

“ISOLATION”

An interactive Forum Theatre session for Years 7-10 exploring bullying amongst young people.

This resource contains everything you need to support your students’ learning before, during and after their participation in the TRG Theatrical Response Group performance “Isolation”.

The “blue boxes” throughout these notes indicate where the activity links to the Australian Curriculum and are provided to support your use of our incursions in specific learning areas.

Teacher Note:

TRG invites schools to participate in pre and post student surveys to determine the impact that our incursion has had on students’ knowledge, attitude and behavioural intent. If you would like to participate in this simple, completely anonymous in-class evaluation process, please contact us and we’ll send you the materials.

This resource contains:

- Teacher information and activity notes
- Pre and Post performance extension activities for the classroom

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE:

In the days before the performance

Section 1: Introducing key concepts

- Optional: Administer student pre-survey in class
- To have students start to think about the issues, undertake as many of the in-class activities “Follow the Hand”, “Focus Questions” and “Anonymous Circle” as time allows

On the day of the TRG performance

Section 2: Performance Day

- Students view the performance and engage in interactive playback interventions

In class after the performance

Section 3: Post Performance Activities

- To reinforce the learning outcomes, undertake as many of the in-class activities “Stages of Change”, “Problem Solving Scenarios” and “Focus Review Questions” as time allows
- Optional: Administer student post-survey in class

SECTION 1: INTRODUCING KEY CONCEPTS

In the days leading up to the performance we suggest you talk to students about what they are going to see on performance day. Introducing students to the key concepts of the show through one or more of the in-class activities in this section will also help to enhance their understanding and engagement when taking part in the performance itself.

Key Concepts for this performance:

- “Bullying is a repeated behaviour; that may be physical, verbal and/or psychological; where there is intent to cause fear, distress, or harm to another; that is conducted by a more powerful individual or group; against a less powerful individual or group of individuals who are unable to stop this from happening.” (Olweus 1996)
- Bullying is a whole school issue and therefore can only be solved through a whole school approach. The first step is a cultural shift amongst the students.
- Bullying is complex and instantaneous solutions don’t exist but students have the power to make real, tangible change.
- Resolving the social issue of bullying is multifaceted. Developing coping strategies for victims, deconstructing actions and intentions of perpetrators and empowering bystanders are all essential elements needed to make change.
- Bullying has a myriad of consequences that may have lifelong effects.
- On average one in four high school students are bullied at school ‘every few weeks’ or more often.
- Empathy, emotional literacy, problem solving, communication and support networks are our essential values in approaching cultural change towards bullying.

IN-CLASS ACTIVITY: Follow the Hand

Learning Objectives:

- Students will develop a visceral and immediate experience of power relationships
- Students will extend their self-awareness and personal understanding of power in their lives
- Students will create a catalyst from which to discuss power and power relationships

Students will engage in a quick and light hearted physical activity that puts them in a position of power and a position of dependence. The activity gets students used to changing habitual patterns of thinking and allows for dynamic learning styles. The activity is used to generate discussion around power and control, personal experience of this control and its relation to a social setting.

Set Up:

- A clear and empty space.
- Place students in pairs

Instructions

1. Students label themselves A and B
2. A places their hand 5 centimetres away from B's face.
3. A is to take B on a journey through the space by leading them with their hand
4. B's objective is to keep the same distance (5cm) between their nose and A's hand at all times.
5. A and B swap roles after 2 minutes.

Discussion

Starter questions:

“Which did you prefer, leading or following? Why?”

“Can you think of a real life example where that power imbalance exists?”

The discussion should assist students in recognising their own experience of the activity and power relations. The extension of the discussion should lead students to relate power relationships to their daily lives and then to bullying.

