

WHO'S TO BLAME?

- ✓ 1. To challenge prejudice and blame directed at victims of sexual and gender-based violence.
- ✓ 2. To create an awareness of rightful responsibility in incidents of sexual violence.

45min – 1hour

★ Signs: Percentage (provided)
Teacher Notes: Scenario Sheet:
'Who's to Blame?' (provided)

PROCEDURE

- 1 To begin, tell the class that you're going to do an exercise about responsibility and accountability in selected scenarios. Without telling them that the lesson is about victim-blaming, say that there are six stories. Learners will be required to determine the level of responsibility for each of the characters in the story by holding up one of the percentage signs as follows:
 - a. If they feel that the character in the scenario bears complete responsibility for what happened, they should hold up the card marked 100%.
 - b. If they feel that the character bears most, but not all responsibility, they should hold up the sign marked 75%.
 - c. If the characters share equal responsibility they should hold up the 50% sign.
 - d. If there are two characters in the story, the learners should apportion blame to each. The total should add up to 100%. For example, if one character is give 25% of the blame, the other must have 75%.
- 2 After you have explained the game, read out each of the scenarios listed on the 'Who's to Blame?' Scenario Sheet (provided). Expect that learners will ask clarification questions, and may also want extra detail to the story. Use your discretion in whether to provide extra detail or not – doing so can derail the exercise, or take up a lot of time.
- 3 After you have read each of the scenarios, ask learners to hold up the 'Percentage Signs' that correspond to each character's amount of blame for what happened in the story. You may want to mark down the consensus percentage of blame on the board so that learners can reflect back on their choices.
- 4 Then, ask the following questions (additional prompt questions are included on the scenario sheet):
 - a. Why did learners make the assessments that they made? How did they arrive at the percentage they selected?
 - b. Does the 'villain' in the story have a right to behave in such a manner? How do we justify their actions? Why do we justify their actions?
 - c. What message do we send to our community/ society in the way we apportion blame and responsibility? Is the message accurate?
 - d. Where does responsibility for honesty, and for self-control, fit in?

- e. Is it reasonable to expect victims to be held accountable for someone else's (the perpetrator) actions?
- f. What about other people in the story or bystanders (for example, parents, friends): Do they have responsibility? Why, or why not?
- g. Do we expect people who have responsibility in the story to carry the corresponding amount of punishment? For example, if we give each party 50% of the blame, do we expect each of them to serve 50% of the prison sentence? Why or why not?

As the discussion progresses, be sure to remind learners of the way they reasoned previously. For example, if Nku and Anna from the earlier stories got the blame they deserved, shouldn't others (especially in scenario 3) be held responsible in the same way? Why or why not?

- 5 After the discussion, draw attention to how they may have engaged in victim-blaming in this exercise. Point out how common it has become in our society to blame the victim, and as a result how normalised it has become for the victim to blame herself/himself. If learners were prone to victim-blaming in respect of the examples with violence against women (scenarios 4 and 5), point out how our society routinely but wrongly blames the victim in this kind of violence.
- 6 Point out that there are many sources of support if a learner is a victim of any violence – parents, friends, peers, teachers, the police, school counsellors and NGOs may help them. Remind learners that the first step in addressing violence as a victim is to understand that it is NEVER your fault.
- 7 Remind learners that victims of gender-based violence face many obstacles in reporting, so it may not be a simple task. Some of the reasons that victims of gender-based violence do not report include:
 - They fear that they will not be believed.
 - They fear an escalation in the violence – often because of past experiences.
 - The perpetrator has threatened to harm or kill them, or people they love.
 - They fear that they will lose their families (including children) if people know what happened to them.
 - They may not feel that they have the support of key family members.
 - They may not be ready to face the reality of what has happened to them.

Chapter 10: Sexual Offences | Exercise 2

- They fear stigma, shame and discrimination.
- They fear that the criminal justice process will let them down.
- They experience discrimination at the hands of health care workers who should be there to help them.

Provide learners with the following resources for domestic violence and sexual offences:

Rape Crisis Cape Town: www.rapecrisis.org.za

Rape Crisis provides counselling, support, training, awareness raising and advocacy services for victims of sexual violence.

<http://www.mosaic.org.za>

Mosaic provides resources, information, and support for victims of gender-based violence.

