

CAC Meeting October 16, 2019

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“How to Talk to your Teen about Bias, Prejudice, and Discrimination”

*These notes were compiled by a member of the CAC committee. This document is intended to supplement the slides and presentation given by the presenter. It was not written or reviewed by Ms. Magner or Ms. Berman, although it has been reviewed by the counseling department.*

“No Place for Hate” initiative

- We can't eradicate hate without looking at hate and discrimination in all forms. NPFH looks at bullying and harassment in a wholesale way.
- Students at Pyle signed the NPFH pledge recently.
- We are kicking off our No Place for Hate initiative for the first time this year. Ms. Beckett has formed a committee consisting of students, faculty, and parents. This committee will plan activities throughout the year that reinforce the NPFH pledge and Pyle's mission of fostering a respectful environment and honoring diversity.

Rationale for Work

- By age 3-5 children develop negative attitudes toward differences - even before they are in a school context.
- More than one in five students (20.8%) report being bullied. Numbers increase exponentially with different groups of students (LGBTQ, students of color, students with disabilities.) Keep in mind that not all bullying is reported.
  - 75-80% of LGBTQ students report being bullied.
- More than half of bullying situations (57%) stop when a peer intervenes on behalf of the student being bullied. Peers can make a huge difference in decreasing bullying.
- School based bullying prevention programs decrease bullying by up to 25%
- Adolescent suicide is a big problem especially among marginalized groups.

Basic Premises

- Bias is universal (Can be natural, such as a school team rivalry. Becomes a problem when it relates to identity.)
- Prejudice can be unlearned
- Conflicts may arise - conflicts are not necessarily bad. Can be positive and constructive.
- Respectful dialogue is needed
- There are no easy answers
- Change is a process, ever evolving
- Diversity is a strength - fostering an environment where it is respected and appreciated

Broader Trends in the Fight Against Hate

- FBI data indicate reported hate crimes at K-12 schools and colleges jumped by 24.7 percent - the second year in a row where incidents spiked (2015-2017).

## Trends in PreK-12 Schools

- 94% and 89% rise in anti-Semitic incidents in preK-12 schools and on college campuses, respectively, in 2017.
- 22% of students ages 12 to 18 report being bullied at school. Take into consideration that not all bullying is reported.
- 28% of students ages 10 to 18 report being cyberbullied during their lifetime
- Students were harassed because of their appearance/body size (72%), race or ethnicity (26%), religion (26%), and perceived sexual orientation (22%)
- Many negative impacts of students who report being bullied and cyberbullied - they are more likely to skip classes, skip school altogether, avoid school activities and engage in a physical fight.
- Bullying = has to be repeated, take place over a period of time, involve a power dynamic or perceived power dynamic, social dynamic.

## School Based Hate Incidents in the Washington, DC Region, 2019

- Local headlines indicate that this is not just a Pyle problem. We are seeing trends all through the region.

## Developing a Common Language

- We need to develop a common language in order to be able to engage in dialogue.
- Stereotype (belief)>>>>>Prejudice (attitude)>>>>>Discrimination (action)
  - Head>>>>>heart>>>>>hands
  - Stereotype = generalization based on physical characteristics of a person or group. Not necessarily negative. Grounded in belief
  - Prejudice = an attitude of thinking less of a group or person. Grounded in our beliefs. Treat a group differently based on the stereotype. Negative connotation depending on the perception. Prejudice = pre judge.
  - Discrimination = following through on prejudice with actions.
- These things build on each other - there is a progression.
- It can be difficult to put these terms into words but it is important to have the language to define them so we can recognize them when we see it in ourselves and others. Takes practice to talk about these things.

## Slurs and Biased Language

- Every day - at school, work - we hear biased, hurtful and offensive language, including slurs, epithets and so-called "jokes". We also see slurs written on walls, buildings, streets and in our social media feeds. Many people, especially those who have children in their lives, wonder what to do when they see and hear this kind of language. Parents, caregivers and educators feel they need to be even more attentive to this language because they know children are listening, absorbing and often -times repeating these slurs.

- Young kids see these things and they are curious. They want to know what it is. They become aware at a young age. (ex. Child who asks why that man is in a wheelchair). Important to watch our reactions to the innocent questions of a child.
- Slur = an insulting, offensive or degrading remark, often based on an identity group such as race, ethnicity, religion, ethnic, gender/gender identity, or sexual orientation.
- Epithet = an offensive word or name that is used as a way of abusing or insulting someone.

