

Operation Snowman

An Anti-Bullying and Prevention Event

Prepared by Group Critical Empathy

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

Bullying is everywhere whether we admit it or not. Our purpose? To be the driving force that puts an end to bullying and make it a thing of the past. How? With the power of **Empathy**.

But What Is Empathy?

Empathy is an umbrella term defined differently from one psychologist to the next. Ph.D.-bearing Mary C. Lamia of *Psychology Today* states that “The concept of empathy is generally defined as experiencing the emotional state of someone else, yet various theorists and researchers emphasize different aspects; such as thinking and feeling oneself into another person's inner life, perspective-taking, or empathy as a vicarious affective response based on the awareness of another's emotional state.”

Experiencing the pain of another through empathy has been proving in psychological research, as Paul Bloom states in *The New Yorker* that “researchers have learned that “some of the same neural systems that are active when we are in pain become engaged when we observe the suffering of others.”

More specifically, **critical empathy** is a term described by Diane Fruchtmann of DePauw University as empathy that aspires for and focuses on **“attempt at shared feeling...that simultaneously recognizes and attempts to bridge the differences between self and other.”** This goes beyond the typical definition of empathy in one’s **“attempt to stand in another person’s shoes and see through their eyes, to work through the same issues they worked through with something like the same feelings of urgency, passion, or confusion,”** while also perceiving one’s “own position and the position you sought to occupy.”

In developing and using strategies of empathy, students can intervene and combat bullying, creating for one another a safe, open-minded, and accepting environment for learning, friendship, and positive change.

Dr. Lamia’s research concludes that even bullies may feel empathy, but choose to use it in a negative way to inflict pain: “The bully's use of empathy is very much like those people who have a destructive narcissistic feature in their personality that enables them to use empathy to manipulate, control, exploit, or evoke fear in others.” Therefore, it is through the use of critical empathy strategies that bullies, even, can reform their basis of empathy to be rooted in a desire to include, support, and respect fellow students.

The Education Development Center details strategies of empathy can be further developed through activities such as discussing situations in which one is a bully, victim, or bystander, and what to do about it to develop a better understanding of when and how to help and prevent bullying using empathetic tactics. Therefore, it is essential for us to develop to instill and perhaps rewire positively-used empathy in youth so that it can become second nature to put themselves in the shoes of classmates, friends, and strangers. Perhaps with these tools developed, they can think twice before bullying another, and not think twice before stepping in to help someone being bullied.

Strategies of developing empathy are most powerful in group settings in which mentoring, discussion, and activities allow students to communicate safely and openly, allowing for honest and respectful communication that further leads to empathetic behavior as students take the time to listen and understand one another, and to develop trust and unity through bonding activities that further push their knowledge of bullying and how to together prevent it using empathetic strategies.

What Will Snowman Achieve?

- 1. Teach students how to better understand others through developing listening and engaging skills**
- 2. Use various activities/real-life simulations to help students practice communicating with others and becoming more experienced with how to handle situations that involve empathy**
- 3. Deepen the connections students have with others now to build long-lasting relationships with those in their community and continue to extend into the future**

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. A positive attitude
2. An open mind
3. Willingness to learn new life skills

VERIFICATION (What will people learn as they leave the event?)

Steps to check for student understanding

1. What kind of person they are now and what they see themselves to be (future letter).
2. Informal observational assessment of participation in group activities.
3. Informal assessment of students' abilities to contribute meaningfully to discussions.

See “MAJOR TAKEAWAY” for what the students should be learning during this event.

ACTIVITY (SCHEDULE OF WHAT WILL HAPPEN AND WHEN IT WILL HAPPEN)

Color Chart

RED is Session/topic 1

ORANGE is Session/topic 2

GREEN is Session/topic 3

Large Group Session 1 (3:30-4:00)

- Simon Says
- LG Question 1: Who am I and why are we here?
- Find Small Groups/Split

Small Group Session 1 (4:15-4:45)

- Warm Fuzzie explain/exchange
 - Once all members are accounted for, Warm Fuzzies are handed out to each group member
 - Explain Warm Fuzzies
 - Warm fuzzies is a game that involves:
 - A necklace of yarn with a large ball of yarn at the end with little short strings coming out of it
 - Being social with your peers
 - The goal is to meet new people and hand out/give people your fuzzies (the strings on the ball)
 - Here is how:
 - In order to hand out these strings (warm fuzzies) you must go up to someone you either know or don't know, introduce yourself and have a 15 second conversation with them.
 - After the conversation, find one (1) thing you have in common with them
 - This can be something you talked about in your time of conversation
 - This can be about something visual about them (outfit, accessories, shoes, bandanna etc.)
 - Once you have found your commonality that *ties* you together, seal this bond by tying one of your own Warm Fuzzie from your ball of fuzzies to

their string necklace of the other person, as a sign that the two of you have something in common