TEACHER TIPS



General

This exercise provides a safe space to identify and challenge pervasive views about victim-blaming, especially in incidences of sexual violence. Such prejudices are detrimental not only to the victims involved, but also to the community involved and broader society.

The exercise doesn't ask about personal experiences, and so should not carry a risk of triggering adverse reactions from learners who may have been or are victims of gender-based or sexual violence. Any discussion of these topics require sensitivity on the part of the teacher.

Remember that in every class and school there are likely to be perpetrators and victims of gender-based or sexual violence, and some teens may be coming to terms of their victimhood as a result of this exercise. It is important for teachers to be mindful of this, and to make sure that the discussion doesn't single out individuals or vilify anyone.



Making the Link with Gender and Violence

This exercise helps learners reflect on the pervasiveness of victim-blaming. The tasks challenge our understanding of who is responsible and who is accountable for violence, particularly gender-based and sexual violence. It also allows the opportunity for personal reflection on victimhood and those who wrongly taking responsibility for acts of violence perpetrated against them. Learners who are, or have been, victims of gender-based or sexual violence may not realise that they are victims and may not know what they can do to protect themselves. Learners who have perpetrated such violence may also not have identified their own responsibility in the acts. This exercise is therefore a non-confrontational way of raising these issues with the learners.

The exercise is useful because it challenges assumptions and prejudices against victims of gender-based or sexual violence.



Assessment Ideas

Ask learners to identify other cases in which the victim is more likely to be blamed. Learners can be assessed on their ability to understand and apply the concepts discussed in this exercise to scenarios in their everyday life.

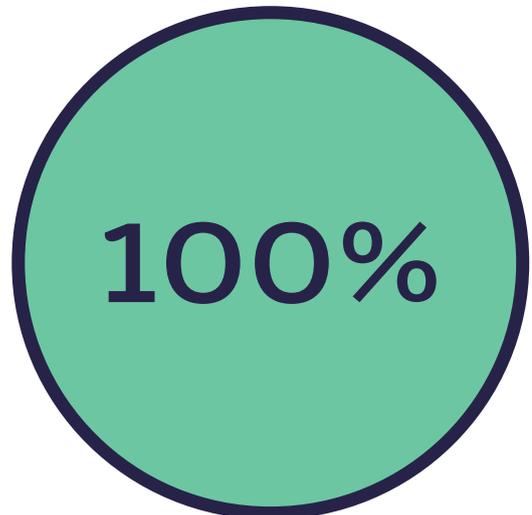
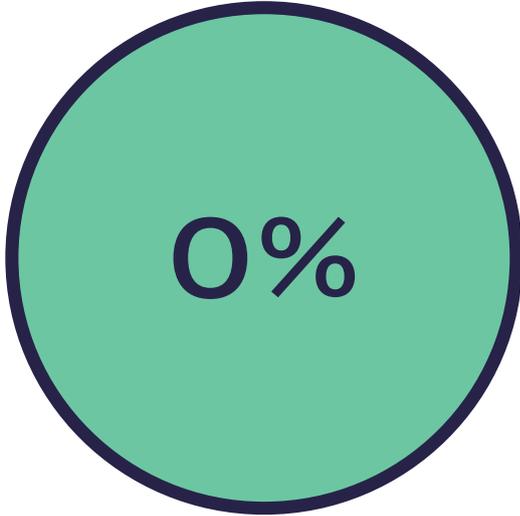


References:

Adapted from Barbara Keating and Lori Bluvus (2007), *Teaching about family and gender violence*. American Sociological Association.

PERCENTAGE CARDS

Print and cut out. Hand out a set of cards to each learner.



SCENARIO SHEET

Read the scenarios. Have learners assess **RESPONSIBILITY** and **Accountability**.

