1. Viewing of Dateline’s “The Party’s Over”

LAST 1-2 HOURS:

1. Have students sit in a circle.

2. Write down Adrenaline Rush on the board.

What is it? When do you feel it? Refer students to the feeling of when your heart races and sometimes you are so wrapped up in something that you are not thinking clearly, this dichotomy between your heart and your head.

Have students “file this away” for later in the lesson.

Common student responses:

Listening to good music Talking to someone I’m attracted to
Ditching class Driving fast in my car

Writing poetry Watching movies

Playing (sport) Arguing with my parent(s)

3. Review what happened that night.

“What do you know about the sequence of events that night?”

Have students share with a partner

As a whole group, have students share out the sequence of events that night to insure that everyone is on the same page.

4. Write down “The Problems/Issues” that night on the board.

Common student responses:

No supervision/no parents No one called 911

Under-age drinking No one stopped the fight

Destruction of Property Violence

5. Make distinctions between the problems/issues shared by students. The point is to have them identify problems they have control over when involved in a scene similar to that of November 17, 2001. During this exercise it is extremely important to help students recognize the maturity and control they are capable of.

Examples:

- No supervision/no parents

How many times have you been home without your parents present? Is there an inherent problem with there not being adults present? No. Therefore you would put an “X” next to this on the board.

- No one called 911

Unfortunately, given the depth of the stab, calling 911 would not have made a dramatic difference. Furthermore, this would not stop the stabbing from occurring in the first place. Doctors also indicated that Deanna died promptly after the stabbing. No, this is not a real problem or issue that contributed to the end result. Therefore you would put an "X" next to this on the board.

- No one stopped the fight

This is indeed a problem and could be used as a segue into the activities for the lesson. Yes, therefore you would circle this as a real problem that they as students could control that evening.

6. Encourage them to consider problems they did not write down. Editor's note: I have done this lesson several times, and not once did a class truly point out the following important "problems/issues" of that evening, e.g., "What about Pride?" "It's not what you say, but how you say it." Illustrate a few examples, e.g., how an adult effectively approaches a class, or how you go about asking someone to do something for you.

Lesson #1:

When you enter into someone's personal space, through words or actions, be very careful about your approach. When Deanna approached the girl who was being "destructive" in the backyard, maybe she didn't realize how fragile the girl was. You can encourage students to share examples of their own. Do you think that Deanna's approach may have hurt the girl's pride? Students can engage in a short discussion re: how one, our approach into someone else's personal space should be done in a respectful way that doesn't hurt their pride. While Deanna may have thought what she was doing was benign, it is always good practice to be overly respectful because you never know where someone may be coming from. Secondly, it is simply not worth it to hurt someone's pride, especially if you don't know him/her and don't know what s/he is capable of. Always be mindful that it is not what you say, but how you say it.

Lesson #2:

Have a student volunteer to walk from one side of the circle to the other. It's best if you find a "mild-mannered" student. As you approach this student from the other end of the circle, deliberately bump into him/her. When doing this, shove a little back and ask him/her, "What's your problem anyway?!" Editor's note: The several times I've done this exercise, the people sitting around you in the circle always begin to get excited. In every instance at least one person in the circle starts to say something about, "Beat her up, come on!" You as the instructor continue to antagonize the "mild-mannered" student. You work to pump up the crowd. You then reflect with the crowd and with the student. "How did this mild-mannered student suddenly become compelled to get into a fight?"

MAKING CONNECTIONS:

Have the students then reflect on what they wrote on the board about adrenaline. It is important for them to recognize that as a crowd they fueled a fight. Much like the circle that night of the party, adrenaline clouds your thinking. Give some analogies to things the students wrote down about adrenaline rushes, e.g., “How many of you have your coach yell at you for not sharing the ball with the team?” “All you see down the court is the ball, the ball, all while your teammates are begging you to pass.” Help them recognize two important parts to this part of the evening:

One, we have to stop this almost primal urge to see two people fight. Why do circles always form when there is a fight?

Two, recognize that even if you are not in the fight, by watching it you instigate the fight. The “mild-mannered” student can be coached into saying that s/he felt obliged to fight to appease the crowd.

