



Examples of Projects – Scouts over 15 years Self Harm



Identifying the problems:

Your project should respond to a specific need in your community. It is important to involve Scouts in this part of the project using participative and dynamic methods. Here are some creative ways of exploring the issue of violence against yourself.

Activity 1: What's the problem?

There are many different causes of violence against self, from alcohol and drugs to extreme stress and psychological problems. As a group of Scouts explore the different ways that people can be violent against themselves and also the different reasons for these. This can be done by conducting a survey of young people and adults in the local community to discover people's opinions about the different types of violence against self and their thoughts on the causes - see Interviews in Activity Treasure Chest. Remember in the most extreme cases of self-harm suicide may be the result.

Activity 2: Different people - different places

Different people are affected in different ways. The affects and causes of violence against self can be localised, causing some methods to be more common in certain communities than others. Different communities also have different attitudes to this subject. In some cultures alcohol is an accepted part of daily life including driving motor vehicles whilst under the influence, whilst in other cultures alcohol is totally prohibited. The same can be said for other substances and mental conditions. As a group, identify a number of different communities and discover the variety of attitudes and causes of violence against self

Activity 3: It's good to talk

There are many different organisations and people who deal directly and indirectly with the effects of self abuse. To help Scouts identify the different issues and the ways in which people deal with them, a series of interviews or talks could be arranged with the key groups. Examples of people that could be included in the discussions are police, nurses, doctors, religious leaders, 'The Samaritans' and social workers. By talking to people with experience in these issues, the different sides of the issues can be examined and explored.

Developing awareness and empathy:

After actively participating in identifying the problem, Scouts need to be helped to develop their awareness of the issues, many of which are complex.

Here are some activities which will help Scouts to explore the issue of violence against self and develop skills and empathy. These activities use the Scout method of active participation and exploration. The project in the community should help the Scouts use the skills that they have developed.

Activity 1: Cause and Effects - a flow chart

Having discovered the range of causes and issues around the subject of violence against self, in small groups develop cards which identify reasons for self-harm, the effects and possible outcomes. The groups should swap cards and then develop possible flow charts - see Activity Treasure Chest. The groups can then share their results and discuss their charts.

Activity 2: Agony Scout

A number of made up situations can be created by a Leader in the style of someone writing a letter to an agony aunt, asking for advice. In small groups, a reply to the letter can be written, which explains some of the reasons for the situation and the effects of the actions on the person. The replies can then be shared more widely and discussed as a group. This activity will help to develop a better understanding of the issues affecting people who choose to hurt themselves.

Activity 3: Rating the risks

A list of all the different ways that people can cause violence to themselves can be put together from the activities that were undertaken before. As a group talk about the effects of each of the methods listed. As a result of the discussion, order the different methods in a diamond rank, with the most harmful at the top and the least harmful at the bottom and the ranking discussed as a group - see Activity Treasure Chest. Some suggestions for the list of methods of self-harm are:

- smoking cigarettes
- cutting yourself
- drinking alcohol
- refusing to eat
- smoking cannabis
- injecting heroin
- making yourself sick
- binge eating
- snorting cocaine
- hitting yourself

Self-harm can happen for very many reasons but it is often linked to stress.

Taking action:

The Gifts for Peace project should make a difference in the community. Actions need to be developed which are appropriate to the community and are challenging and fun for the Scouts involved. Here are some projects which may be appropriate for Scouts to respond to the subject of violence against self in your community.

Project 1: Raising the Flag

Having identified the range of methods that people can use to inflict violence against themselves, choose one or two topics that are most appropriate and/or common in the local community. Devise a programme that will raise awareness of the issue you have chosen. This could involve working with the local media, producing promotional material for display in local community centers, schools and workplaces.

Project 2: Helping each other

Develop a peer education programme that will inform and educate the Scouts about the different issues around violence against yourself. Use a combination of the situations, websites and activities from the treasure chest to enable the peer educators to understand the topics and to help to inform and educate younger people and peers about the issues around violence to self. In particular inform young people about the reasons why people may choose to cause violence on to themselves and how different forms of violence might affect them.

Project 3: Working in Partnership

Having identified a number of issues on the topic of violence against self there may be groups and organisations in the community that specialise in supporting people who use difference methods for violence against self. Talk to a local organisation to set up a partnership with them to support and expand the work that they do to enable the support and messages to be available to even more people.

Measuring change:

The project is designed to help young people to develop their capabilities, attitudes and values in response to situations about globalisation. Scouts can help to make a difference in their communities and by understanding the issues related to violence against self. Two dimensions of change should be measured - change in the communities and change in the Scouts themselves. Measuring change should be built into the design of the project in a fun, participative way. Here are some activities which will help to measure change.

Activity 1: Problems and Solutions

As a result of the project carried out, measure the changes in the Scouts involved. Carry out a survey to discover the attitudes of the Scouts to the different forms of violence that can be used by themselves. Also try and find out what the Scouts also think are the reasons why people may use violence on themselves. What ways have they found that can prevent people from using violence on themselves and what are the options for support and help for people who may be using a form of violence on themselves?

Activity 2: What's going on

Conduct a survey in the local community to find out what they think are the main forms of violence on self, the reasons for this and the different ways that people can get help with their problem - see Interviews in the Activity Treasure Chest. Also identify their ideas on what other support can be offered for the issues that they have identified. How do the attitudes of the community compare to the attitudes of the Scouts at the start of the project. Identify ways in which the project that the Scouts have carried out has raised awareness of the issues and support that is available.

*****Please note that this is an especially sensitive issue and care should be taken when discussing this with young people. Make sure that everyone feels comfortable discussing the topic and make sure that you have the correct background information to hand. See the information on Self Harm in the section Social Issues which contains some background information and links to specialist websites and organizations.**

Case study:

Here is some information from New Zealand on how they are tackling this difficult issue as part of their Gift for Peace.

Scouting New Zealand's Gift for Peace is tackling an issue that is a significant concern in their country – youth suicide. New Zealand has an unacceptably high level of youth suicide.

The project is designed for all young people in Scouting as it encourages Scouts of all ages to adopt healthy life-styles and develop confidence and self-esteem. It is through developing these skills and understanding the issues facing young people today that the issue of suicide will be tackled.

Scouting New Zealand will work in partnership with other organisations including the police, Ministries of Health, Education and Youth Affairs, other health and child welfare agencies and the Yellow Ribbon Organisation, which focuses on youth suicide prevention.

"Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around."

Leo Buscaglia