- You **CANNOT** give the same person more than one Warm Fuzzie even if you have more than one thing in common
- This is so that you can leave room for other peoples war fuzzies
- You **CANNOT** give yourself Warm Fuzzies, it is a meet and greet exercise for small and large group sessions
- Now let your group engage in Warm Fuzzies
- Explain that after your Small Group Warm Fuzzie exchanging, they will be allowed to trade Warm Fuzzies in the upcoming Large Group session
- Safe Place and Small Group Rules
 - In each Small Group activity, leaders go over the meaning of Safe Place
 - Leaders also discuss that whatever is said in this room, stays in this room when it comes to sensitive material
- Hangman
 - The first activity's purpose is to introduce the main subject that is bullying in a fun and proactive activity
 - Hangman will be played to introduce the topic and lead to our first Discussion with the following words
 - Name Calling
 - Hurtful
 - Worthless
 - Bully
- SG Discussion 1.5: What is Bullying?
 - Engage the group with the question above

Large Group Session 2 (5:00-5:30)

- Battle Royal Rock, Paper, Scissors
 - This is a game huge game of Rock, Paper, Scissors
 - Everyone is on their own and is a two out of three win format
 - After winning a battle you must battle another person to clash with within 5-10 seconds
 - What makes this special is that when you lose a battle, you become a part of the winning person's team, cheer this person on and stick with them
 - If you, the battler, win, you gain the defeated person and his fans who now cheer you on
 - Eventually there will only be two battlers left and two massive crowds ready to cheer on their battler
 - You can win in two ways:
 - One, you are the battler who is the last one standing, becoming the

People's Champion

- Two, you cheering for the winning battler
 - The last battler will then face the Main Speaker of the event, as all the participants cheer for their People's Champion
- LG Question 2: How can we deal with bullying?
- Split

Small Group Session 2 (5:45-6:15)

- DINNER IN YOUR SMALL GROUP ROOMS
- Tornado Game
 - Rules
 - Everyone steps on a dot in the form a circle with one person in the middle
 - The person in the middle says one thing about themselves that other people might have in common with them
 - I.E. color of shirt, have a dog as pet, loves sports (or specific sport), was bullied at some point in life, has bullied someone before
 - Everyone who has the same thing in common with the person in the middle has to move to a different dot, and the person in the middle has to find an open dot
 - After everyone moves to a new dot (CAN NOT BE ON THE IMMEDIATE LEFT OR RIGHT OF THEIR CURRENT DOT) a new person in the middle says one thing about themselves that other people might have in common with them
 - People on dots search for new dots if in common with person in the middle
 - Cycle repeats
 - What is the point?
 - To learn that we are all similar in some way shape or form
 - As individuals, we all have some common interests whether it is the whole group, or some people, down to even our favorite colors
 - Lead into discussion on empathy
- SG Discussion 2.5: What is Empathy and Critical Empathy?
 - See if the group can distinguish between the two type of empathy and explain how Critical Empathy might be a better tool than simple empathy
 - For the specific definitions we are using, please see “[But What Is Empathy?](#)” section above

Large Group Final Session (6:30-7:00)

- Guest speaker: How to live and lead with Critical Empathy
- LG Question 3: What can we do about this? How do we USE Empathy as a tool?
- Split

Small Group Final Session (7:15-8:00)

- Role playing
 - Session 1: Person A is the **Bully** and Person B the **Bullied (victim)**
 - Leaders will select two volunteers to role play
 - Remind group that this is a Safe Space and this is only an illustration of what could possibly be a very real, in school situation
 - Each individual is handed a script (one is Person A while the other is Person B)
 - Person A is the **Bully** and reads the script which uses hurtful language to insult that individual
 - Person B, who is being **Bullied** states what Person A is saying is hurtful and does not feel good
 - Session 2: Person A is **Bully**, Person B is **Bullied**, Person C is a **Friendly Student**
 - Leaders select three volunteers this time
 - Remind group that this is a Safe Space and this is only an illustration of what could possibly be a very real, in school situation
 - Like before, each of the three people get a script
 - Also like before, Person A is the **Bully** and ‘bullies’ Person B, the person being **Bullied**
 - This time though, Person C steps in
- SG Discussion 3.5: How do they relate?
 - With this being the last session of the night, it is time to bring together Bullying and Empathy/Critical Empathy and how they go together
- Future Letter
 - Group leaders explain what the Future Letter is
 - The Future Letter where all group participants (the middle school kids) write a letter to yourself
 - This letter is to be addressed to yourself in the future
 - You are to write what you learned here at Snowman and what kind of person and change you will be in the future
 - The letter takes about 10 to 15 minutes of silent time to write (or however long the kids need)
 - After everyone is finished writing, you address it to your current home and hand it to your leader
 - **You should not share what you wrote to others, as it is personal to you**
 - Leaders then explain how you will receive these letters your senior year in high school and find out what past you thought future you would be

MAJOR TAKEAWAY:

Teaching students the importance of having empathy is essential towards how they build relationships with each other and with those in the community. By focusing on developing these skills now, students can be mindful of what they say and learn how to effectively listen so the skills they attain can carry on throughout their lives. Using real world examples can help students be prepared for dealing with situations that involve empathy and be able to apply it when needed. These skills can not only help to build trust within their communities but can also create a support system that helps students grow as individuals and become more comfortable with each other.

Works Cited

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