

# **‘RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE NO WAY’ PROGRAM**

## **CHOOSE WISELY: TOOLS FOR SAFE RELATIONSHIPS**

**Peer Educators’ guide  
to violence prevention  
education**



## Acknowledgements

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These resources have been developed and re-developed over time to respond appropriately to the needs of young people as they arise. They are freely available to promote a greater awareness of the impact of violence on the lives of young people. These resources are intended to encourage bystander intervention, and to interrupt and challenge the values and beliefs that support violence. The resources may be adapted and changed to suit differing groups of young people, as we have done over time. We ask only that they are acknowledged as the work of young people involved in this program and that they are not sold or utilised as a tool for making profit.

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## Part 1: Introduction

The Peer Educators' Guide to Violence Prevention Education was developed in 2013 at the finalisation of the 'Relationship Violence No Way' Program to bring together the tools, resources and practice wisdom developed within the program over 15 years from 1998 – 2013. It is violence prevention education designed for young people by young people. This guide is intended for use by peer educators, youth workers, teachers, social workers; all those working with young people and interested in violence prevention. This guide provides the rationale, supporting information and outline to enable successful use of the Choose Wisely resources: Relationship Violence No Way Program workshop outlines, handouts and films.

### **Rationale for violence prevention education with young people**

#### **Domestic and relationship violence**

Domestic and relationship violence are highly prevalent in Australia and have significant physical and psychological consequences for victims. Young people are witnessing and becoming involved in physical, verbal, emotional and social violence in their family of origin at very high rates. Since the age of 15, 40% of women have experienced one incident of physical or sexual violence. Most women who are victims of physical assault do not report the incident to the police.<sup>1</sup> In Australia, women are most likely to be subjected to violence by a male who is known to them.<sup>2</sup>

In a survey of 5,000 young Australians aged 12-20, one in four (23.4%) reported having witnessed an act of physical violence by their father or step-father against their mother or step-mother.<sup>3</sup> This has a number of highly detrimental effects for children and young people immediately and in the long term. These may include: injury and psychological stress, ongoing difficulty in school due to stress, anxiety, disruption and cognitive impairment and greater likelihood of issues in adulthood with relationships and poor physical and mental health. These are outlined in a number of literature reviews including the White Ribbon Foundation report *Assault on Our Future*<sup>4</sup> and The Australian Domestic Violence Clearinghouse *Children Affected by Domestic Violence*.<sup>5</sup>

One in eight young women report being in an abusive relationship before they complete high school.<sup>6</sup> The impact of violence on women is well documented including in homicide data: 112 women in NSW alone were homicide victims in 2007-08. Of these women, 78% were killed by someone known to them, 55% were killed by a partner or ex-partner.<sup>7</sup> VicHealth has also well documented the health costs of violence against women including injury, ongoing health and mental health impacts.<sup>8</sup>

Although there is little Australian data on violence within same sex relationships, the small studies that have been completed indicate high levels of physical abuse 41% of women and 28% for men in same sex relationships.<sup>9</sup> Of these, only one in ten had reported the abuse to police.<sup>10</sup>

## **Sexual violence**

Sexual violence is prevalent, under-reported and damaging to mental health and reproductive outcomes. Sexual assault is most prevalent for young women, with 45% of all recorded victims of sexual assault aged 10-19 years.<sup>11</sup> Only 19% of women who were victims of sexual assault reported this to the police.<sup>12</sup> 78% sexual assault victims report a known perpetrator and most crimes take place in a home.<sup>13</sup> This pattern of sexual assault begins early: 34% of sexually active year 10 girls and 38% of sexually active year 12 girls report having had “unwanted sex”.<sup>14</sup>

Sexual assault can have significant negative impacts on women’s mental health and wellbeing in the short and longer term including depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder<sup>15</sup> and can reduce women’s capacity to work and also have a ripple effect on their friendship and family networks.<sup>16</sup> For further reading, see the Australian Institute of Family Services’ Impact of Sexual Assault on Women.<sup>17</sup>

While the rate of men reporting experiencing sexual violence within the general population is 5.5%),<sup>18</sup> a small study of LGBT population noted that 16.8% of respondents stated a current or previous partner had forced them to engage in sexual acts that they were not comfortable with.<sup>19</sup>