IN-CLASS ACTIVITY: Focus Questions

Learning Objectives:

- Students will engage with and reflect on their own, peer and social understandings of bullying in contemporary society
- Students will explore the prevalence and severity of bullying in their schooling environment and the impact it can have on their lives
- Students will develop an understanding of current bullying education discourse, including statistics, definitions and preventative strategies

Suggested Questions

1. What does bullying mean to you?
2. Have you ever experienced bullying?
3. How can we stop bullying in high schools?
4. What bullying education have you done prior to this session?
5. How could we support someone who is being bullied?
6. What are the consequences of bullying?
7. How does our school deal with bullying?
8. Why do some students get bullied?
9. How do you resolve conflict in a non violent way?

Curriculum Link:

General Capabilities –
Personal and Social Capacity
Self Awareness

Recognise emotions

- reflect critically on their emotional responses to challenging situations in a wide range of learning, social and work-related contexts

Develop reflective practice

- reflect on feedback from peers, teachers and other adults, to analyse personal characteristics and skill sets that contribute to or limit their personal and social capability

Curriculum Link:

General Capabilities –
Ethical Understanding
Reasoning in decision making and actions

Reflect on ethical action

- evaluate diverse perceptions and ethical bases of action in complex contexts

General Capabilities – Personal and Social Capacity
Social Management

Communicate effectively

- formulate plans for effective communication (verbal, nonverbal, digital) to complete complex tasks

Instructions

The above focus questions can be approached in a variety of ways, catering to the needs and learning styles of the class. Example options include:

Think Pair Share – Discussion

1. Students are presented with one question at a time.
2. They are given 1 minute to think individually about the question and make notes.
3. Students pair up and discuss their thoughts, adding to their notes.
4. Pairs are called upon to share their thoughts with the group.

Dot Point Response – Written

1. Students are given the list of questions and asked to create three key dot point ideas in response to each one.
2. A focus on individual work and time for thought should be given to allow students to reflect honestly on their own personal experiences.
3. Students are asked to share some of their ideas for each question.

Expert Groups – Written and Discussion

1. Students are split into small groups (3 - 5) and the questions are divided up between groups.
2. Groups are then given time to research their questions in detail and prepare specific and factual responses to each question.
3. The groups then share their findings for the whole class, demonstrating for the larger group their new expert knowledge.

Note: If you intend to run the In-Class Activity: Focus Review Questions in Section 3 after the performance day, retain the students' responses from this activity for comparison in that exercise.

IN-CLASS ACTIVITY: Anonymous Circle

Learning Objectives:

- Students will develop a tangible understanding of bullying in their immediate school context and its influence on their peers
- Students will have a chance to self-reflect in a safe environment and experience the commonality of their lived experience in relation to their peers
- Students will extend their trust and openness to communication with their peer group

Set Up

- Space to sit in a circle with the whole class, either on chairs or on the floor
- Paper and pen for each student
- Something to collect and hold pieces of paper (bowl, hat, tray etc)

Instructions

1. Students collect piece of paper and a pen
2. Students sit in a circle including the whole class.
3. The following focus question is written on the board:
“Have you experienced bullying in your own life, either by being bullied or watching a friend being bullied? Write a short paragraph about your experience of bullying, elaborating on either the events in the story or how the event made you feel”
4. Students are encouraged to select an experience that doesn't involve anyone currently in the group.
5. Once students have finished writing their paragraph they fold the piece of paper in half and place it in the container in the middle of the circle.
6. The teacher then shuffles the stories in the container and distributes them out randomly to students, so they each end up with a new story.
7. Students are then asked to read the piece of paper they selected, going around the circle one at a time, so that every person's story is read out to the group.
8. The students are reminded that the objective is to remain anonymous, so if they are given their own story, they don't reveal that to the group.

Curriculum Link:

General Capabilities –
Personal and Social Capacity
Self Management

Express emotions appropriately

- consider control and justify their emotional responses in expressing their opinions, beliefs, values, questions and choices

General Capabilities –
Ethical Understanding
Reasoning in decision making and actions

Consider points of view

- use reasoning skills to prioritise the relative merits of points of view about complex ethical dilemmas

Discussion

Focus Questions:

“What were common themes or experiences from the group’s stories?”

“How did you feel when someone else read your story?”

