

Mixed Company Theatre Presents



# SHOWDOWN

An Anti-Bullying Play for Teens

## Teacher's Guide

- Relate the **SHOWDOWN** production to the Ontario Curriculum.
- Learn how Forum Theatre creates a unique relationship with the audience.
- Discover the **W.I.S.E.** anti-bullying strategy.
- Get ideas on project activities for your classroom.

### **SHOWDOWN**

An Anti-Bullying Play for Teens  
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*Cover Photo: Paul Hardy and Dylan Jukes in the Fall 2002 Tour of SHOWDOWN.*

*Back Cover: Paul Hardy and Dharini Woollecomb in the Fall 2003 Tour of SHOWDOWN.*

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## Background

Across Canada, media coverage of teen bullying cases is front-page news, as incidents have escalated into gang murder and victim suicide. Names like Reena Virk and Dawn-Marie Wesley are becoming every concerned parent and teacher's nightmare: is this happening to someone I know? Why were these teens physically, mentally and emotionally abusing each other? What can we do about this issue as educators, parents and teens?

With this challenging issue in mind, SHOWDOWN, a timely project, is aimed at engaging students around the complex issues of bullying, conflict resolution and emotional literacy. SHOWDOWN addresses this sensitive issue by involving the different groups of people who are affected by it: students (including the bully, victim and bystander), the school administration, the parents and the community at large.

## The Forum Theatre Format

SHOWDOWN is presented in a forum theatre format. Forum theatre is issue-based and interactive, and provides opportunities for students to participate in realistic situations. Forum Theatre also purposely presents worst-case scenarios in order to stimulate audience members into action. Students reshape the production by intervention, thereby becoming actors themselves, or "spect-actors."

Students view the show or scenes once, then the second time around they participate by stopping the action when they want to suggest another, more constructive solution to the problems presented. Their interventions are mediated by a Mixed Company facilitator who ensures that the work remains productive and helpful. Students rehearse for reality in a safe, theatrical environment, re-constructing the actions on stage to create more positive alternatives and models to the anti-models presented in the play.

## The Goals of SHOWDOWN

SHOWDOWN is a production that specifically aims to help teens recognize the different forms that bullying can take: name-calling, exclusion, extortion, threats and physical violence. At its centre, this Forum play examines bullying from a power perspective, revealing that bullies are not looking for a fight, but a victim: How can I control this person? And finally, SHOWDOWN aims to provide students with the Mixed Company anti-bullying W.I.S.E. strategy (**see page 6 handout**) a toolbox of positive ideas and solutions to bullying behaviour.

Once we recognize and deconstruct the attitudes and power imbalance behind bullying, then interpersonal change is possible. Successful conflict management skills can teach students how to define and manage boundary issues as an important first step to understanding and handling bullying. When victims and bystanders are able to take a stand and deem something unacceptable, then a bully must deal with that new situation. When the behaviour/response changes, then the interaction can change. SHOWDOWN makes these interactions explicit and open to audience members for exploration and debate.

## Caveat: Disclosure

Mixed Company does not ask for or encourage personal disclosure from students during the course of the show. However, we are dealing with volatile issues. Sometimes, during the interactive segment of the performance, a student may either disclose or otherwise be adversely affected by recalling incidents of bullying they have experienced.

Mixed Company therefore **STRONGLY** recommends that your school's guidance department be present at the show and/or be available as a referral option for students dealing with these issues. Please feel free to forward this guide to your school's guidance department for their information.

## The Play

### Play Synopsis

SHOWDOWN follows the cycle of abuse as it begins at home and is carried through into the school and the community.

Beginning in the Roberts household, Dad sets the example by yelling, using put-downs and threats of physical violence. His behaviour impacts on the household in varying ways. Mom pops pills to alleviate her stress. Ashley charms and manipulates dad to defuse his anger. And Drew acts out his hurt and resentment by taking it out on others.

In school Drew torments Carl Ottey. But even though Carl suffers through extortion, theft and physical violence, witnesses are reluctant to help and Carl unwilling to report it. Holding in his fear and anger serves only to fuel Carl's own thoughts of revenge. 'Loser' Teresa Walcott, desperate for Ashley Roberts attention and friendship, unwittingly walks into a trap: a public humiliation. But not satisfied with having thoroughly embarrassed her, Ashley continues to psychologically torment Teresa, driving her into further social isolation.