## **Harassment issues**

A large scale Australian study found evidence that one in four Year 4 - Year 9 Australian students (27%) are bullied frequently. 29% of Year 8 students also report frequent bullying.<sup>20</sup> Bullying has been shown to cause substantial harm including physical and somatic symptoms, anxiety, social dysfunction and depression.<sup>21</sup> Longer term effects have been shown such as: school failure and the uptake of unhealthy and socially damaging behaviours such as alcohol and substance use.<sup>22</sup>

Use of technology for the purpose of harassment has become more prominent. 16% of young people who have experienced harassment online identify that this has negative impacts on their confidence, self esteem, school performance and family relationships.<sup>23</sup>

## **Homophobia**

Homophobia is a constant source of bullying and harassment; particularly for young men regardless of their sexual attraction but it is especially damaging for young same sex attracted people (SSA). For this group, ‘school was the most dangerous place... to be with 80% of young people who were abused experiencing this abuse at school’.<sup>24</sup> Young SSA people who had experienced abuse due to their sexuality said it affected their sense of safety at home and at school. This is a realistic fear with nearly 85 per cent of GLBT respondents in Leonard et al’s 2009 study having been subject to heterosexist violence or harassment in their lifetimes.<sup>25</sup> Homophobic harassment can have extremely detrimental effects on young people, in Hiller et al’s study those who report experiencing such harassment were more likely to use drugs and alcohol and were at greater risk of suicide and self-harm.<sup>26</sup>

## **Rationale for young people leading violence prevention education**

It is essential for high quality youth work practice that programs be imbedded in a strong youth participation model. Research shows that youth health services that use effective, respectful youth participation mechanisms are more responsive, more efficient and more engaging for young people.<sup>27</sup> Youth participation also provides opportunity for young people to be connected with their local community and challenges negative stereotypes of young people.<sup>28</sup> The Youth Connect Strategy released by the Office for Youth in November 2010 recognises that involving young people in decisions that affect them 'positively impacts their overall sense of health and well-being, is empowering for young people and provides a valuable tool for building skills and confidence'.<sup>29</sup>

### **Peer Education**

Peer Education as a high level participatory mechanism recognises the capacity for young people to uniquely engage with, educate, influence and support their peers. Using Peer Education as the primary means of the RVNW Program's service delivery celebrates young people's ability to contribute to reducing violence on behalf of and for young people.

It has been identified through numerous studies that young people see their peers as the first point of contact for information, problem resolution and guidance in relation to sensitive issues<sup>30</sup> such as those covered by the RVNW program. Young people are also more likely engage with, learn from and relate to slightly older, trained peers.<sup>31</sup>

In the evaluation of the RVNW program in 2011/12, 75% of workshop participants strongly agreed or agreed that they were comfortable discussing the workshop content with the Peer Educators.<sup>32</sup> 88% of workshop participants identified the Peer Educators as believable; 91% said the Peer Educators were knowledgeable and 95% said the Peer Educators were respectful during the workshop.<sup>33</sup>

## Part 2: Relationship Violence No Way' Program

### **The history of the Program: 1998 - 2005**

'Relationship Violence No Way' (RVNW) began in the 1990s following the recommendations of a 12 month pilot project entitled 'Guys Talk Too: Improving Young Men's Sexual Health'<sup>34</sup> which was a joint initiative of SHine SA and the South Australian Health Commission. 'Guys Talk Too' was the first project in South Australia to link improving young men's sexual health with lowering sex-based violence. It was designed to deliver Primary Health Care Services to young men in the 16-23 age group using peer education strategies in the inner and outer southern metropolitan regions of Adelaide.

The 'Relationship Violence- No Way!' Project (Stage 1) was managed by the South Australian Domestic Violence Unit and funded through the Commonwealth Partnerships Against Domestic Violence in late 1997. The project received in-kind support from the Domestic Violence Unit and extra funding support from Yarrow Place Rape and Sexual Assault Service and Onkaparinga Crime Prevention Project. The first stage of the project concluded in February 1999.