Pyramid of Hate (helpful tool in framing the conversation)

<https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/documents/pyramid-of-hate.pdf>

- Biased attitudes - stereotyping, insensitive remarks, fear of differences, non-inclusive language, microaggressions. Once we don't speak up about it and it becomes normalized then it moves up to the next level - acts of bias, etc. and so on up the pyramid.
- Acts of bias - bullying, ridicule, slurs/epithets, name calling, social avoidance, and dehumanization, biased/belittling jokes
- Discrimination - economic, political, educational, employment, housing and segregation, criminal justice disparities
- Biased motivated violence - murder, rape, assault, arson, threats, terrorism, vandalism, desecration
- Genocide - the act of intent to deliberately and systematically annihilate and entire group
- When you look at the headlines you can use the pyramid of hate to track back to where it came from. Helps us understand the foundations of hateful or discriminatory acts.
- The best place to attack the problem is at the bottom with biased attitudes. This is where it starts in the conversation and this is what we have the most control over.

When starting the conversation, consider the following.....

- Ensure the environment is safe and respectful - make sure your kids are calm and relaxed when you bring it up. Be very careful about your reactions, facial expressions
- Define the terms - What do they think these things mean? It may be different than what it actually means.
- Connect the past to the present - Connect to current events. ADL table talks is a great resource for this. <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/table-talk>
- Consider perspective
- Encourage empathy - how do we feel what others may be feeling?
- Inspire hope and activism - what can we do about this?

Questions to start the conversation

- Do you know what a slur is? Who is usually targeted by slurs? It's really important to know where they are getting their information. Kids now have access to media and technology like no other time before. We need to be aware of the sources of information that are available to our teens.
- How do you feel when you hear a slur or other biased language?

- Do you hear and see slurs and biased language as you go about your day? What happens in school when slurs are used?
- How do you and others respond when you hear slurs? How do you wish you could respond?
- Why do you think people use slurs?

#### Questions to dig deeper.....

- What do you think about the impact of slurs - on the people targeted, others who are part of that identity group, and the community/society?
- How do you think someone should be held accountable for their words? What about a peer at school? What about a political leader?
- How has your thinking changed by learning more about slurs?

#### Considerations before responding

- What do you want out of the interaction?
  - You could send your kids newspaper articles to get them thinking and initiate the conversation.
  - Continue to share your values as a family. Consistency in communicating and living family values is important as they are trying to figure things out.
  - Teens are still in a period of self discovery and you may not always like who they are. They are trying on different masks to figure out who they are. They are experimenting with boundaries.
  - Important to find the balance, you don't want to jam it down their throats but you also don't want to just put your head in the sand. Whether or not they want to engage in the conversation, we are at least planting a seed that they may think more about at a later time.
- Assume good will -
  - Important to remember this when we find ourselves in a group where something questionable is said. Maybe we don't understand what they mean by it. Also, we don't always know how our kids are responding. Maybe they are walking away and/or going off line. They may already be doing the right thing.
  - Things are not so binary as good and bad. It's difficult to know how much anxiety a teenager is holding.
- Talk to the person privately - they will react differently than if they are called out in public.
- Use "I" statements, not "You" statements "I heard you say this word and it made me feel uncomfortable."
- Remember your rights. You have the right to remove yourself from a situation.
- How do you deal with the uncomfortable feeling of confronting biased language?
  - Remember that by being silent we are endorsing it.
  - Think about your personal safety when you are responding.
  - The more practice you have talking about these things the more comfortable you will be.

- Put yourself in the shoes of those being targeted. How uncomfortable must they feel when they hear these things?
- Think of low risk ways of stepping up - even a small step is a step - walking away, not responding to the conversation, going up to the victim to let them know that you support them.

#### Responding to Jokes and Slurs

- Assume good intent and explain impact
  - “I know you mean well, but that hurts.”
- Ask a question
  - “What do you mean?” Gives the person the chance to think about what they are trying to say. Allows for reflection.
- Interrupt and redirect
  - “Let’s not go there.”
- Broaden the universal human behavior
  - “I think that applies to everyone.” Goes back to understanding stereotypes.
- Make it individual
  - “Are you speaking of someone in particular?”
- Say Ouch! That hurt
  - “Oops, I didn’t mean it that way.” Call yourself out when you make a mistake.

#### Guidelines for achieving bias free communication

- Be aware of words, images, and situations that suggest that most or all members of a group are the same.
- Avoid qualifiers that reinforce stereotype.
- Identify people by identity characteristics only when relevant.
- Be aware of language that, to some people, has questionable racial or ethnic connotations.
- Be aware of the possible negative implications of color symbolic words.
- Avoid patronizing language or tokenism toward any racial or ethnic group.
- Substitute substantive information for ethnic cliches.
- Review media to see if all groups are fairly represented.

Since we live in a high privilege area, how do we foster understanding in our kids when they haven’t personally experienced being marginalized?

- There is a table talk about privilege that talks about this:  
<https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/kyle-korver-privilege-and-racism>
- Share books with kids - mirror books about ourselves and window books about other cultures.
- It’s our work to educate ourselves. We shouldn’t rely on the groups who are marginalized to educate us.