The play ends with hard facts and heartfelt questions: Bullies continue to abuse. And victims always pay the price. Is this the only way?

### Character Breakdown

**Ashley:** Clearly a popular girl with brains, beauty and attitude to spare, she is one of the two main bullies in SHOWDOWN. She is a high status girl using her power to control, manipulate and socially exclude others when she sees fit.

**Drew:** Drew is Ashley's younger brother. He is a very aggressive young man who imitates his father but is unable to gain his dad's approval and respect. Drew dominates his peers, seems to have no sense of remorse for hurting others and refuses to accept responsibility for any of his behaviour.

**Mom:** Overworked and under appreciated, Mrs. Roberts has very poor tools for coping with her abusive husband and disrespectful kids. She self-medicates (popping pills) in order to alleviate her stress.

**Dad:** Mr. Roberts is a man of little patience who would rather use his hands rather than reason and patience to settle an argument. Although he demands respect from his family he does not repay the courtesy. He is the 'king of his castle' and no one is allowed to forget it.

**Carl:** Carl is a typical grade 9 student who loves popular music, movies and, of course, girls. Although not an obvious victim at first, he quickly falls into the victim pattern. Not only does he fear retribution if he were to report Drew, he is also afraid of the stigma of 'ratting'.

**Sonya:** Also in grade 9, Sonya finds Carl interesting and cute and sweetly flirts with him at the start of the play. A girl who recognizes Drew for the bully that he is, she is, however, too afraid to stand up to him.

**Mrs. Rogers:** Mrs. Rogers is the school Vice-Principal. She is an efficient administrator who tries to maintain order and discipline. Although she feels she has dealt effectively with Drew's bullying, her strategy leaves Carl feeling less than secure and protected.

**Jason:** Jason, Ashley's boyfriend, is the high school hunk. He is sensitive to Ashley's needs and tries to cater to her every whim. But he too is unable to stand up to her and is often a victim of her scathing tongue and manipulative ways.

**Teresa:** Teresa tries desperately to fit in and longs to have friends. But because of her awkward style and insecure manner she is easily targeted as the school loser, a loner who others find easy to mock or just ignore.

## Pre-Show Activities

### Theatre Etiquette

Please discuss theatre etiquette with your students prior to your theatre experience; this is an important component of cultural literacy. As members of the audience, you play an important part in the success of a theatrical performance. Students accustomed to watching television in their own homes and those who attend rock concerts and movies are used to eating snacks, moving around, getting in and out of their seats or sharing comments aloud during a show. Movies and TV shows are not affected by the audience.

### **BUT THEATRE PERFORMANCES ARE!**

Students may not be aware of how disturbing such behaviours can be in live theatre, not only to other audience members, but to the actors on stage / in the performance space who can see and hear them out in the audience. Please make clear to students that the rules are different at a live theatre performance, whether it is in a community venue or in your school. Discuss behaviours that are problematic and explain WHY they are a problem.

Please review the following theatre rules and guidelines with your students prior to your theatre experience:

- Students' behaviour is the responsibility of school staff and volunteers.
- Photography and both audio or video recording during a performance is strictly prohibited by Canadian Actors' Equity regulations.
- Please be considerate audience members! Talking, whispering, shuffling about in seats during a live performance are rude and disruptive behaviours that are disturbing for other audience members and distressing to the actors.
- Please try not to leave your seat and re-enter the performance space (even if it is your school's gym) during the performance. Try to plan washroom visits before the show or after.
- Do not throw anything on to the stage or into the audience. This is disruptive, rude and dangerous for the actors.

Remember, your students are ambassadors of your school! A hard-working cast of actors and a host of talented theatre artists and educators have worked hard to create an enjoyable and entertaining theatre experience for our school audiences. With your co-operation in following these guidelines, we are sure it will be just that!

### A Note on Safety in the Classroom

As SHOWDOWN tackles the extremely sensitive issue of bullying, Mixed Company would like to stress the need for sensitivity and an atmosphere of trust in the classroom. The students may be taking emotional chances in opening themselves up to this material, so we urge you to proceed with an awareness of these emotional chances, and respect for the students' willingness to share.

Before beginning any of these activities, please ask the students to agree to the following rules:

- Do not cause harm to others (physical or emotional).
- Do not cause harm to oneself when revealing or exploring emotions that are painful at this time (physical or emotional).
- Do not cause harm to the space (room and facilities).