“What did you learn from hearing everyone’s stories?”

The discussion should focus on the commonality of experiences rather than isolating the individual details. The discussion should lead the students to make observations about their class as a whole community and relate to their importance and right to belong.

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SECTION 2: PERFORMANCE DAY

What is Forum Theatre?

Forum Theatre is a style of theatre developed in Brazil by Augusto Boal through his form of Theatre of the Oppressed. It began as a social revolutionary movement to empower the citizens in Brazil and South America to rise up against their oppressive governments. The objective of Forum Theatre is to empower the disempowered by breaking down experiences of oppression and generating options for change.

The style of theatre is interactive and revolves around the audience participating in discussion about the choices the characters make and providing new options to create alternate outcomes. It is a tool to create social change and deconstruct power relations in a hope to make positive differences in people’s daily lives.

How does Forum Theatre work?

Forum Theatre performances are hosted by a person called the ‘Joker’, being the one who facilitates the discussion between the stage and the audience. The company of actors present a short play of scenes that end in a crisis point, where change is desperately needed for the characters. It is here that the Joker will turn to the audience for help, generating discussion and canvassing options for change that exist in the immediacy of the scenes.

The Joker will engage the audience in a variety of probing questions and dialogue to get their ideas developed into action on stage. The audience will influence and re-direct the course of action for the play, generating new endings for scenes. Members of the audience will also have a chance to play their ideas out on stage and discuss the success or failure of each option.

What is Forum Theatre aiming to do?

The objective of Forum Theatre is to develop ideas and skills to enact social change in the real world. Forum Theatre acts as a catalyst generating new conflict resolution ideas and as a medium to practice implementing those ideas. Forum Theatre aims to combat oppression in a community, whatever form that may take.

Forum Theatre does NOT aim to give answers and solutions; rather it creates a platform for the community engaged in the show to build solutions. Forum Theatre is driven by the needs and demands of its audience, being a flexible and ever changing show that reflects the responses of the people who engage with it. Forum Theatre rests on a ‘need for change’ existing in the audience - if there is no desire to change the ending of the crisis point, no solutions can be created.

How will the Forum Theatre session work?

The session will run for either 60 or 90 minutes, depending on what has been agreed. The first 25 minutes of the session will involve a performance by the TRG Company, exploring the complexity, prevalence and consequences of bullying in contemporary society.

The remainder of the session will be given over to an interactive group discussion between the Joker and the audience. The Joker will create the chance for the audience to get up on stage, engage in debate and explore their ideas related to bullying.

At the end of the session the Joker will summarize the key concepts identified in this resource pack and encourage students to seek appropriate professional help if they are struggling with any issues related to bullying and/or mental health.

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Self Awareness

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Develop reflective practice

- reflect on feedback from peers, teachers and other adults, to analyse personal characteristics and skill sets that contribute to or limit their personal and social capability

General Capabilities –
Personal and Social Capacity
Social Management

Communicate effectively

- formulate plans for effective communication (verbal, nonverbal, digital) to complete complex tasks

Negotiate and resolve conflict

- generate, apply and evaluate strategies such as active listening, mediation and negotiation to prevent and resolve interpersonal problems and conflicts

General Capabilities –
Personal and Social Capacity
Self Management

Express emotions appropriately

- consider control and justify their emotional responses in expressing their opinions, beliefs, values, questions and choices

General Capabilities –
Ethical Understanding
Reasoning in decision making and actions

Reflect on ethical action

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Consider points of view

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Synopsis for “Isolation”

“One’s dignity may be assaulted, vandalized and cruelly mocked, but it can never be taken away unless it is surrendered.” (Michael J. Fox)

Provocative and confronting - Isolation throws you into a world of harsh realities faced by school students across the country. One boy is beaten up, another is ignored, a girl is mocked every day, another gets slapped in the face and they don’t know how to make it stop: that’s where you come in.

Four friends in high school go through a journey that exposes who they are on the inside. Tackling physical violence, verbal abuse, isolation and cyber bullying, these four students are confronted with a daily struggle to survive.

