

Youth Violence: Inside the Skin
3- HOUR WORKSHOP

Designed for what audience: At-risk youth and their parents.

*Facilitated by: The Youth Violence Team from the University of Alabama at Birmingham
AND/OR local facilitators (social services providers, educators,
community leaders)*

STUDY GUIDE FOR "YOUTH VIOLENCE: INSIDE THE SKIN"

Description

This 1-page document is a guide which outlines the over-arching ideas in the film "Youth Violence: Inside the Skin". The characters and their individual plot lines are identified as illustrating the three themes: 1.) Violence Begets Violence, 2.) Boredom and Addiction, and 3.) Followers and Leaders. Discussion points are suggested that may be used to break the cycles that perpetuate each of these 3 scenarios.

How to Use the Study Guide

Below is a 3-hour educational experience based on the Study Guide. However, Workshop Leaders should feel free to use the Study Guide to create their own follow-up discussion and exercises for this film.

Preparation:

Study: The Workshop Leader and Facilitators should be thoroughly familiar with the ideas in the Study Guide. They should be prepared to paraphrase all points and supply examples if needed.

Materials:

For the third round of discussion, facilitators will need

1.) a slip of paper for each person in his/her group.

Facilitators should anticipate how many people will be in their groups when all participants are divided into roughly equal groups, with one facilitator per group. The words "follower" or "leader" should be written on each slip of paper. There should be an equal number of each of these. It would be best if the facilitators had these slips in their pockets so that Round Three may proceed smoothly and quickly.

2.) pencils/pens small pocket notebooks for each person in the room.

Facilitators will pick up pencils and notebooks from the front of the room and hand them out. They will be used for journaling during the last portion of the workshop.

1. SCREEN THE FILM

The Workshop Leader should introduce the film by preparing the viewers to "get lost in the characters and stories". The film will have a greater and longer-lasting impact if viewers experience the film on an emotional level, rather than mentally/intellectually.

2. BREAK

After the screening, viewers should be given a break to allow the film to "sink in." No formal discussion should take place immediately following the film. It is useful if participants are encouraged to leave the room, go to the rest room, grab a snack -- things that will get their minds off of the film.

3. DIVIDE INTO GROUPS

After a 10-15 minute break, participants should be divided into small groups with a facilitator in each group. If the number of facilitators dictates that group size is more than 10, facilitators should circulate around the room rather than be in a group.

A. THEME: Violence Begets Violence

1.) Setting up the First Round of Dialogue

WORKSHOP LEADER: Let's take the idea of "Violence Begets Violence". In your groups talk about which characters had violent families or were treated violently by others.

2.) Pose Deeper Questions

Discussion will proceed at different rates in each group. When a group seems to be ready to move on, the facilitator should pose deeper questions.

FACILITATORS:

- How did the background of violence affect the choices of the character?
- Did he/she really have a choice?
- Is there anything that he/she could have done to make the story end differently?

Facilitators should make sure that the participants discuss:

- Sean's Story
- Michael's Story
- Anne's Story

It is best for the facilitator to say as little as possible so that participants are teaching themselves and each other through dialogue rather than an external information source. Facilitators may mention an idea, but should draw no conclusion. They may give their own opinions and invite the opinions (or even disagreement) of others. Facilitators should avoid presenting their ideas as "the voice of authority."

3.) Go Deeper

Facilitators should consider how these 3 characters address the points listed here. Ideas from this list can be interjected in discussion, using the facilitator's own words.

1. Misplaced anger from childhood trauma
2. Learning the language of violence as a method of communication and self-expression
3. Lack of attention is more violent than negative attention.

4.) Breaking the Cycle

Facilitators should present the following idea in their own words, suggesting that there may be a way to break the cycle of violence. Facilitators should allow -- even encourage -- participants to disagree. (Remember, the most important thing that can happen in these guided dialogue sessions is that participants reveal parts of themselves to themselves. Therefore, there should be no "right" or "wrong" answers, and the group dynamic should be one of acceptance and freedom to express anything.)

WORKING TO BREAK MENTAL PATTERNS CAN HELP YOU LEAVE TRAUMA IN YOUR PAST RATHER THAN BRING IT INTO THE PRESENT. WORK AT CHOOSING YOUR THOUGHTS RATHER THAN BEING CONTROLLED BY THEM.

B. THEME: Boredom and Addiction

1.) Setting up the Second Round of Dialogue

WORKSHOP LEADER: Let's move on to the idea of "Boredom and Addiction". In your groups talk about which characters were bored.

2.) Pose Deeper Questions

When a group seems to be ready to move on, the facilitator should pose deeper questions.

- What effect does extreme boredom have on a person?
- How do you think these characters got so bored? Is there a "cause" for boredom?
- Have you ever been so bored you wanted to do something dangerous, or violent, or just sort of insane?
- So where does addiction fit in if we're talking about boredom? What does one have to do with the other?

Facilitators should make sure that the participants discuss:

- Brad's Story

3.) Go Deeper

Facilitators should consider how our bored characters address the points listed here. Ideas from this list can be interjected in discussion, using the facilitator's own words.