### A Note on Activities

The following activities relate SHOWDOWN to specific outcomes outlined in The Ontario Curriculum for grades 7-10. Teachers may use this study guide to enhance their classroom's viewing experience of SHOWDOWN and to deepen student understanding about the play and the production. The Guide may also be used to achieve expectations as outlined in The Ontario Dramatic Arts, Physical Education and Health, Social Studies and Language Arts Curriculums. Use the highlighted dramatic outcomes at the end of each activity to select activities suitable for the grade and development level of your group and to adapt exercises to the needs of your students.

## Pre-Show Activities

### Activity #1: Bully Map

*The Bully Map encourages students to develop their skills for observation and assessment of personal safety hot spots. This activity can also be used as an environmental assessment for your school in determining the types, the patterns and the severity of bullying occurring in your community.*

Create a map of your school; include the playing fields and the nearest public transportation bus stop(s). Provide students with 3 colour markers (or pens or stickers): green represents a zone relatively free of bullying, orange represents a zone with a moderate amount of bullying activity, and red represents a hot spot for bullying.

Students begin by filing out their own map. In a group the class builds a comprehensive map. Note: After receiving each student's map at the end of the class you can always add in areas that students may have been hesitant to talk about in the group.

- Why do you think bullying occurs more frequently in certain places than in others on the map?
- Are there bullying activities that are associated with certain places than others?
- How long do the bullying incidents last?

### Activity #2: Auto Sculpting

*By using images, groups are able to represent more than they would be able to communicate through words. This is an opportunity for students to begin observing and sharing their own thoughts and feelings on the topic of bullying or on conflict in general. It is also an expressive opportunity for students to start to work with their bodies, using gestures and space and beginning to explore character motivation.*

All students form a circle and face outward with their eyes closed and minds blank. Announce a word or phrase associated with the issue of bullying (e.g. victim, bully, bystander, teacher, parents, power, loneliness, exclusion, aggression,

loyalty, ratting/baiting). Everyone takes their first impression of that word/phrase and shapes their body in the image of that impression (realistic or abstract) – whatever it means to them. Ask students to turn into the circle and open their eyes.

- What are the similarities/differences of the images?
- Pick out certain images and ask others to describe what they see.
- Choose a student/sculptor to speak about what they are feeling or thinking at that moment. A word or a phrase is enough.
- Who has the most power in each of these sculptures?
- Other questions to consider: What kinds of events can lead to conflict?
- With what kinds of feelings and actions do people often respond to conflict?
- What were the causes of the conflicts you sculpted?
- Are these common causes for the conflicts that happen in you life?
- How do you tend to respond to conflict?

### Activity #3: Summary

Use the images and observations of this exercise to summarize these basic points for all to see in the class: What is a bully? What is a victim? Describe types of bullying? What are some anti-bullying solutions? ( **For anti-bullying solutions, Introduce the WISE strategy if possible.** This will provide continuity when students see the play SHOWDOWN. **Please see Page 6 for WISE chart)**

### Curriculum Expectations

**Health and Physical Education:** *To describe harassment and identify ways of dealing with it (gr.7-8); To distinguish between effective and abusive relationships and to identify resources and demonstrate appropriate strategies for dealing with abusive relationships (gr.9-10).*

# Handouts

## Examples of Bullying Include:

- hitting, tripping or deliberately pushing or hurting another person
- intentionally damaging another's belongings
- threatening another person with physical or relational harm
- name-calling, sneering or gossiping
- teasing or humiliating another student
- making fun of another's appearance, size, disability, race, gender, language, culture, clothing, family or grades
- directing insulting remarks, gestures or actions of a sexual nature towards another
- isolating others or threatening to exclude them from social events, games and conversations
- using telephone or e-mail for intimidating or threatening purposes

*(TCDSB, Responding to Bullying Pamphlet)*

## Characteristics of Bullies

- Values the rewards that aggression can bring.
- Lacks empathy for his or her victim and has difficulty feeling compassion.
- He or she tends to lack guilt and fully believes that the victim provoked the attack and deserved the consequences.
- He or she likes to be in charge, to dominate, and to assert with power. A bully likes to win all situations.
- A bully's parent(s) (or other significant role model) often model aggression.
- A bully thinks in unrealistic ways (e.g., "I should always get what I want.").