As a result of the success of the peer education and peer support methodologies from the Stage 1,<sup>35</sup> joint funding from three government departments was allocated to support The 'Relationship Violence- No Way!' Project Stage 2. This was a project of the Inner Southern Community Health Service and was based at Marion Youth Service for a period of twelve months from July 1999 to June 2000.

'Relationship Violence No Way' Project Stage 2 involved implementing single and mixed sex peer education methodologies to support the establishment and maintenance of non-abusive relationships for young women and young men at risk of being subjected to domestic/relationship violence.<sup>36</sup> Eleven young men and women (5 women and 6 men) who had experienced domestic/relationship violence were recruited and trained to become peer educators. They provided peer education on relationship violence to groups in secondary schools, individual (1:1) mentoring and support to clients from youth service provider agencies and schools in the region, as well as other activities.

In January 2005, the 'Relationship Violence – No Way!' Project formally became a core program at Southern Primary Health – Marion Youth (previously Marion Youth Centre). The program then employed a full time Coordinator, a role which had formerly been fulfilled by a part time external consultant.

In 2006 the mentoring component of RVNW ceased to be part of Marion Youth Centre service provision and was handed over to Families SA, which had been the main source of referral.

## **The 'Relationship Violence No Way' Program: 2005 - 2013**

From 2005 until the closure of the program in 2013, RVNW Program had one Coordinator and up to 25 casual sessional Peer Educators employed at a time.

Peer Educators represented diverse communities, background, gender, sexuality, religion, education and experience including young people who were:

- > Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- > Same sex attracted
- > Culturally and linguistically diverse
- > Of refugee background
- > Muslim
- > Christian (including Catholic, Fundamentalist, Pentecostal and Greek Orthodox)
- > Sikh
- > Atheist
- > Youth work, social work, law, psychology, health promotion, public health, arts, art and education students.

This included young people who had experienced:

- > domestic violence in their family of origin
- > domestic and relationship violence in their own relationships
- > sexual violence
- > bullying and harassment
- > homophobic abuse
- > racism
- > sexism
- > supporting friends/family members who had experienced violence
- > religious discrimination and or persecution
- > war and terrorism

The RVNW program worked with local high schools in the Southern region of Adelaide including Willunga High School, Reynella East College, Hallett Cove R-12 School, Seaview High School, Pasadena High School, Mitcham Girls High School, William Light R-12 School, Urrbrae Agricultural High School, Unley High School, Hamilton High School, Australian School of Maths and Science, Marymount College, Mercedes College, Emmaus Christian College and Annesley College. The 'Relationship Violence No Way' also worked with alternative education programs including those run by Workskil, FAME, SOLE, Hallett Cove Youth Pathways and Mission Australia. The program recorded 1700 - 2000 individual student contacts annually, peaking in 2012/13 financial year with 3214 student contacts.

Additional projects undertaken by 'Relationship Violence No Way' included development of violence prevention resources such as the Choose Wisely short films, White Ribbon Day Ambassadors and White Ribbon Day in Schools packages, RVNW stickers, posters and postcards and the Don't Stand By, Stand Up! bystander intervention poster series.

'Relationship Violence No Way' also partnered with Flinders University under the Southern Knowledge Exchange Grant program to research, develop and deliver the Safer Social Networking Training Program.

## **'Relationship Violence No Way' Program workshops**

- > Relationship Violence Prevention
- > Challenging Rape and Safe Partyng
- > Harassment and Peer Conflict Resolution
- > Challenging Homophobia and Discrimination
- > Cyber Citizenship

All of the Relationship Violence No Way' Program workshops have been designed to be run by two Peer Educators facilitating a single-sex group of 8-20 young people in a classroom or working space which is appropriate for confidential conversations.

In our experience, young women and men participate more in discussions and feel more comfortable asking questions (particularly about sex and relationships) when workshops are run in single-sex groups with Peer Educators of the same sex.

Each workshop was usually delivered in 90 minutes. The Peer Educators would set up the room so that the participants are seated in a circle facing towards a white board.

While teachers/group workers were not required to be in the room during the workshop, behaviour management support from teachers/group workers has been helpful.

