

THE PYRAMID OF HATE

Rationale:

History provides examples of the way in which stereotyping, scapegoating, dehumanization and discrimination can escalate to mass murders that have, in some instances, resulted in genocide. This activity provides participants with the opportunity to understand the pain caused by bias and the ways in which prejudice can escalate. It is designed to promote recognition of the value of interrupting that progression. .

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Examine how discrimination based on bias can escalate into acts of violence.
2. Discuss the impact of prejudice on individuals and on society.
3. Recognize the role of individuals in interrupting the escalation of hate.

Requirements:

Materials: *Have You Ever* Handout (one copy for each participant)

Genocide Transparency

Shoah Visual Testimony video

Photographs of survivors with quotes

Pyramid of Hate Handout

chart paper, markers and push pins or velcro

[Optional: easels]

Space: Room for students to work in small groups

Time: 45 – 60 minutes

Participants: high school student/maximum 40

Procedures:

1. Distribute *Have You Ever?* Handout to each student and tell them they are to answer yes or no to each of the questions in the handout. Assure the students that the handouts are for their eyes only. [3 minutes]
2. When students have completed their questionnaires, lead a discussion using some or all of the questions listed below. List students' responses on chart paper or on the chalkboard. [10 minutes]
 - a) Why do you think people tell ethnic jokes about other groups, insult others, or exclude them socially? (A possible response might be "others" are different.)
 - b) Why would these differences cause a person to "put down" someone else? (Possible responses might be: it makes them feel superior or more important or they are afraid of the "other", failure to understand another's culture.)
 - c) Where do people learn to disrespect people who seem different? (Responses may include home, school, friends, or the media--newspapers, television, movies, music.)
 - d) Can you give examples of a prejudice you have learned through the media?

3. Read the following case study.

In one school, a group of four boys began whispering and laughing about another boy in their school that they thought was gay. They began making comments when they walked by him in the hall. Soon, they started calling the boy insulting anti-gay slurs. By the end of the month, they had taken their harassment to another level, tripping him when he walked by and pushing him into a locker while they yelled slurs. Some time during the next month, they increased the seriousness of their conduct – they surrounded him and two boys held his arms while the others hit and kicked him. Eventually, one of the boys threatened to bring his father's gun into school the next day to kill the boy. At this point another student overheard the threat and the police were notified.¹

4. Ask the students if something similar to this could happen at their school? How do they think a situation like this could affect the entire school? What could have been done to stop the situation from escalating? Who should have stopped it? [7-8 minutes for case study and discussion]
5. Tell the students that they have been discussing a situation that started out as “whispering and laughing” and became more intense, escalating to violence. A visual way of describing this type of progression is called a Pyramid of Hate.
 - a. Distribute the *Pyramid of Hate* Handout or draw a Pyramid on chart paper or the chalkboard. Briefly review each level of the Pyramid starting with Level I. Ask students to provide one or two examples to exemplify each level. [5 minutes]

Based on the case study, ask students the following questions:

- a. Where would you place “whispering and laughing” on the Pyramid (Level I)
 - b. Why do you think that what seemed harmless initially progressed into violence? (Answers might include: nobody stopped it, the perpetrators gained confidence that they could continue without interference or consequences, the victim did not seek help, etc.)
 - c. Even if it seemed harmless to the perpetrators and bystanders, do you think it felt harmless to the victim? How do you think he felt?
 - d. At what level of the pyramid do you think it would be easiest for someone to intervene? What would be some possible ways to intervene? [5 minutes]
6. Ask the students if they can think of examples of genocide to which groups were subjected based on their race, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, etc. (e.g., Native Americans, Aboriginals of Australia, enslaved Africans, Rwandans, Armenians, Muslim Bosnians, and Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe.) Chart their responses. [2 minutes]
8. Present the United Nation’s definition of “genocide” by using the *Genocide* transparency. [3 minutes]

¹ Description of school incident from “Sticks and Stones” by Stephen L. Wessler. *Educational Leadership*, December 2000/January 2001 (p. 28). Used with permission.