*(C.Garrity et al., Bullyproofing Your School)*

## Handouts

### Characteristics of Victims

- Isolated or alone during much of the school day.
- Is anxious, insecure, and lacking in social skills. Is physically weak and therefore unable to defend himself or herself.
- Upsets or cries easily, yields when bullied, and is unable to stick up for himself or herself.
- May have suffered past abuse or traumatization.
- May have a learning disorder that compromises his or her ability to process and respond to social interactional cues.

*(C.Garrity et al., Bullyproofing Your School)*

### The W.I.S.E. Strategy

**W - Walk Away** - Don't stay in a situation where you might be hurt.

**I - Ignore the bullying - Inform an adult** - Ignoring the bullying takes power away from the bully. But don't ignore repeated bullying. Inform an adult. You do not have to deal with this on your own.

**S - Stay strong - Safety in numbers** - Stand up straight, look the person in the eye and speak in a friendly but firm voice. This shows that you don't want to fight and that you mean what you say. Also, find allies. There is power in numbers. But don't get violent. Be assertive, **not** aggressive.

**E - Exercise humour** - Humour gets a bully off balance. Get the bully to laugh with you and not at you.

## Post-Show Activities

### Theatre Elements to Explore

#### The Script

The basic elements that build a typical plot follow a pyramid structure consisting of a rising action (also called a complication), climax and falling action (also called a denouement).

- Does a Forum play like SHOWDOWN follow this structure?
- How is it constructed differently from other plays you may have seen?

The constant rising action inherent in a Forum play provides very little relief – or a catharsis - for the audience.

- What effect does this have on the audience's involvement with the play's characters and themes?
- Is the playwright trying to provoke the audience? Is he successful?

By directly engaging its viewers, the Forum play takes away the convention of the "4th wall". Audience members are both spectators and actors or "spect-actors".

- How does this change your view of what theatre can do?
- Is it frightening to become a part of the play? It's certainly an opportunity to explore character motives. Is it also an opportunity to rehearse for reality? Is it important to rehearse for reality?
- What other themes, issues would lend themselves to a Forum play format?
- This interactive format creates a much more intimate experience for the audience. Explain how this is achieved.
- What other activities/ entertainment have an interactive format?

#### Direction in the Show

Talk about your impressions, as an audience member, of the "world of the play", the casting, and choices made by the director in staging the show. Was the style of acting realistic and was the use of the set effective? Were the "stage pictures" memorable?

#### Bringing the Characters to Life

- As a group, recall and list all the characters in the play. Who was your favorite character?
- What did you like about the actor's performance and interpretation of the role?
- How did the costume help define the character?
- What special talents did the actor bring to the role?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of "doubling" – having characters play more than one character in the production?
- How would playing multiple roles be demanding from an actor's point of view?

#### Activity #4: Play Review

Write a review of the play examining the various elements and techniques already discussed. Also, reflect on the many ways that the performance impacted on you socially, personally, artistically. Did it deepen your understanding of bullying? Were the playwright, director and actors successful at drawing you into the show? How?

#### Curriculum Expectations

##### Dramatic Arts:

*To evaluate the quality of the drama (gr.7-10) and to describe the various kinds of learning made possible through drama (gr.9-10).*

## Power, Status & Confidence

*In schools, power and status play a major role in group dynamics. This is one reason why cliques form and why there are outsiders. Bullies clearly view themselves as high status players who have all the power. And victims are kept low in status in part because of their own lack of confidence and poor communication and social skills. Status, therefore, is a more sophisticated way of controlling and socially excluding others. Clothes and accessories (everything from jewelry to X-Boxes and ipods) are all symbols of status in youth culture. But status is also conveyed by how individuals carry themselves, how they fill a room, if they stand up straight, how they make eye contact. It's also conveyed by how people interact. Do they hesitate, defer or submit constantly to others? Or do they speak loudly, with confidence, freely sharing their feelings and ideas?*

Ashley is a popular girl in school with a lot of social power.

- How has Ashley achieved this status?
- What does it feel like to be someone with very high status?
- If you have high status do you automatically have power?
- How do you think it feels to be of lower "status" like Teresa?
- Can a person change his or her status?
- How is power or status measured in the play? In youth culture today?
- Is confidence always related to status and power?