**The Harassment and Peer Conflict Resolution, Cybercitizenship and Challenging**

**Homophobia and Discrimination workshops** have been designed for young people in years 8-9 (ages 12-14) although the workshop content can be adapted for older/more mature groups.

**The Relationship Violence Prevention and Challenging Rape and Safe Partying workshops**

have been designed for young people in years 10-12 (ages 15-18) although both workshops include content that can be used for older/more mature groups and for more indepth discussion on violence in same-sex relationships and negotiating consent and safer sex.

# Key understandings of the 'Relationship Violence No Way' Program

## 1. Safety is a right - no one deserves to experience violence

- 1.1. Everyone deserves to be safe at all times and in all places.
- 1.2. If one person feels uncomfortable, the situation is not safe regardless of the intention of others.
- 1.3. Consent to sex must:
  - > Be freely and voluntarily given by all partners at all times.
  - > Not obtained by threats, coercion, or pressure.
  - > Sex needs to be emotionally, physically and legally safe and respectful for all people involved (partners) and in an environment they feel comfortable.

## 2. Violence is a choice

- 2.1 Abuse is about maintaining power and control over another person/people and can take many forms.
- 2.2 The use of violence and abuse in relationships is a choice and no one is genetically, hormonally, or socially programmed to do it.
- 2.3 It is the perpetrator's responsibility to stop using violence.
- 2.4 Harassment is about maintaining power and control over another person/people.
- 2.5 Revenge only makes problems worse.

## 3. It's never the victim's fault

- 3.1 Victim-blaming is wrong: it shames victims into silence and contributes to low rates of reporting of violence. Victim-blaming promotes myths about the causes and incidences of violence, justifies perpetrators actions and permits violence to continue or reoccur.
- 3.2 A victim of violence, no matter what form, should not be expected to leave a relationship. It is the perpetrator's responsibility to stop using violence.
- 3.3 A person's identity is not defined by the violence they have experienced. Victims/survivors of violence can and do live happy, healthy lives free from violence.

#### **4. Gender is socially constructed**

- 4.1 Gender is learnt and changes over time.
- 4.2 Traditional gender roles promote, excuse, and condone violence against women.
- 4.3 Relationship violence is predominantly perpetrated by men against women. Men are also victims of physical violence including rape and sexual assault, usually perpetrated by men.
- 4.4 Analysis and deconstruction of gender roles is essential in violence prevention.
- 4.5 Traditional rigid gender roles promote and maintain homophobia.

#### **5. Respectful communication**

- 5.1 Communication is a key part of any respectful relationship.
- 5.2 The more you understand the problem, the easier it is to deal with the issue.
- 5.3 Work on the problem together – it's OK to ask for help, it's OK to admit that you're wrong, and it's OK to say a problem is too big to deal with on your own.

#### **6. Bystander intervention**

- 6.1 We are all impacted by violence and have a responsibility/opportunity to prevent violence.
- 6.2 If you're watching harassment you can help change the situation.
- 6.3 Bystanders can and do make a difference in preventing violence in relationships by:
  - > Being safe and supportive friends for victims;
  - > Interrupting or safely intervening in violence-supportive behaviours;
  - > Believing people who disclose violence; and
  - > Respecting and supporting a person's decision about what to do next about the violence they have experienced.

## Part 3: Peer Educators' guide to working with young people

Since its establishment in 1998, the 'Relationship Violence No Way' Program has developed its own style of violence prevention based on our experiences of working with young people and current research on best practice. This Part draws together our practice knowledge, program evaluation and current research and presents a guide to working with young people in violence prevention.

### Violence prevention educators

Peer Educators, youth workers, social workers, teachers and all other people working with young people and interested in violence prevention are violence prevention educators.

### RVNW Program workshops

The content of our workshops has evolved organically over time: the Peer Educators have reshaped activities constantly to best meet the needs of young people and to make our workshops as relevant as possible. For example, as online bullying and harassment issues became more prevalent for young people, RVNW developed the Cyber Citizenship workshop that focused exclusively on this area.

