



#8654

BREAK THE CODE OF SILENCE: SAVE A LIFE!

Grade Levels: 10-13+

18 minutes

ALFRED HIGGINS PRODUCTIONS, INC.

DESCRIPTION

"I'm no snitch!" "I didn't want to get involved." When is it appropriate to tell school authorities about potential trouble? Friends, teachers, and counselors comment on the accidental shooting death of Demetrius Rice to illustrate the need to break the "code of silence." Discusses students' fear of personal safety, lack of trust in school personnel, and the need for anonymity. Knowing about dangerous situations carries a responsibility to inform authorities.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Subject Area: Health

- ◆ Standard: Knows how to maintain mental and emotional health
 - Benchmark: Knows techniques for seeking help and support through appropriate resources
- ◆ Standard: Knows essential concepts and practices concerning injury prevention and safety
 - Benchmark: Knows potential signs of self- and other-directed violence

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

1. To question the sense of keeping the playground code of "Don't be a snitch," in the face of serious teen issues such as weapons possession, suicide, date rape and abuse.
2. To stress the necessity of communicating life-threatening situations to authority.
3. To examine the long-lasting emotional impact the loss of a person's life has on friends and family.
4. To confront the real fear of consequences that prevents many teens from confiding in adults and presents methods by which one can inform authorities without fear of retaliation.
5. To provide a usable guide for evaluating talk about suicide in teen relationships, emphasizing that there are situations where the greater obligation of friendship is to break a person's confidence in order to get them help.
6. To empower viewers to take responsibility for the safety of friends and classmates.

SUMMARY

Compelling interviews with teens describe the death of their friends because of a gun brought to school. Their emotional stories form the nucleus of a poignant plea to break this "Code of Silence" in the face of the appalling consequences of today's situations involving weapons, suicide, date rape, etc.

The students honestly examine the fears that prevent many from telling authorities and school counselors. Practical ways to communicate this kind of information safely are examined. The counselors discuss clues a teen can use to help decide if a friend is serious about suicide, and empowers them to be a good enough friend to involve authorities and perhaps save a life.

Dramatizations illustrate how quickly situations can escalate and the permanence of the consequences. A young host links all these elements together in a logical presentation, urging viewers to take responsibility for their own safety, and that of their classmates.



AFTER SHOWING

Discussion Items and Questions

1. Why does this "Code of Silence" exist? What purpose did it serve? How did we learn to be a part of it? Why do we feel the way we feel toward people who break this code?
2. What kind of situation would make it necessary for you to break the code of silence?
3. What might happen if you tell about a possible danger? What could happen if you don't? Would it bother you if you knew and didn't tell something that might have prevented a tragedy?
4. Is there someone on staff at school you could trust to keep your name out of things if you needed to report something dangerous?
5. What are some ways you can report a life-threatening situation to authorities at your school anonymously?
6. What needs to happen so that these life-threatening situations don't occur in the first place?

Applications and Activities

1. Invite your school counselor or peer counselors to describe how a potential suicide is handled at your school.
2. Have two students act the following scenario: Best friends, one shows the other a weapon they brought to school to scare some people that have been hassling her/him. After hearing this conversation, have two other students play "Good conscience/Bad conscience" by presenting the arguments the person who saw the weapon might be having in her/his mind. Discuss the viability and consequences of the various possible courses of action.

RELATED RESOURCES



Captioned Media Program

- Handguns Made for Killing: Not for Kids #3613
- Teens Confronting Violence #3525



World Wide Web



The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and “kid-safe” sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

- **STUDENT PLEDGE AGAINST GUN VIOLENCE**

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

The Pledge encourages students to take a proactive stance in reducing gun violence. A copy of the pledge, event planning materials, resources, contact people and other information are presented.

- **TEENSHEALTH**

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

Click on topics such as “Body Basics,” “Mind Matters,” “Staying Safe,” and more. Also has a table of contents of hundreds of articles for teens.

- **YELLOW RIBBON SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM**

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

Click on buttons such as “Chapters Worldwide,” or to see available “Presentations/Workshops” that teach awareness and suicide prevention skills. Link to “Teen Advice Online” for articles and other links about suicide, dating, and archives.

- **COOL NURSE**

<http://www.coolnurse.com/>

Lots of clickable buttons on different issues such as “Mental Health,” “Teen Health Topics,” “Your Social Life,” and much, much more. Shows photographs of different drugs.