### Activity #5: Status Parties

*Status games are a standard in drama classrooms. Status Parties are a quick and efficient way of introducing students to the concept of status. Students begin to observe how different variables can play a role in influencing status e.g. holding eye contact vs. breaking eye contact. Students also experience how a simple*

*thing like standing up straight vs. slouching can influence how they might feel and act. Filling up your space and looking a person in the eye says that you're strong and confident. A bully won't get very far with a person who doesn't look or act like a victim.*

**"If our status was never at risk we'd all look poised, and at ease, and our necks would be long, and our movements would seem effortless. High status is the natural state of the body but most of us placate higher status people by ruining or posture, and restricting our 'space'."**

**Keith Johnstone, Don't Be Prepared -  
Theatresports for Teachers**

Explain to students that they will be attending a party. This may be a school dance or it may be a private party at someone's home. Divide the class in half. Audience members sit and observe. Participants are divided into Groups A and B. Make sure to switch A and B roles in the middle of the party so that all have an opportunity to play both higher and lower status. The following are different party suggestions for Groups A and B. Try a variety so that students get a good grounding.

- A's blink frequently and they walk and stand with toes pointed inward. B's hardly ever blink and their feet are rotated slightly outward.
- A's use long and grammatically complete sentences. B's use broken sentences and are out of breath whenever they speak.
- A's use a long thoughtful "Hm" at the beginning of each sentence. B's use a tiny hesitant "Um".
- A's hold eye contact. B's half break contact and take quick glances back at people.

## Post-Show Activities

After the activity debrief with students.

- How can your discoveries help you create characters in the future?
- What did students learn about how status affects their own lives?
- Do you play one status in particular? Or does it switch with different people in your life?
- Can you see using some of these strategies to change your status for the better?
- Have you ever not helped someone in trouble (mild or serious) because you didn't want to lose status?

### Curriculum Expectations

#### Dramatic Arts:

*To accurately represent the attitudes of a character and to demonstrate how a role is communicated through voice quality, gestures and body movements (gr. 7-10).*

### Activity #6: Hot Seat the Bully

For this activity the teacher in the role of the bully will field questions from the students. The purpose is to discover what has shaped the personalities of the play's bullies, Ashley and Drew. They both enjoy controlling and dominating others, lack guilt for their actions and empathy for their victims. How have these attitudes formed? Have status and power played a role in their home lives? Students can ask questions, but if they do not believe that the teacher in role response is authentic then they may say so and suggest a more authentic reply.

### Curriculum Expectations Dramatic Arts:

*To identify ways of sustaining concentration in drama (e.g. remaining in role when playing a character being interviewed) (gr. 7-10); To identify and employ different questions to develop and deepen roles within a drama (gr. 9).*

### Victimization and the Need for Empathy

*There is an inverse relationship between empathy and aggression. By learning to understand another's point of view and to respect their feelings, aggressive behaviour is less likely to occur. Building emotional literacy can have a direct impact on bullying and future levels of family and societal violence.*

### Activity #7: A Day in the Life ... of a Victim

In groups create a series of 5 to 8 tableaux from the point of view of the victim. Each tableau should progress and reflect the type of day that victim might experience. All tableaux begin in the morning at home.

**Variation:** As a Visual Arts Activity, have students create a storyboard with captions for a day in the life of a victim. Apply the same following questions to the storyboard.

During tableaux you can signal the actor playing X to share his thoughts as the victim. What is s/he feeling, hoping, or avoiding? Also feel free to animate the tableaux further by signaling all the actors to take the pose into an improvisation.

- What feelings dominated X's life?
- How lonely was X? Did any of the characters notice X's loneliness?
- Does X have strong communication skills?
- Does X have any friends? Why or why not?
- How did X defend himself against his/her bully?
- Did X show any signs of strength?
- Do you think X is different from most kids? How?