The RVNW Program Workshop Outlines are not intended to be prescriptive: each Peer Educator has brought their own experience/context and style to delivering workshop content. However, RVNW Peer Educators used a principled and strategic approach to working with young people based on our experiences and best practice research. As discussed, we value diversity in our team and believe that multiple kinds of experience and knowledge should be used in violence prevention education.

This Part of the Guide contains:

- > A discussion on 'Relationship Violence No Way' Program Peer Educators' approach to working with young people and presenting our violence prevention workshops.
- > A recommendation on the Key Understandings for Violence Prevention Educators as developed and practiced by Peer Educators in the RVNW Program.
- > A list of skills we have found to be important for working successfully and sustainably in violence prevention education with young people.

# **Our approach to working with young people**

## **Participant-centred learning**

As young people ourselves, Peer Educators in the 'Relationship Violence No Way' Program are in a valuable position for engaging with young people. Peer Educators for RVNW Program facilitate in a relaxed informal manner and use relevant cultural references and recent media articles as case studies for discussion. We often incorporate fun, humour and where participants have consented, a respectful use of swearing.

## **Respectful of difference, diversity and a range of life experiences**

We are aware that participants in workshops may have had experiences of abuse, sexual assault, violence, harassment and/or homophobia. With such awareness, we put in place the safety mechanisms to avoid triggering<sup>37</sup> or alienating participants. These include creating the Group Agreement (see below); ensuring participants understand the sensitive nature of the topics to be discussed and are aware that they can leave at any time and seek support; and respectfully responding to disrespectful, disruptive or concerning behaviour.

We respect that participants come from culturally and socially diverse backgrounds. In order to challenge dominant social structures such as racism, heteronormativity<sup>38</sup> and sexism, and ensure that all participants feel included, we use culturally or socially diverse examples in workshop discussions. For example, in our Relationship Violence Prevention and Challenge Rape workshops, there are scenarios about same-sex as well as opposite-sex relationships. Peer Educators work actively to challenging stereotypes and myths surrounding different groups, for example, that some cultures are more violent than others. Young people from diverse backgrounds, particularly those who speak English as a second or third language, can be marginalized from group discussions which are dominated by people who speak English as a first language. In our workshops, we aim to challenge this by being aware of and actively including young people from diverse backgrounds to ensure their perspectives are heard.

## **Mixed use of learning techniques**

In the evaluation of 'Relationship Violence No Way' Program, between 71% and 84% of students rated the presentation style of the workshop as 1 or 2 (on a scale of 1-excellent to 5-boring).<sup>39</sup>

We use a varied combination of learning techniques to support participants' engagement and learning. These include: handout resources, verbal discussion, brainstorming, and activities in big and small groups. We work flexibly and adapt activities to meet the needs, level of understanding and mood of participants. We also adjust the classroom environment to facilitate discussion, by, for example, dispensing with desks and arranging chairs in a circle.

## Safe space

The establishment and preservation of a safe workshop space is essential for effective and valuable discussion in workshops about sensitive topics. This extends to the environment where the workshop is conducted: for example, we always attempt to work in a space that is enclosed to ensure privacy and confidentiality. A safe workshop space for Peer Educators involves working in pairs to ensure that both feel supported and able to, if necessary, respond to the individual needs of a young person.

Before dealing with any workshop content, Peer Educators ensure that participants understand the nature of the content to be discussed and inform them about available support services. The Group Agreement then provides the infrastructure for safe discussion of the workshop content. The Group Agreement is established with the participants at the beginning of each workshop (see workshop outlines for content). It models respect for participants to involve them in creating the agreement about how everyone will interact during the workshop, as opposed to Peer Educators enforcing rules on participants that they have not agreed to. If a participant acts in a disruptive or disrespectful way, the Peer Educators will refer back to the Group Agreement to demonstrate why the behaviour is inappropriate and ask the participant whether they are willing to continue upholding the Group Agreement. The Group Agreement emphasises participants' right to feel safe and respected and their responsibilities to respect each other.