IN REVIEW:

Students recognize that the real problems/issues that evening were around things in everyone’s control. Some of the first steps to non-violence:

It isn’t what you say, but how you say it. When we enter into someone’s personal space in words or actions we have to be prepared for the consequences. We want to enter in the most respectful way possible, since we never know where someone may be coming from. Students can be encouraged to reflect on how even a friend may be having a bad day and may snap if s/he doesn’t appreciate the way s/he is being asked to engage in conversation or action.

An important question for this particular lesson:

“How much is your pride worth?” Too many students feel it is beneath them to be respectful of others’ even if they do not agree with what they are doing or saying. In the end, pride can get in the way of respectful communication, both in giving and receiving.

It is everyone’s responsibility when we see two people engaging in a conflict, to recognize that this may become violent, prevent the aggravation and eventually stop it. Too many conflicts are escalated because of the circle that forms. The students must recognize that by being an on-looker they are equally guilty of being a participant in a fight. Reflecting on how even the “mild-mannered” student felt the need to fight when in the center of the circle today in class.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Conflict resolution

Give others the language to communicate effectively

Giving students the tools to break up even big fights. Editor's note: a good example I like to give them is when I broke up a high school fight in the cafeteria between two girls. I went from behind one of the fighting girls, I immobilized her by wrapping my arms around and under her elbows. While she was immobile I whispered something funny into her ear. This not only physically removed her from the fight, but also mentally. By talking about something off-topic it cooled her down and quelled some of the adrenaline. She was able to think clearly. The students then reflect on ways to recognize, prevent and stop fights.

STUDENT PRACTICE OF NEW MATERIAL

Independent Practice – How to recognize, prevent, and stop violence

v Students will re-write the sequence of events above, including solutions that could have changed the end result. At what points during the course of events could there have been conflict resolution?

v Students design a lesson plan, allowing them to teach the lessons learned from Deanna Maran's death to other students.

v Students will create a poster that uses one slogan to teach others about the consequences of violence.

v Students will create a handbook that uses tips on how to recognize potentially violent interactions, what to do to prevent it, but if it escalates, what to do to stop it.

v Students will create scenarios that have the potential to lead to violence (or have in the past) in their everyday lives. With concrete steps about what can be done to prevent or avoid the confrontations.

v Students will write an action plan reflecting what they think can be done to avoid something like this happening to one of their friends.

v Students will write a narrative in which kids are invited to timeline a violent situation in which they have found themselves or their friends and write a parallel story: what really happened on one side and on the other, how they wish things had happened, knowing now what they didn't know then.

EXAMPLE

You see two girls approaching one another screaming at one another.

STEP ONE: See if you can reason or talk down one or both of the girls. If that doesn't work

STEP TWO: Find other people to help you diffuse the confrontation. See if together you cannot talk down one or both of the girls. If that doesn't work

STEP THREE: You and the other people, go from behind the two girls at precisely the same time, wrap your arms around theirs, whisper in their ears something calm or funny, as you remove them from the heated argument.

CONGRATULATIONS! You've just diffused a potentially violent interaction.

THEN WHAT? Obviously you've not solved what brought the two girls together to fight in the first place. Now the hard work comes, getting to the bottom of their confrontation and figuring out what it will take for them to discuss their differences and come to a mutual solution that makes both sides happy.

STUDENT PRACTICE OF NEW MATERIAL

Independent Practice – Coming to terms with this story

Some students are moved by this story and feel compelled to send their sympathies. While the family appreciates these gestures, they hope that students will also do something to end the violence.

What some students have done:

v Put on a dance to raise money for the Deanna Maran foundation for non-violence.

v Written a memory book for Deanna Maran's family

v Written their own "I Am" poems, such as that written by Deanna

v Created a Quilt to commemorate Deanna and her story

v Started a website to post their feelings about Deanna

v Planted a peace tree

CLOSING/ASSESSMENT:

At the end of the year poll the class. Have them reflect on the same questions posed at the beginning of this lesson.

MEASURING YOUR SUCCESS:

If your students can point to specific instances where they have recognized a potentially violent situation, prevented it and stopped it.

Please encourage students to add to the [Deanna Maran Foundation for Non-Violence testimonials](#), by writing to info@maranfoundation.org.