

## Background

In the month of November, we have Bully Prevention Week at our school. During the week, as the guidance counsellor, I visit classrooms to raise awareness about bullying and to help children learn to stand up against bullying. Recently, we had a presenter in our school from England. She used a program called Philosophy4 Life in her school to train children to have discussions about philosophical questions about life issues to help them learn to become better citizens.

Training for this program can be taken in the UK from the program put out by the [Society for Advancing Philosophical Inquiry and Reflection in Education](#) (SAPERE).

**Age:** Grade 4-12

## Description of the Activity

- Children meet together in a circle.
- The facilitator uses a story, a picture, or a quote to start a discussion.
- Once the story is done, the children are encouraged to think of a deep, open-ended question. The facilitator chooses one question which the children have a discussion about.
- Ground rules are laid for the children in the discussion circle.
  - Each person has the right to be heard without anyone interfering or making fun of the person
  - Everyone gets a turn to be heard.
  - At the end, everyone goes around the circle and gets to say whether or not they changed their mind about the question and what changed their mind.

## Procedure

- The facilitator will tell the story of [The Good Samaritan](#) from the Bible, except adapt it to a more modern day setting.
- The children will emphasize how many people are bystanders and how this can be a matter of life or death for someone.
- The children will come up with questions relating to the story. Questions that are possible for discussion could be:
  - Why did the other men not want to help the injured man?
  - What made the Samaritan stop to help the man?
  - What kind of a person does it take to help someone when no one else will do anything?

Once the students had discussed one of these questions, they will have the opportunity to see if they changed their mind to the question and why they may have changed their mind.

**Conclusion:** This activity will help the children reflect upon the deeper issues of love, selflessness, courage and respect for all people. Hopefully, the children will realize that they can make a difference and that the moral cost of being a bystander is huge. I hope they are able to determine the importance of standing up for people who cannot stand up for themselves.

### Follow-up Activities

1. The children can make banners or slogans to put up in the hallway to recognize these themes.
2. Students can write letters to the characters in the story, asking them why they made their decisions.
3. Students can act out the stories and make their own versions of the story, so that the story becomes part of their experience.
4. Children can write their own versions of the story in the school setting.

### Summary of Activity:

*I tried this activity with a Grade 4 class of 24 students. The children were engaged in the story. They listened politely and were able to retell the first part of the story to the person who was missing. I think that the story appealed to them because I made it relevant to their activities. In our area many children love dirt biking and 4-wheeling. They love to ride trails in the bush. By using this setting, it appealed to experiences that they already had and were engaged in.*

*After the story was finished, I had the children sit in a sharing circle. I gave them a few minutes to think of a deep question that could not be answered by a yes or no answer. The children have never done this type of activity before, however, they had a lot of questions about the boy; why he had not worn a helmet; where he was going and many other general questions.*

*Two students came up with very deep questions about the characters. One girl asked why the boy on the dirt bike had not wanted to help the boy who was hurt. The other boy asked why the people did not like the*

*person who had helped the injured boy. I chose to deal with the question of why the one boy may not have wanted to help the hurt boy because I wanted them to think about some of the different reasons people might be a bystander and not do the right thing.*

*When we went around the circle and asked the children to share their opinion on this question, the children gave many very insightful answers to this question. You could really tell that they were thinking about the decisions the characters had made in the story and why they might have made the choices that they did. At the end of the exercise, the children went around and shared their opinions. I told them that they had even changed my opinion, because they had thought of reasons for the boy not helping that I had not thought of.*

### **Reflection Questionnaire**

Here are the results of the children's opinions:

On a scale of 1-5, 1 being awful, and 5 being Great-What do you think of having a discussion with your friends?

3 students-awful, 4 students-2/3, 16 students-4/5-Great

Did you change your opinion? 8 students said yes; 6 students were between yes and no; 10 students said no.

*The reflection questions I asked them to do at the end were worded too difficultly for most of the students. They are in grade 4 and it is very hard for them to write down their opinions. I had to give the children ideas and reflect on what they talked about. They were able to write down simple answers.*

What do you think causes people to be bystanders rather than helping someone who is hurt?

Who is your neighbor and what are your responsibilities towards them?

*For children this age, it is important not to be too wordy. I rephrased the questions so that they could answer from our experience. They had a hard time defining their neighbor as those around them. In the future, I would try this with an oral reflection, or a picture to reflect their thoughts. I could also do an interview with simpler questions.*

The children seemed to have a good understanding of why people do not always help others. Their answers included the following concepts:

The boy didn't help the hurt boy because he might have been faking it or sleeping.

The boy was selfish.

The boy didn't care about others.

The boy couldn't fit the hurt boy on his dirt bike.

The boy was scared.

The boy was in a bad mood.

The boy didn't like the other boy.

*All of these comments reflect very real reasons why children choose to be bystanders. The facilitator's hope is that by having children think of why we do the things we do, that they may take a risk and make the choice to help someone less fortunate than they are.*

*The reflection piece is very important to help them verbalize these concepts and practice them in their own world. Role plays would also be very effective.*