In creating the Group Agreement, Peer Educators inform young people about our obligations as Mandatory Notifiers under South Australian law and discuss the risks associated with disclosure in an open or public space. The workshop participants are encouraged to only discuss stories in third person: that way no one can tell the difference between a question that participants might have about the content being discussed, a personal story or an example from TV. This promotes emotional safety and discussion. During the workshop, Peer Educators will engage in protective interruption to circumvent disclosure. Where a participant begins by saying "my dad/sister/friend", the Peer Educator will interrupt and remind the participant that the group agreed to use third person for discussing stories or case examples. If appropriate, a Peer Educator in this situation may also check with the young person after the workshop to see if they want to talk.

Also included in the Group Agreement is the right to pass- where a participant chooses not to participate for whatever reason- and the right to leave the room- particularly important for young people who may be triggered by the discussion.

## **Modelling respect**

We have found it imperative in our work to role model respect through respectful, consistent management/response to behaviour in line with the Group Agreement. The Group Agreement also provides a platform for participants to describe and explore their concept of respect. One example is discussing with the participants whether or not it would be okay to swear during the workshop and how swearing can be respectful or disrespectful. For example, swearing about a circumstance would be acceptable, however swearing at someone else in the room would be disrespectful. Another important way that Peer Educators model respect is in their interactions with each other while facilitating workshops. This is particularly important where facilitators are of different gender because it reinforces gender equality and the possibility of men and women working together to challenge sexism.

## **Respectful behaviour management**

In our evaluation of our workshops, between 92% and 97% of students indicated that they felt listened to and respected by Peer Educators.<sup>40</sup>

In our work with young people, we practice respectful behavioural management based on a functional analysis of behaviour. This means that we understand that all behaviours have a function for the person who enacts them. This is an example of how Peer Educators would use the functional analysis of behaviour to understand how to respond to a young person in a workshop:

In a Challenging Rape workshop, a young woman appears not to be listening, she turns away from the group and starts to braid another young woman's hair.

This behaviour could be interpreted as disrespectful (as the young woman is distracting another participant). Referencing the Group Agreement, the Peer Educators facilitating the workshop could immediately ask the young woman to stop braiding her friend's hair and turn around. However, reflecting on the sensitive nature of the topic being discussed and using a functional analysis of behaviour, the Peer Educators would consider why the participant might be acting this way before responding to her.

A functional analysis of behaviour involves asking:

- > What is the participant doing? Where? When? How?
- > What might her behaviour mean?
- > What messages may she intend to be communicate?
- > What functions might the behaviour serve?
- > What needs to change for the function of the problem to be expressed with different behaviour?

The participant could be uncomfortable or confronted by the content of the workshop. She may have experienced or know someone who has experienced sexual violence. Bearing this in mind and not wanting to embarrass the young woman or draw the group's attention to her, a Peer Educator could respond to her behaviour in a number of ways. For example, one Peer Educator could go over to the young woman and talk to her quietly while the other Peer Educator continues with the workshop, or one could ask her to turn around and braid her friend's hair in a way that they could still see and be part of the group.

Considering possible purposes for young people's behaviour in the context of the workshop and topics discussed enables us to respond effectively and in a non-judgemental way to the young person. By not demanding that all young people look attentive or only speak when spoken to, Peer Educators model respect for the participants and their learning. In our experience, by being more 'relaxed' with typical 'behaviour management', we build better rapport with the young people we work with and this encourages them to open up and participate more in workshop discussion. Modelling respect in managing group behaviour sounds simple but too often many young people feel disempowered by adults in their life and have never been given the opportunity to talk about what they really think. Using a functional analysis of behaviour and giving young people the space and respect to explore important issues in their own way and time is, in our experience, crucial to unpacking violent-supportive myths and having open, practical discussions about healthy relationships.

## **Position of Inquiry**

A Position of Inquiry requires that we as individuals explore how our lives and values are shaped by the social context in which we have grown up. The principle guiding this approach is that every person is the expert in her/his world. Rather than telling young people what is right and wrong, the role of the Peer Educator is to facilitate participants' inquiry into how their social context has affected the development of their values and beliefs. This approach is a way of respectfully dealing with resistance and allowing young people a safe, non-judgemental space in which to challenge their values. For example, in a Harassment workshop, if a young person said they would punch someone who broke their phone, rather than telling them that this is the wrong response, a Peer Educator might ask questions exploring the circumstances (e.g. What if it was an accident? Would it be different if it was your best friend or someone you didn't know very well?) or exploring the possible consequences (e.g. What would happen if that occurred on school grounds as opposed to outside school? Would violence get your phone back? How else could you solve this problem?) In this example, the young person is given space to reflect on what they would really do and what the consequences of this would be.

