

Continuum of Harm Exercise

Proposed Audience: 9 – 12 grades & beyond

Sources: Men Can Stop Rape & Domestic Abuse Intervention Services

Overview:

In this activity, participant's place cards with different situations along a continuum that ranges from "not at all harmful" to "most harmful" to women. Interesting debates and discussions about gender, violence and their connections tend to result from situations that participant's disagree on. The major point of the activity is to show participants how all of the situations, when viewed together, create and sustain violence against women and a rape culture. The exercise helps participants recognize that we must pay attention to both the intent and the impact of our actions. In addition, participants are encouraged to think about which situations would invoke a reaction from them and to break their silence the next time they are confronted with one of those situations.

Objectives

- To identify everyday attitudes and behaviors that support the dominant story of masculinity and contribute to a rape-supportive culture.
- To recognize everyday opportunities to challenge the dominant story of masculinity and prevent men's violence against women.

Materials Needed:

- 8 x 11 cards of Actions – one action per sheet (see box below) Facilitator can adapt the Attitude and Action Cards to fit their specific audience.
- Continuum of Harm – Post three cards on one wall or around the room, "Not at Harmful to Women" "Least Harmful to Women," and "Most Harmful to Women."

Timing: 40 – 60 minutes

Activity Steps:

- 1) Ask participants to move so they can all face the part of room on which you set up the Continuum of Harm cards.
- 2) Introduce the activity
- 3) Hand out cards one to each person or reveal them to entire group.
- 4) Ask people to place card on the wall or ask the group where to put it. Discuss one card at a time.

➤ **Activity Introduction:**

What we're going to do now is take you through an exercise that will help us all walk upstream and begin to examine the cultural origins of sexual assault and dating violence. This exercise is called the Continuum of Harm to Women. What we're going to do is show you a series of cards. On each card is a behavior, belief, assumption, or attitude. What we want you to do is place each card somewhere along the continuum from "Most Harmful" to "Least Harmful." And, if there are some which feel cause no harm to women at all, we'll

place them to the side under the heading, “Not Harmful.” Before we begin, I want to emphasize that there are no right or wrong answers here. We expect that you will disagree about where the cards should go and we may end up having to split the difference in your opinions in order to place the card.

- **Choose about Cards:** You may choose to reveal each card to the group at once or pass out the cards and have each participant place the card and then have discussion. Either way, MAKE SURE that only one card is being discussed/distributed at a time.
- **TIME! Facilitator Tip:** Because this activity is so easy to get caught up in, keep an eye on time. This exercise should take a minimum of forty minutes, and preferably fifty to sixty minutes. You may choose which cards you use, but must have a MINIMUM of seven cards up on the wall, including “stranger rape” and “acquaintance rape.” You need to be thoughtful about the order in which the cards are presented—start with a card that will stimulate conversation and engage a variety of viewpoints, like, “honking/whistling at a woman on the street.”

Attitude and Action Cards:

Honking or whistling at a woman/girl walking down the street
Themed Parties (ie Golf Pros/ Tennis Hos)
Telling a man or a boy that he throws like a girl
Using 'He' in when writing to refer to men and women
Yelling at your girlfriend for talking to another guy
Refusing to wear a condom
Using alcohol or drugs to 'loosen a girl up'
Believing that a woman's place is in the home with the kids
Telling your girlfriend she can't go out to the bars without you
Joking about how a girl 'needs to get smacked'
Believing that when a woman/girl says no to sex, you just have to push a little harder
Grabbing a girl's butt as she's walking by
Blaming a woman or a girl for being raped because she wore revealing clothes
Looking at Maxim
Acquaintance rape
Stranger rape

- **Activity Debrief: Bird Cage**
Debriefing the continuum is perhaps the most important part of this activity. It's the time when the source of violence against women is revealed, when an approach to rape prevention involving men and women falls into place. Before you begin debriefing, you might ask the audience if anyone can explain the purpose behind the continuum. It's

not unusual for some to recognize what the cards have common: the potential to dehumanize women and to make it easier to commit violence against them. Explain how each (some, if time is running short) of the cards confine and dehumanize women and connect them with other forms of dehumanization—war propaganda, for example, or racist attitudes and assumptions.