9. Ask the students what they have heard about the Holocaust and list their responses on chart paper or the chalkboard. (Make sure that the students are aware that this was the deliberate and systematic murder of 6 million Jews based upon their religious or cultural identity, as well as the death of thousands of political dissidents, Roma, Polish intellectuals, people with disabilities, homosexuals and other targeted groups.) [3 minutes]
10. Divide the students into groups of four or five. Explain that they are about to see some brief video clips of survivors of the Holocaust talking about their personal experiences during this period. Tell them that when the video is over, each group will be assigned the story of one survivor. The task of the small groups will be to decide where on the Pyramid of Hate that person's experience belongs. [2 minutes]
11. Show the video. [4 minutes]
12. Distribute to each group a photo of a different survivor. Have each group select a reporter and, when the group members have reached consensus, instruct the reporter to bring the photo of the survivor to the large Pyramid and affix it to the appropriate level. Explain to the students that there is no one correct placement. When all the photos have been placed on the Pyramid, ask the reporters to explain why their group selected the level they did for the survivor they have been assigned.. [3 minutes]

(Alternative procedure: Divide the students into groups of four or five and give each a *Pyramid of Hate* and individual photos of each survivor accompanied by a quote from his or her testimony. Have each group decide where on the Pyramid they should place each survivor's testimony. Remind the students that there is no one correct placement. After 10 minutes, have the groups bring their Pyramids to the front of the room and place them on easels.)
13. After all the photos have been put in place, ask if there is agreement with the placement of the photos. If students don't agree, have them explain their thinking. [4-8 minutes]
14. Ask students what they learned during this activity.
15. Recalling the testimony of Milton Belfer, ask students what could have been done by individuals or groups to change the situation he recounted..
16. Conclude the activity by showing the testimony of Mollie Stauber from *One Human Spirit*

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY:

Variation: Distribute the *Pyramid of Hate*. Divide the whole group into small groups of 5 to 6 participants. Assign one level of the *Pyramid* to each small group and have the students brainstorm examples from history, current events, or their personal experience that demonstrate the word.

FOLLOW UP ACTIVITY:

Have students work in groups to research other genocides that have occurred in the 20th Century, such as in Cambodia, Rwanda, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Assign each group a genocide to research and present in the form of a case study using the **Case Study Activity Sheet**.

WEB SITES RESOURCES:

To view the survivors' testimonies, visit www.vhf.org/courtv. To download this lesson, visit www.ADL.org/education/courtv

HAVE YOU EVER ?

ANSWER YES OR NO TO EACH OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

Answer truthfully. This is for your eyes only!

HAVE YOU EVER:

Overheard a joke that made fun of a person of a different ethnic background, race, religion, gender or sexual orientation?

Been the target of name calling because of your ethnic group, race, religion, gender or sexual orientation?

Made fun of someone different from you?

Left someone out of an activity because they are different from you?

Were not invited to attend an activity or social function because many of the people there are different from you?

Engaged in stereotyping (lumping together all people of a particular race, religion, or sexual orientation? Ex: White men can't jump!)

Were threatened by someone who is different from you because of your difference?

Committed an act of violence against someone because that person is different from you?

GENOCIDE

Genocide as defined by the United Nations in 1948 means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group, including

- killing members of the group
- causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group
- deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part
- imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group
- forcibly transferring children of the group to another group

CASE STUDY: GENOCIDE IN _____

SUMMARY OF THE EVENT:

(Present the basic facts: what happened, by whom, when, and where.)

THE BACKGROUND:

(Prepare a summary of the political, economic, social, and geographic factors that contributed to the problem.)

ORGANIZERS:

(What group or groups of people were responsible for the mass killings? Motives?)

VICTIMS:

(What group(s) of people were victimized? What survival tactics were used? What was the ultimate death toll?)

WORLD RESPONSE:

(What was the response of the other countries to the mass killing? Could this genocide have been prevented?)

AFTERMATH:

(How has this genocide affected both perpetrators and victims and their families? What is the general situation in this country at the present time?)

ADL'S PYRAMID OF HATE