In this ground breaking new show, we employ an interactive style of theatre to explore the real world challenges of high school students. We generate an empathy driven dialogue to break down these confronting problems and start to explore the solutions. We don’t have the answers, you don’t have all the answers - but the students do....

Isolation is inspired by a youth-devised performance development process in three Perth high schools that captured the students’ real-life experiences of bullying.

Curriculum Link:

General Capabilities –
Critical and Creative Thinking
Generating Ideas
possibilities and actions

Seek solutions and put ideas into action

- assess risks and explain contingencies, taking account of a range of perspectives, when seeking solutions and putting complex ideas into action

General Capabilities –
Critical and Creative Thinking
Reflecting on Thinking and Processes

Think about thinking (metacognition)

- give reasons to support their thinking, and address opposing viewpoints and possible weaknesses in their own positions

SECTION 3: POST PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES

Once back in class, students should participate in reflecting on the key messages. The suggested classroom activities are designed to reinforce the key learning outcomes from the performance.

IN-CLASS ACTIVITY: Stages of Change Tableaux (Drama based activity)

Learning Objectives:

- Students will develop a practical and self-driven understanding of problem solving in relation to bullying in their school environment
- Students will explore a new way of problem solving, using their body and images, along with cognitive discussion and group dialogue
- Students will utilise their new skills developed from the session and generate ideas and skills to make direct social change in their school

Set Up

- A clear space for all students to stand and move around in freely

Instructions

1. Students begin by creating whole class tableaux (frozen images). The class should create a tableaux of the following scenes:
 - Holiday in Bali
 - Airport
 - Anger (moving into abstract representation)
 - Bullying
2. To scaffold the process, build the image one student at a time. The teacher can start with the first element of the frozen image, then the students join the image one by one adding to the scene. Students should reset after completing each image.
3. Now split students into smaller groups of 5 – 7 and ask them to find their own space on the floor. They are now given the task to create two tableaux:
 - A school plagued by bullying
 - A school free of bullying

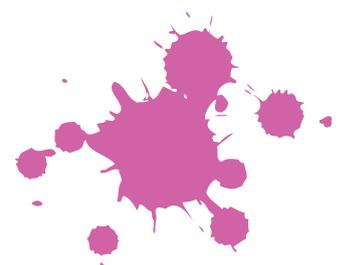
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Curriculum Link:

General Capabilities –
Personal and Social Capacity
Social Management

Negotiate and resolve conflict

- generate, apply and evaluate strategies such as active listening, mediation and negotiation to prevent and resolve interpersonal problems and conflicts



4. Students are then asked to discuss in their groups how a school plagued by bullying could transform into a school free from bullying. What steps need to be taken to make the change and remove bullying from a school?
5. The next task is to create 4 more tableaux that represent the journey of change from the school with bullying to the school without bullying.
6. The final task is to isolate the difference between each of the six tableaux the groups have created and create a list of the changes needed to go through each step of the process. Each group should end with a list of linear steps required to remove bullying from a school.

Discussion

Focus Questions:

“Which school do you prefer, with or without bullying?”

“Are the steps you created to make the change achievable for our school?”

“Do schools without bullying exist?”

“Does bullying exist outside of schools?”

The discussion should focus around developing the need for change within the students. Highlight the benefits of a school free from bullying and the practical, achievable tasks required to make change.

IN-CLASS ACTIVITY: Problem Solving Scenarios

Learning Objectives:

- Students will develop their ability to recognise bullying and the ability to make change within situations of oppression.
- Students will extend their capacity to empathise with people involved in bullying situations
- Students will generate practical problem solving strategies appropriate to their own context.

Instructions

1. Students are put in small groups and given each of the three scenario outlines below.
2. Their task is to develop strategies to assist in conflict resolution, opening up dialogue and decreasing the bullying present.