SCENARIO	ADDITIONAL PROMPT QUESTONS
<p>Nku is on his way home from soccer practice. He was in a hurry to watch the final episode of his favourite TV series, and he just tossed his bag onto the back seat of his mom’s car. On their way home, they stopped at the grocery store to buy food. His mom locked the car but Nku forgot to roll up the window on his side. When they returned to the car, the bag was gone. What level of responsibility does Nku have for the theft of his kit?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is Nku responsible for leaving the car windows down? • How much responsibility do passers-by carry for leaving Nku’s things alone?
<p>Anna is twelve years old and has the day off from school. Her parents tell her to stay home. However, she gets bored and takes some money from her parents’ drawer and goes to hang out at the game shop on the corner. There she meets with two other girls, Lisa and Dimpho, whom she recognises from school. When Lisa and Dimpho see that Anna has money, they talk her into going to the nearby mall to look around. On the way to the mall, Lisa and Dimpho beat up Anna and take her money. What level of responsibility does Anna have for the mugging and the robbery? Should Anna herself be held accountable for theft?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a difference between Anna being responsible for stealing from her parents, and Lisa and Dimpho’s responsibility for violently robbing Anna? The result is that money is ‘taken away’ in both cases. • Would it be different if Anna’s parents had given her the money and permission to leave the house? • Should parents be held responsible for leaving their children alone?
<p>It is a hot summer day and you and your friends go to the neighbourhood pool. You decide not to pay R10 to put your bag in a locker because you want to buy a cool drink. Your friends all thought that it was better idea to get lockers. You leave your bag on the side of the pool where you can see it at all times. When you finish swimming for the afternoon, you discover that your cell phone and wallet have been stolen from your bag. How much responsibility do you have for the goods being stolen?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much responsibility do you have for leaving the bag unattended? • Is it the responsibility of pool management to assure security of their patrons’ goods?
<p>Tanya has been dating Jeff for two months and they are now in a monogamous relationship. Tanya knows that Jeff has a bad temper, especially when he has been drinking. Just last week he got into a fistfight with a stranger at a soccer match. Tanya and Jeff go to their high school soccer match on Friday night. A student in Tanya’s English class, Ndlovu, talks to Tanya for a few minutes about an assignment they have in class. After the game, Tanya and Jeff go to a party where Jeff has a few drinks and Tanya chats with both male and female friends. While walking out to the car, Jeff starts complaining that Tanya was too friendly with Ndlovu and other guys. Tanya assures him that they are just friends and there is no reason for him to be jealous. Jeff orders Tanya to stop talking to other guys. Tanya says, “Don’t be silly,” after which Jeff punches Tanya hard on the shoulder almost knocking her down and giving her a nasty bruise.</p> <p>Is Tanya responsible for Jeff striking her?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When people get angry, do they have a right to hit those with whom they are angry? • Is it reasonable to expect potential victims to never make someone angry in order to avoid violence? • Is it reasonable to make the victim responsible for the assailant’s behaviour? • What is the assailant’s responsibility?

SCENARIO SHEET

SCENARIO	ADDITIONAL PROMPT QUESTONS
<p>Faye is a first year university student. She stays in a residence, and has made a group of new friends who she hangs around with. One of these new friends is a guy called Mark, who is a Residence Advisor at one of the residences. Mark has tried to come on to her. She has politely told him that she is not interested. He seems OK with that. One night there's a knock at her door and Mark is there – he has let himself into the residence because all the security guards know him. She lets him in, and he starts to kiss her. She pushes him away but he forces her down and has sex with her. He sees her the next day in the street and asks her please not to tell anyone because it was just a misunderstanding. He tells her that if someone finds out about what happened he will lose his job.</p> <p>How much responsibility does Faye have for what happened?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the encounter rape? Why or why not? • Does it make a difference that they know one another? • Does it make a difference that she let him into her room? • Does Faye have to take Mark's job situation into account in thinking about what to do?
<p>Savanna and Risai are Matric learners. They go to a friend's braai where someone has provided a lot of beer. Everyone is drinking. After a couple of hours, Risai wants to leave but Savanna does not – her parents aren't home and she wants to have some fun. David and Rob, two older brothers of a boy in her class, tell Savanna that they will give her a ride home later. Their friend, Zuva, is the designated driver. They finally leave at 2am and David, Rob, and Savanna are all drunk. The men take Savanna to her room where she passes out. She awakens some time later to realise that her clothes have been removed and that David is having sex with her. He says that Rob and Zuva also had sex with her although she has no memory of it.</p> <p>How much responsibility does Savanna have for the sexual encounter?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the encounter rape? Why or why not? • Savanna is unconscious and the boys are awake. Are they all equally accountable for what happened? • Do the boys have any social, legal, or moral obligation to not take advantage of her intoxication? • Since Zuva was not intoxicated, is he more accountable than Rob and David?