### Curriculum Expectations – Dramatic Arts:

*To produce pieces that deal appropriately with youth problems and to produce work as a member of an ensemble (gr. 7-8); To demonstrate an understanding of how empathy functions as a component of role playing (gr. 9).*

## Post-Show Activities

### Why Is It So Hard To Tell?

	per 100 bullied children
Fear of them getting back	42
Not wanting to be a "tell tale"	41
Not wanting to worry parents	34
Shame at not being able to stick up for self	31
Fear of losing friends	29
Hard to prove	29
No confidence in adults keeping name out of it	25
Fear of what parents might say	25
Mixed up and confused	25
Something I can't change	24
Unable to put feelings into words	23
Parents don't understand school life	23
Accept as something to put up with	22
Feel no one will believe me	20
Not wanting to get them into trouble	19
Not wanting to show not popular	16
Not seeing it as bullying	16
Blame myself	15
I deserve it	7

(Reasons for not telling given by pupils who had been bullied, but had not sought help. Source: Strathclyde LEA "Building Better Relationships – Bullyproof Your School")

### Activity #8: Writing "In Role"

In role as Carl or Teresa, write a series of diary entries at key points in the story. Write a letter to another character in the play, explaining your feelings and actions as the bullying progresses. Compose a monologue that expresses your inner tensions and conflicts.

#### Curriculum Expectations – Dramatic Arts:

To write in role in various forms showing understanding of complexity of a dramatic situation, using appropriate vocabulary, tone and voice for character portrayal (gr.7-8); To identify and describe the function of various methods of reflection (gr.9).

### Strategies for Positive Power

#### Activity #9: Whisper Tunnel

Both victims and bystanders need to learn positive talk back strategies to boost their confidence and courage. The Whisper Tunnel is a group activity that explores character but also provides an opportunity for positive feedback for the victims in SHOWDOWN.

Create a tunnel by lining up the students in two parallel rows facing one another. This tunnel represents the voices of support and encouragement that Carl and Teresa desperately need. One student can play either Carl or Teresa, and walks down the tunnel and back again. He is given words of advice, support and encouragement (in whispers) by the students. Each student in the line must think of a voice which answers to one of Carl's many problems or worries. Give several students the opportunity to play either Carl or Teresa. Reflect on the experience.

#### Curriculum Expectations – Health &

**Phys.Ed.:** To identify ways of dealing with harassment and to identify people and resources that can support someone experiencing harassment (gr.7- 10). **Social Sciences:** To apply strategies for building self-confidence (gr.9).

#### Activity #10: The Ouch Game

Learning to speak up, as either the victim or a bystander, has its many difficulties. Sometimes what's lacking is courage to actually voice your concerns. At other times, there is a difficulty in discerning and recognizing more subtle bullying behaviour. The Ouch game is a listening and observation activity. Viewers must verbally mark the bullying behaviour. Participants are also challenged as individuals and then as groups to speak out and be heard; "Ouch! Someone is being bullied!"

## Post-Show Activities

Students can reuse tableaux from A Day in the Life of the Victim for this activity. Students will take their tableau and animate it into an improvisation. While the improv is played out, one person chosen from the audience is given the task of calling out the word "OUCH!" anytime they see someone in the scene being put down, oppressed or bullied. Afterwards, try another scene and have the entire audience call out "OUCH!"

- Was it easy or difficult to call "OUCH"? In a group? By yourself?
- When you were calling "OUCH!" in a group did you do it all confidently, as one voice? Or were voices scattered? Why was it difficult for it to feel like a group effort?
- Did you start to become uncomfortable at how many 'ouches' you noticed?
- Do you think you've become used to bullying behaviour and so you don't notice it as much? Why?
- Is bullying just a part of growing up?
- Does everyone have the right to feel safe in school?

### Curriculum Expectations – Health & Phys.Ed.:

To analyze situations that are potentially dangerous to personal safety (gr.7-8); **Dramatic Arts:** To apply principles of listening both in and out of role (gr.9).

### Activity #11: Picking a Fight

*Conflict is a part of everyone's life. If students find themselves in a situation in which conflict management is possible than measures should be taken to resolve the situation with fairness, good listening skills and creativity. Note, though, that real bullies are not interested in negotiating but simply dominating as was clearly the case with Drew and Ashley in SHOWDOWN. In either instance, however, an ability to de-escalate a dangerous situation is extremely valuable.*

*The game of Picking a Fight has a twofold purpose. It helps students explore listening skills as well as body tension in performance. And as they try out different ways to argue students also become more familiar with the escalation and de-escalation potential in a conflict.*

Have students choose a partner, calling themselves A and B. Without preparing, A begins a conversation by saying, "No you didn't," and B replies with, "Oh yes I did." Continue the conversation and quickly develop it into a natural argument. Don't continue at a "No you didn't," "Yes I did" level. Here are some suggested situations: at your locker, in a classroom, at a school club meeting, at a school basketball tournament, in the subway, in a video store, at the movies, at the dinner table, at home in front of the television.

