



Make your school
a firearm free zone

Finding alternatives to violence

This resource sheet outlines activities for discussing violence and to help learners explore alternatives to violence. The activities take the firearm free zone process one step further by looking at violence in general, how it affects our lives and how we can find alternatives to violence in our everyday life.

Research¹ has shown that to promote alternatives to violence learners need to:

- 1 Know that violence is widespread and harmful.
- 2 Be able to empathise with victims of violence.
- 3 Acknowledge that they can encourage violence through their own attitudes.
- 4 Use skills to change norms and avoid dangerous situations.

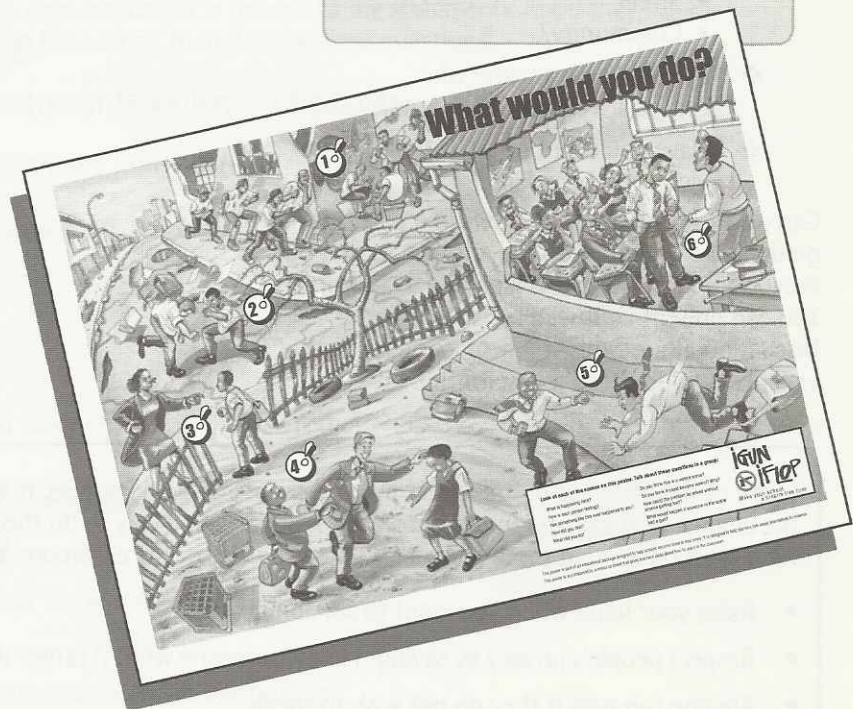
You will find activities that explore each of these areas in this resource sheet.

USE THIS RESOURCE SHEET WITH THE POSTER "WHAT WOULD YOU DO?"

Using the poster as a starting point for discussion

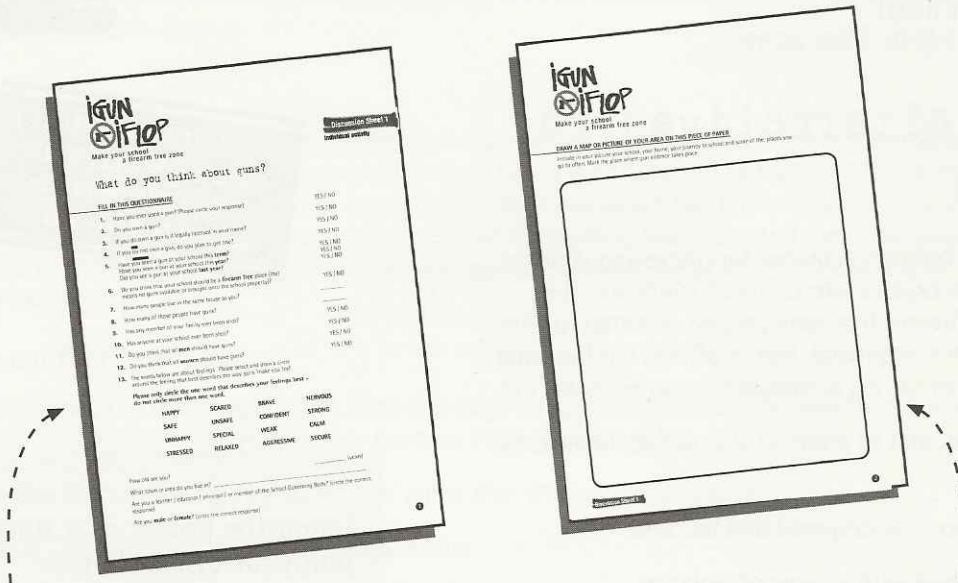
The poster is a tool that you can use to encourage learners to talk about violence and alternatives to violence. Begin your series of lessons by using the poster in small groups. Ask the group to tell you what they see in each scene. Then you should work through the questions that are on the poster with the group. Talk about one scene at a time.

