



be a teacher

One Man Can take action against abuse



**ACTION SHEET:
TEACHERS**

A girl student knocks a boy student's books out of his hands. He shouts at her for being so clumsy. The teacher sees this, doesn't know how to respond and rushes them on to their next class.

In another school, a teacher feels overwhelmed and exhausted after failing to contain an especially disruptive student. She knows he's exposed to ongoing violence at home and is not sure what to do.

In a school board meeting, parents, teachers and students, who not long ago were locked in confrontations about sexual harassment at school, celebrate the anniversary of a new initiative focused on encouraging male students to challenge violence against women and girls.

In a staff room and later at assembly, a principal talks to the teachers and learners about the importance of healthy relationships and reminds them of the school policies prohibiting sexual harassment and dating violence.

Teachers - encourage men to take a stand against domestic and sexual violence

Today, you as a teacher are being called upon to address a major societal problem: violence against women and children.

Every teacher has a big influence on the attitudes and values of the learners they come into contact with. However, great teachers have always taught more than their course work. They teach honour, perseverance, self-respect, discipline, teamwork and respect for others.

By teaching your male learners that young women deserve to be treated with honour and respect and that violence does not equal strength or manliness, you will help your young men develop some of the most important skills in life.

To be able to educate learners effectively, schools and teachers have to take relationship violence seriously. Learners who are exposed to violence at home are often too distressed to focus on their school work. Learners who have been raped or abused themselves are often too traumatised to be able to learn.

Responding to and preventing sexual and domestic violence has to be a primary concern for all school personnel, for the school governing body and for parents.



MAKE A DIFFERENCE STOP VIOLENCE



This document is part of the One Man Can Action Toolkit, an initiative of Sonke Gender Justice and the Provincial Government of the Western Cape. For more, see www.genderjustice.org.za/one mancan





What can teachers do to encourage boys and young men to be more active in ending violence against women and children?

1. Understand the impact of violence: Violence interferes with students' ability to learn and adds untold stress to the already difficult jobs of teachers and administrators. Learners who live in homes with violence frequently have a hard time concentrating at school. They often sit in class distracted by the violence they witnessed or by the possibility that their mother might be beaten up again. The anxiety children exposed to violence feel may make them disruptive. It may also leave them withdrawn and depressed. Boys who have been exposed to domestic violence are more likely than their peers to be violent in their relationships and disruptive at school if they do not get the help they need. They are also more likely to use drugs and alcohol. Girls who have witnessed or experienced violence are more likely to become pregnant as teenagers, to attempt suicide, to use drugs and alcohol, and to have eating disorders.

2. Create a physically and emotionally safe school environment: Develop comprehensive school policies to prohibit gender-based violence, including a Code of Conduct that addresses hurtful language and behaviour that constitutes bullying or harassment. Integrate violence prevention messages into existing school curricula (see samples below). Invite an organisation working with men to run groups on relationships for young men. Invite guest speakers. Guest speakers from local agencies have direct knowledge about the effects of gender-based violence and can share their experiences with students and school staff.

3. Make your views clear: Define your views on what it means to be a man. Explain that you are opposed to violence against women and that you will take it seriously if you see violence or hear language that encourages dating violence in any way.

4. Model respect and integrity: In your interactions with women and girls - including your wife and daughters - always demonstrate respect and integrity. Never make dismissive comments about women and girls. Through your actions, teach your learners the importance of respect - for oneself and others.

5. Encourage learners to support each other: Make it clear that you expect learners to speak out when they hear about violence or the threat of violence. Encourage them to remain non-violent. Remind them that good friends support each other to change and to be the best they can be.

6. Involve and educate parents: Use seminars, meetings, newsletters, and emails to reach parents with information about gender-based violence and the school programmes in place to prevent it. Talk about dating violence in parent conferences and help parents understand what they can do to help their child develop healthy relationships at home and at school.

7. Identify and invite non-governmental organisations to speak at school governing body meetings about violence, bullying and sexual harassment. There are many organisations working with men in communities across the province and the country.



8. Hold your fellow teachers accountable: A report by Human Rights Watch entitled “Scared at school: Sexual violence against girls in South African schools” indicates that teachers are often responsible for domestic and sexual violence committed against girls in their schools. As a teacher you have a legal and ethical obligation to speak out swiftly and forcefully and demand that teachers who violate the rights of girls be arrested, prosecuted and convicted.

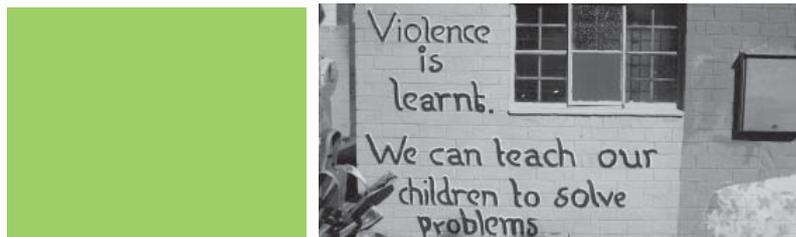
9. Provide educational materials to learners, parents and colleagues: Work with your colleagues to develop materials that you can send home with students to reach parents who do not attend school events. School staff can help families experiencing violence by having agency telephone numbers and brochures available as referrals (see the Directory of Service Providers in this Toolkit).

10. Teach students about healthy relationships: Think about the many ways you can integrate content on alternatives to violence into your existing classes. For instance:

- Learners in a maths class could help to develop and analyse an anonymous school survey that measures their peers’ attitudes and behaviours concerning violent relationships.
- Learners in a computer class could create brochures to be placed in the school office, staffroom, library, or design a web page for the school’s intranet.
- In a life orientation class, work with students to review existing school policies concerning sexual harassment and sexual violence. Discuss whether additional policies are needed to protect students who have been targets of these behaviours. They may wish to put their thoughts in writing in the form of a proposal to the school principal or school governing body.
- In a drama class, help students to design a play that shows alternatives to dating violence. Include the roles that friends, family, teachers, bystanders, a domestic violence counselor, community groups and others may play to prevent violence.
- Identify and discuss plays, movies, or musicals that depict healthy or unhealthy relationships.
- In an art class, encourage students to develop a poster campaign about dating violence.
- In a physical education class, plan a school-wide or community ‘walk’ with your students to educate the community about violence against women.

For information on where to get support, see the Directory of Service Providers in the One Man Can Action Kit, or see our website www.genderjustice.org.za/onemancan

For the classroom activities, thanks to the American Bar Association’s Teen Dating Violence Prevention Initiative www.americanbar.org/unmet/teendating/toolkitinstructions.pdf



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