A third of the way through the argument announce to students: Find a way to start to de-escalate the argument, to bring it down in intensity and step back.

Two thirds of the way through the exercise instruct students to start to negotiate a solution. This should not be a perfect or magical solution. There can be loose ends. They can even agree to disagree.

- Where did you feel the most tension in your body when you were improvising your argument? In your neck? Throat? Hands? Back Legs?
- Did you try to control the tension? How? Were you successful? How did you use your breath?
- Were you aware of any emotional buttons that were pushed?
- What were some of the 'escalating' words that were used?
- Where did the change in the argument begin? Specifically which line?
- How did the change begin?
- What were some of the 'de-escalating' words that were used?
- Did your body language change during the de-escalation? Did your tension change?

## Post-Show Activities

- Was it just as difficult to negotiate some sort of resolution as it was to continue arguing?
- Did you feel that your partner really heard what you were saying?
- Did your partner at anytime employ active listening skills? What were they?
- Were you happy with the resolution? How much did you feel you had to compromise?

### Curriculum Expectations – Dramatic Arts:

To demonstrate understanding of the motives of characters (gr.7-8); **Social Sciences:** To demonstrate communication and conflict resolution skills in the context of family and social relationships (gr.9).

### Activity #12: Stop, Think and Act

Often, when confronting bullying situations, young people have a difficult time seeing 'around the corner'. Students feel, act and **then** think. Through role play exercises there is the possibility to teach students to **first feel** (become aware of their emotions in the moment), **to think** (what are their options) and only **then act**: "**This is the essential goal of the [role-playing] process: to make decisions in the light of probable consequences.**" (Patti Andrews et al, "Conflict Resolution Through Drama")

In groups of 3, students choose a scene from the play SHOWDOWN that bothered them, and in which there clearly was a conflict or poor choice made by one of the characters. Students role-play the scene twice, each taking a turn playing the bully, the victim and the bystander (This part can be improvised into the scene.). During the improvisation call "Freeze!". The students freeze in their physical positions and stop their dialogue.

Try and pick escalating moments in the improv in which to tap each character on the shoulder and have the character speak what they are thinking or feeling at that 'frozen moment' in time (i.e. "I'm scared that he's going to hit me.")

### Curriculum Expectations – Dramatic Arts:

To accurately represent the attitudes of a character through voice quality, gestures and body movements;

**Social Sciences:** To understand and apply a variety of problem solving and decision making skills to family and social problems (gr.9).

### Activity #13: Commercial / Website Creation

As a culmination of their experience with the play SHOWDOWN and the exercises in this teacher's guide, have students create one of two final communication projects:

Develop a 2-minute anti-bullying commercial. This may be for radio or television and should be videotaped or audiotaped. It can be presented to other classes or at an assembly. If a radio commercial, play it over the P.A. during morning announcements during Safe Schools Week in your Board.

Design an anti-bullying website. How will the design be influenced by its purpose? Who is your audience? What design elements will you use to appeal to your audience? Once it is completed link the strongest sites to your schools' website. Engage the rest of the community in your anti-bullying work: make sure the whole school and all parents are aware of this new site for Safe Schools week in your Board.

### Curriculum Expectations –

**Oral & Visual Communications:** To create a variety of media works (gr.7-8); **Media Arts:** To use knowledge of a variety of media forms, purposes and audiences to create media works and describe their intended effect (gr.9-10).

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### **Bullying.org**

<http://www.bullying.org/>

- Includes an online forum for sharing strategies and experiences

### **Dr. Ken Rigby**

South Australia

<http://www.education.unisa.edu.au/bullying/>

- Includes research and strategies from one of the worlds leading bullying experts

### **Anti Bullying Network**

Scotland, UK

<http://www.antibullying.net/>

- Includes an extensive database of bullying Q&A and many other resources

### **La March Centre for Research, York University**

Toronto, Ontario

[www.yorku.ca/lamarsh](http://www.yorku.ca/lamarsh)

- Includes the "Teen Relationships Project" research and statistics onbullying and violence

### **Kids Help Phone**

<http://www.kidshelp.sympatico.ca/>

- Includes online counselling services on a variety of topics



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