It is essential in practicing the position of inquiry in a workshop that Peer Educators do not judge participants' responses but rather enable them to see ideas from a different point of view and guide them towards more complex understandings of the causes and effects of violence. Therefore, Peer Educators need to be extremely aware of their own value-set and how this might influence their reactions to young people's questions and ideas. Violence prevention workshops should open up space for young people to discuss and explore their beliefs about violence and the beliefs of other people/institutions in their lives. Sometimes young people ask challenging and controversial questions to try and shock Peer Educators and/or their fellow participants and to get a negative reaction. If Peer Educators react to young people's thoughts with judgement or disgust, this shuts down discussion. It may also make participants defensive or create a joke out of a serious issue. This is a missed opportunity for deeper discussion about and challenge of violent-supportive views.

We recognise that as Peer Educators our lives are similarly affected by narrow and rigid versions of masculinity and femininity that at times promote abusive behaviour, injustice, discrimination and self-harm. The legitimacy of our work derives from our commitment to adopting the position of inquiry in our own lives and challenging our values (such as those about violence, gender and relationships) in the same way that we ask and support other young people to do. One important way we do this is by changing the language that we use on a day to day basis and being mindful not to use words or phrases that reinforce harmful social constructs such as "that's so gay", "slut" or "stop acting like a girl"/ "man up" etc.

## **Questioning method**

In the 'Relationship Violence No Way' Program workshops, we ask questions of participants, using the Position of Inquiry, to help them to explore their views and values. The questions in the Values Walks and in the 'Suggested Questions to Guide Discussion' in the Workshop Outlines are intended to explore the boundaries of young people's views. We recognise that in society, attitudes and beliefs that support violence are entrenched and often manifest in subtle ways. For example, in our experience, participants in workshops will often agree with broad statements such as 'It is never okay for a man to pressure or force a woman to have sex with him' and may describe such behaviour as rape. However, when talking through a scenario (see Challenging Rape workshop), participants might say that the victim should have fought harder or may be lying about what happened. Our questioning method, therefore, aims to dig deeper into participants' values and ideas in specific contexts so that violent-supportive attitudes can be challenged. In the Workshop Outlines, we have highlighted questions that are aimed to be contentious (or "devil's advocate") questions that we use to facilitate open discussions about these issues: for example, "What if a man says he's just protecting his partner when he prevents her from seeing her family and friends?" We have named this a contentious question because it conflicts with our Key Understandings about violence (such as 2.1: Abuse is about maintaining power and control over another person). However, providing a specific context enables participants to critically consider violent-supportive attitudes hidden within everyday discourse and name them as such. This also provides practice in responding to and challenging each other's views about violence.

In the Workshop Outlines, we have connected the Key Understandings with the Cheat Sheet Values Walk questions to demonstrate how Peer Educators push the boundaries of participants' values through questioning but can guide discussion back the core principles in the Key Understandings.

## **Key understandings for violence prevention educators**

These are recommended key understandings for violence prevention educators (those working in violence prevention) as developed and practiced by Peer Educators in the RVNW Program.

- > Young people can change their world

- > Violence is preventable.

### **Violence Prevention Educators' role**

- > Violence Prevention Educators can change their views/perspectives/values over time (as understandings grow and deepen in violence prevention practice).

- > Violence Prevention Educators are role models for young people and must be respectful.

- > Violence Prevention Educators have a commitment to ongoing learning.

### **Workshop facilitation**

- > Based on the prevalence of violence in Australia it is likely that some participants will have direct experience of violence. Violence Prevention Educators must support them and make the workshop a safe, accessible space for discussion about violence prevention.

- > People experience and understand violence in different ways based on gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, culture and ability.

- > Violence prevention workshops include challenging, sensitive issues that are difficult for people to talk about and may even be experienced as confronting or triggering.