Scenario 1: Jacinta and Sophie

Jacinta is a ‘popular’ girl at school. She has a short temper and often resorts to physical violence to resolve conflict. Sophie is new to the school and is rather shy. She isn’t good at making new friends and usually takes a while to adjust to a new school. Sophie has become Jacinta’s newest target. Sophie is physically and verbally abused every day by Jacinta, isolating Sophie at school. Sophie has withdrawn from any extra-curricular activities and missed school at least twice in the last week.

- You are Sophie’s favourite teacher at school. How can you support her in coming back to school full time and decrease the bullying she experiences?
- You are Jacinta’s brother/sister in the year above her at school. How can you help her solve the conflict with Sophie in a positive way?

Scenario 2: Ryan and Josh

Ryan and Josh are friends. They have the same friends at school and play footy together on the same team after school. Ryan’s family has a lot more money than Josh’s family. Ryan constantly ridicules Josh for his second-hand clothes as well as makes fun of Josh’s family. Josh is having a particularly bad day one day and ends up in a fight with Ryan where he breaks Ryan’s nose.

- You are the school principal and have Josh in your office to talk about the fight. How do you plan to deal with this incident?
- You are Josh’s best mate from Footy and you go to a different school to him. How can you help Josh deal with this conflict?

Curriculum Link:

General Capabilities –
Critical and Creative Thinking
**Generating Ideas possibilities
and actions**

*Seek solutions and put ideas
into action*

- assess risks and explain contingencies, taking account of a range of perspectives, when seeking solutions and putting complex ideas into action



Scenario 3: Ben

Ben is a dedicated and confident student. He excels academically and at sport. He has lots of friends at school and has a positive rapport with his teachers. Ben also spends a lot of time using Facebook and Instagram. Recently he has started receiving lots of abusive comments on his posts and photos. It has progressed to the point where a few people humiliate and abuse him for everything he posts. He receives private messages from the same people every day insulting him, threatening him and his family.

- You are Ben's parent. How would you support him in this conflict?
- You are Ben's best friend at school. You are the only person he has spoken to about the abuse. How can you help stop this from happening?

Discussion

Discussion afterwards should focus on generating a list of strategies for dealing with conflict. The discussion should analyse the effectiveness of the strategies and the consequences of the choices.

IN-CLASS ACTIVITY: Focus Review Questions

Learning Objectives:

- Students will develop their skills of critical reflection and identify the new information they have gained from the session
- Students will extend their understanding of bullying in a personal and academic context
- Students will gain the knowledge to recognise the prevalence and consequences of bullying in their daily lives, along with an understanding of how to combat it.

Instructions

1. Students should be given the list of questions from the "Focus Questions In-Class Activity" in Section 1 and asked to write dot point answers for each question.
2. Hand out their previous responses to the questions and ask the students to highlight the changes they notice between the two sets of responses.
3. Continue the focus questions with the following questions:
 - "How can we remove bullying from Australian schools?"
 - "Why do people bully others?"
 - "How can students your age cope when they are bullied?"
 - "How can the bystander support a person being bullied and make change?"
 - "How do you/would you deal with being bullied at school?"

Discussion

Once students have had time to think about these questions and/or write their responses, they should be used to generate classroom discussion. The focus should be placed on developing preventative support strategies along with coping strategies. The discussion should also help students see that many of their peers experience or have experienced similar oppression – they are not alone.

Further Reading on Forum Theatre

"Games for Actors and Non-Actors" by Augusto Boal (*translated by Adrian Jackson*)

"Theater of the Oppressed" by Augusto Boal

"The Rainbow of Desire" by Augusto Boal

Useful Anti-Bullying Resources for Teachers

Friendly Schools Plus Program	friendlyschools.com.au/fsp
Bullying No Way	bullyingnoway.gov.au
Kids Helpline	kidshelp.com.au

Curriculum Link:

General Capabilities –
Critical and Creative Thinking
Reflecting on Thinking and Processes

Think about thinking (metacognition)

- give reasons to support their thinking, and address opposing viewpoints and possible weaknesses in their own positions