This resource sheet contains a number of activities. Most are suited to learners in secondary and primary school. You will have to adapt some to the age of your learners.



1. Violence is widespread and harmful

Discussion Sheet 1 is a useful tool to help your learners understand that violence is widespread and harmful.



This survey focuses on gun violence but it can be used to start a discussion on violence in general. You could also adapt this survey sheet to make your own violence survey. You could ask questions such as these:

- ❖ Have you ever witnessed violence in your:
 - Home
 - Street
 - Community?
- ❖ Do you know anyone who carries a weapon of any kind?
- ❖ Have you ever been a victim of violence of any kind?

Carry out the survey on learners in a particular grade and then count up the answers to find out how widespread violence is amongst those learners. You can present your results using a graph. Discussion around this will help learners see that violence is widespread and harmful.

You can use this activity in class with older and younger learners. Do not worry if they draw a map or a picture the aim is to get them thinking about violence in their area.

Many of the activities on this sheet involve discussion with learners. It is important to allow everyone the chance to speak and to protect learners' privacy. One way to do this is to develop a set of rules for discussion and put these up as a poster on the wall of the classroom. You could include these points:

- Raise your hand when you want to say something.
- Respect people's privacy by saying "I know someone who ..." rather than saying the person's name.
- Anyone can pass if they do not wish to speak.
- Respect the opinions of others - listen, consider, keep communication open.

2. Empathising with victims of violence

A good way to help learners empathise with victims of violence is to ask them to tell stories about violence.

Storytelling in pairs works well. They may choose to tell their own story but if they do they should tell it as if it had happened to someone else. This will distance the emotions of a traumatic event. Once everyone has told a story, move on to a class discussion about some of the effects of violence on individuals. Again keep the discussion impersonal.

Note!

Telling stories about violence may raise bad memories for many children. Allow them to choose to tell the story. Do not press them to tell more than they are willing. If you can see a learner has not dealt with the trauma of violence you must refer them for help. There is a list of organisations at the back of the book *Making your school a firearm free zone*.

3. Acknowledge that they can encourage violence through their own attitudes

This activity shows one way to help learners reflect on their own attitudes to violence. You will need a large room for this activity. Ask learners to gather in the centre of the room, say:

"I'm going to read some statements. If you agree with the statement go to the left of the room. If you disagree go to the right. The stronger you feel about the statement the further from the centre of the room you should move. Stay in the centre of the room if you cannot make up your mind or don't feel strongly one way or the other, or if you don't want anyone to know your opinion. Make up your own minds! Don't just follow everyone else. Everyone has a right to express an opinion."

When the game is over, summarise how the class responded in general to the statements. Ask if they think these attitudes are fairly typical of people in the school. Then discuss these questions:

- ❖ What are the attitudes towards violence of people in school?
- ❖ What acts do these attitudes lead to now?
- ❖ What could the attitudes lead to in the future?

Statements

- Watching fights is a lot of fun.
- Being in fights is a lot of fun.
- It's OK for people to sleep around with boyfriends or girlfriends if they need to keep them in line.
- Sometimes people deserve to be hit if they've done something wrong.
- It's OK to walk away from a fight.
- If you want to protect yourself you need to carry a weapon.
- Fighting is not cool.
- Whatever the reason for a fight, fighting usually solves the problem.

You will need to adapt these statements to suit the age of your learners.

4. Use skills to change norms and avoid dangerous situations

There are many skills that can be learned to encourage alternatives to violence. Here are two ways to teach such new skills.

Role plays

It is important to let the learners work out their own strategies for handling potentially violent situations like the ones in the poster. When everyone in the class has had a chance to talk about the poster, let each group choose a scene and ask them to act it out. They should act out two scenarios - one where violence was used and one where it was not used. After each group has presented their role play, ask questions such as: What did you think of their strategy for handling the problem? Could you do something like this?

Five step conflict resolution

Here is one approach to resolving conflict. Read the steps through with the learners and then talk about how practical this approach is and whether learners think it would work.

Step 1: Stop shouting, cool down and agree that there is a problem to solve.

Step 2: Decide what the fight is really about.

Step 3: Make suggestions to solve the problem.

Step 4: Look at all your ideas and decide which ones will work and which won't.

Step 5: Choose one idea and try it. Once you have tried it think about how well it worked. If it didn't work try something else on your list.

Let learners practise the steps through role play.

Many of the ideas in this resource sheet have been adapted from the Get Real About Violence Programme of the Comprehensive Health Foundation in Seattle, 1994.