- > People learn in different ways.

- > Participants will change their answers and that's okay – the Violence Prevention Educator's role is to make it safe for that to happen without judgement.

## Essential skills for violence prevention educators

This is a list of skills RVNW Program Peer Educators have found to be important for working successfully and sustainably in violence prevention education with young people.

Violence prevention educators are:

- > Committed to ongoing learning.
- > Patient.
- > Assertive not aggressive.
- > Excellent at working in team.
- > Able and willing to role model respectful relationships with other workers and young people.
- > Willing to have fun and relate well to participants.
- > Aware of and willing to challenge their own values about violence, gender, relationships etc.
  - > This is integral to respectful group facilitation and using the Position of Inquiry. Violence prevention education workshops should not include facilitators projecting their values onto participants.
- > Aware of their own experiences.
  - > Some of the Peer Educators working in the RVNW Program had experiences of violence and were able to use examples from their own life constructively in workshops. This is a skill that takes time to learn. Awareness of own experiences and vulnerabilities or triggers is important to ensure that violence prevention educators and participants feel safe and the workshop continues to be productive. Workshops are not to be used by educators as a therapeutic response to their own needs.
- > Actively practicing self-care, including being able to ask for help or support where needed.
- > Knowledgeable of topic areas and key understandings of Program.
- > Able to flexibly apply the resources to ensure content is relevant, accessible and engaging for young people.
- > Able to present in an accessible way, explain concepts in simple terms.
- > Skilled group facilitators (see 'Our Approach')
  - > In presenting a workshop on violence prevention, educators must maintain a high level of awareness of the participant group dynamics, mood and energy levels and comprehension. This is essential to ensure the workshop is engaging and accessible for all participants, to avoid or be able to respond effectively to disclosure and to ensure that the participants feel respected and included.
- > Able to challenge participants in a non-judgemental way, such as through practicing the Position of Inquiry (see 'Our Approach').
- > Able to use Protective Interrupting to circumvent disclosure by participants when it is not safe for them to share personal experiences of violence in front of the group (see 'Our Approach').

## Footnotes

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10. Ibid.
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12. Trewin, above n 1.
13. Ibid.
14. Smith A, Agius P, Mitchell A, Barrett C, Pitts M. (2009). *Secondary Students and Sexual Health 2008*, Monograph Series No. 70, Melbourne: Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health & Society, La Trobe University.
15. VicHealth, above n 8.
16. See VicHealth (2007) *Preventing Violence Before It Occurs: A Framework and Background Paper to Guide the Primary Prevention of Violence Against Women in Victoria*. VicHealth. Melbourne; Morrison, Z., Quadara, A. & Boyd, C. (2007) "Ripple effects" of Sexual Assault Australian Institute of Family Studies
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19. ACON and the Same Sex Domestic Violence Interagency Working Group (2006) *Fair's Fair; A Snapshot of Violence and Abuse in Sydney LGBT Relationships*.
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21. Lodge, J., (2008) *Working with families concerned with school-based bullying*. AFRC Briefing No. 11, Australian Family Relationships Clearinghouse Published by the Australian Institute of Family Studies
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26. Hillier, L et al, above n 20.
27. NSW CAAH (2005), ACCESS Study: Youth Health — Better Practice Framework Fact Sheets, NSW Centre for the Advancement of Adolescent Health.
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33. Ibid.
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35. Friedman B., Relationship Violence: No Way! Young Men and Relationship Violence Prevention Project, partnerships against domestic Violence September 1999
36. Southern Primary Health- Marion Youth- Relationship Violence No Way Program (2012) Program Outcome Report 2011-2012.
37. Triggering refers to participants feeling distressed or re-traumatised by discussion which may remind them of experiences they have had in their life, such as relationship violence or sexual assault.
38. The belief or assumption that all people identify as one gender and are attracted to people of the opposite gender.
39. Southern Primary Health- Marion Youth- Relationship Violence No Way Program (2012) Program Outcome Report 2011-2012.
40. See Ibid.

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For more information

Electronic copies of the 'Relationship Violence No Way' Program are available online at [www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/youthhealth](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/youthhealth)