1. Causes of boredom, a known factor in youth crime. Programming your kids with "busy-ness". TV, computers, media, entertainment mentality = high incidence of boredom.
2. Emotional rush = chemical rush
3. Addiction to chemicals through emotion, adrenaline, and substance abuse.

4.) Breaking the Cycle

Facilitators should present the following idea in their own words, suggesting that there may be a way to break the cycle of violence. As before, facilitators should maintain a group dynamic of acceptance and freedom to express anything.

BECOMING AWARE OF THE SIGNS OF OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE BEHAVIOR DISORDER AND USING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ANTIDOTE FOR THAT SYNDROME: BECOMING MINDFUL OF THE DESIRE. OBSERVING SELF, STEPPING OUT OF THE "REACTION" MODE, RETRAINING THE MIND.

C. THEME: Followers and Leaders

1.) Setting up the Third Round of Dialogue

WORKSHOP LEADER: Let's move on to the idea of "Followers and Leaders". Facilitators, please hand out the slips to each member of your group. (Facilitators will hand out slips that say either "follower" or "leader". There should be an equal number of each. After this takes place, the Workshop Leader continues.) If your paper says "follower" you must move around the room until you find a "leader." When you have done so, pair up and move your chairs so that you are as far from another pair as possible. (When most people are seated, facilitators may informally assist "followers" to find "leaders". If necessary, place "leaders" or "followers" together. You may need one group of 3 to accommodate an uneven number of participants. After everyone has a partner(s), the Workshop Leader should proceed with a discussion point.)

WORKSHOP LEADER: With your partner, talk about which characters were followers and which ones were leaders. (Facilitators should circulate around the room. If some groups seem reticent to discuss, the facilitators may interject a question to get them started, such as "What about Kisha? Was she a follower or leader? What about Mark or Brad?")

2.) Pose Deeper Questions

WORKSHOP LEADER:

- What happened in the film to the followers?
- Do you think most people are followers or leaders?
- What do you think most people would say that they are: a follower or leader?
- Why do you think followers follow?
- Why do leaders lead?

3.) Go Deeper: From outer dialogue to inner dialogue

(The last portion of the workshop is designed to promote self-reflection through internal dialogue. This is accomplished by journaling.)

WORKSHOP LEADER: Now separate from your partner so that you are sitting alone. Facilitators, please hand out pens and notebooks to each person. We want you to write about yourself. No one else will read this.

Write your name inside the cover of the notebook. Put the date on the first page. This is the first entry in your personal journal.

Think about yourself for a moment. I'm going to call out a few ideas or questions that you may want to write about -- these are just to help you think. I'll call out some ideas and give you time to write, then I'll call out a few more. But you are free to write anything you wish.

- Do you need status to feel good about yourself?
- Would you rate your self-esteem as low, medium or high?
- Are you a follower, leader, neither or both?

(Pause as people write. Watch the group and when about half of them have stopped writing, give more ideas.)

WORKSHOP LEADER: Here are a few more things you may want to write about:

- Do you feel like you really know yourself?
- What kind of person are you?
- Do you choose friends who are givers or takers?
- Is true strength the same thing as force? What is the difference?
- Are you comfortable standing alone?

WORKSHOP LEADER: I'm going to make two statements for you to write about in your journal. They will sound like advice, but you can write anything about them that you want to -- take them or leave them, argue with them -- whatever.

STATEMENT ONE:

IF YOU FIND YOURSELF WISHING YOU COULD BE CLOSE TO A CERTAIN PERSON, BE SURE THAT PERSON HAS YOUR BEST INTEREST AT HEART. REALIZE YOU ARE CHOOSING.

STATEMENT TWO:

BE CAREFUL ABOUT RESPONDING TO ANOTHER PERSON'S ATTENTION. DON'T JUST REACT -- CHOOSE WHETHER TO RESPOND AND HOW.

(Pause for writing.)

WORKSHOP LEADER:

Now, fold up this piece of paper and put it in your pocket. Facilitators will spread themselves around the room. Leave your chairs and get back into your

original group by going to your facilitator. Use the chairs near your facilitator to form a circle and sit down.

4.) Breaking the Cycle

FACILITATORS:

- What kind of advice can you give each other at this point?

(Pause for discussion.)

FACILITATORS:

Take out your journals again, and answer these specific questions:

- Do you know people who remind you of any of the characters in the movie?

Which ones -- what about them?

(Pause for writing.)

- Were your parents "in the movie"? What things did the characters do that reminded you of your parents? (If the participants are parents, substitute the word "child")

(Pause for writing.)

- If you were the screenwriter, and you could write this story about your family, how would your family's story end? Could you re-write it to give it a better ending?

(Pause for writing.)

WORKSHOP LEADER:

Now rewrite your story. Begin at any point in your life that you wish and write well into the future.

(Pause for writing.)

We want you to keep the notebooks so that you can write notes to yourself and observe your own life. Facilitators will stick around so you can talk to them if you wish.

(Have a person at the door to take up pencils as participants leave.)