

Stories of Us

Episode 1: BULLYING

Teacher's Guide

Preview extracts of pages 10-13

It is highly recommended that teachers view the video before using it in class as it raises issues that may be sensitive to some students. It's also advisable to think about what back-up support is available – for example, coordinating with the Student Counsellor or Student Wellbeing Coordinator – as some students may wish to talk to someone after the class.

Before class, photocopy the centre page of the workbook as a hand-out for the class. This page has photos of the dramatised characters with their names as a reference for the discussion. It also details where students can turn for support (Kids Helpline, etc) and the *Stories of Us* website address (which contains further links for support, research links and so on). Looking ahead, some spare copies will be required for Class Two, as students will be asked to hold onto their hand-out between classes – and invariably many will be forgotten or lost!

In general, be mindful that boys will be less likely to talk about the issues covered in the video and may require some patient prodding. Gently encouraging them to participate should avoid any embarrassment (which would be counter-productive). Ideally, teachers will be familiar with the students and adapt the resource to the character of the class.

Lastly, teachers may wish to prepare in advance what they will cover in Briefing and Debriefing students in the following sessions.

Note: If conducting a double lesson, Class One and Class Two can be combined – in that order – but the questions may need to be rationalised to fit the time. Alternatively, the double lesson could begin with a MindMatters activity (see MindMatters Sessions 1 or 2) as a preliminary to video Class One, with Class Two held over until the next lesson.

Student Briefing

Before playing the video:

- Based upon past experience, students may be negatively predisposed to the prospect of watching 'yet another a video'. To help engender a more positive attitude, begin by emphasising that the *Stories of Us* video is unlike any they are likely to have seen before. This program is Made with Students, For Students.
- Briefly summarise the types of issues touched upon in the video and explain the options should the students want private support with anything raised in the video (e.g. talking to Student Counsellor or Student Wellbeing Coordinator or phoning Kids Helpline).
- Hand out the photocopied centre page of the workbook with the characters' names, draw their attention to the Support & Research details on the hand-outs – and mention that they can take the sheets with them after class.
- Explain that the story does not come to a complete end – it is intentionally left unresolved so that they can explore possible endings themselves. In the second version (which they will see later) there are some additional scenes which provide a positive outcome to the stories.

Important Note: After playing the video, do not to ask students if they have been in similar situations, as the class is not the environment for personal disclosure. If some students have been (for example) the victim of bullying, it can be counterproductive or even dangerous to discuss it in front of other students.



PLAY THE VIDEO WITHOUT INTERRUPTION

(The *Play Version* duration is 22 minutes 27 seconds)



STOP THE VIDEO AT THE END PROMPT

- When the *Play Version* finishes there is a series of still photos with the characters' names (similar to the hand-outs), then a prompt where the following questions are used as discussion starters.



PLAY VERSION QUESTIONS

- How might Mia be feeling? [Hurt; lonely; bitter; vulnerable.]
- How might Mia be feeling about Alison, Madison and Nadia? [Angry; disappointed; manipulated.]
- How might Vince be feeling? [Scared; desperate; unhappy.]
- How might Vince be feeling about Luke and his mates? [Victimised; fed up; angry.]
- What has happened to Mia to get her to this point? [Break down the different stages of her story step by step.]
- What has happened to Vince to get him to this point? [Break down the different stages of his story step by step.]



TEACHER SUPPORT INFORMATION FOR *PLAY VERSION*

- There are many issues raised in the video. In this *Play Version* students should be encouraged to look at the 'big picture' and avoid becoming unduly bogged down in detail. In Class Two (*Segmented Version*) they will look in more depth at specific issues as they happen. There are also extensive support notes in that section of the workbook.

Student Debriefing

At the end of the session:

- It is particularly important to re-emphasise that in the next version of the video there is additional footage in which they will see a positive outcome for the two main characters.
- It's important that they don't leave the class feeling unsupported if they want to talk about it some more, so teachers should emphasise that the Student Counsellor or Student Wellbeing Coordinator is available if they want to talk privately about the video or any personal reactions they may have experienced to the issues raised.
- Also, ask the students to hold onto the hand-out for re-use in Class Two and remind them that the sheet contains contacts for additional support with the issues.

Optional Extension Activity

Having discussed the video in class, if time allows there is an optional extension activity in which the students break into groups and create possible endings to the story. They could also explore possible endings with role-play.

Optional Homework

There is also an option to set homework in which students write an end to the story. Keep it brief so it doesn't become a chore, as it's very important to maintain student interest for Class Two in which they explore the story in more detail. This homework has the added benefit of helping to keep the story 'alive' until next class.

Note: Some students may see this assignment as an opportunity to make light of the issues, so they may need to be reminded that those types of responses are not acceptable.

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Preview extracts of pages 20-23

? SEGMENT B QUESTIONS

- What are you noticing about the way Mia's friends are treating her? [Excluding her from skipping class and the sleepover, getting her to do assignment...]
- Is there a leader in this group? If the answer is 'Yes', then who and why are they the leader? [Yes, Alison – she organises them, etc. Encourage the students to explore...]
- How have the girls each responded to Mia going to the formal with Jason? [Madison and Nadia happy for her, Alison not at all happy.]
- Do you think Jason is aware that Vince is being bullied by Luke and his mates? [Yes, because he saw Luke waiting at Vince's locker and made an excuse to avoid being there.]
- How well do you think Vince handled the situation with the padlock? Was there anything he could have done differently? [Talk to the teacher privately after the lesson; seek the support of a trusted adult, family member or friend.]

i TEACHER SUPPORT INFORMATION FOR SEGMENT B

- Jason saw Luke waiting at the lockers and made an excuse (going to the toilet) to avoid any confrontation – so he is aware of the problem and avoiding both supporting Vince and himself becoming a victim.
- The teacher's comment that Vince's work still hasn't improved is a clue that his grades are possibly falling as a result of the bullying, due to a lack of concentration and general unhappiness.
- Alison inviting the other girls for a sleep-over without involving Mia is yet another example of an imbalance in the group.
- Mia sincerely likes Madison's hair and tells her so.
- Madison and Nadia are clearly happy that Jason invited Mia to the formal but Alison seems unhappy, almost annoyed – from which we can infer that Alison had hoped that Jason would invite her (the 'other person' she referred to earlier).

Segment C

▶ PLAY SEGMENT C
(Duration 4 minutes 45 seconds)

|| SUMMARISE SEGMENT C
At the *End Segment C* prompt, summarise what we have learnt.

- Alison has changed her attitude towards Mia.
- Luke continues to bully Vince (knocking his books) but this time the bystanders support Vince by picking up his books – which seems to annoy Luke.
- Alison lies to Madison about what Mia said about her hair and implies that Mia has been saying things about them.
- Mia confronts Alison about what she said but Alison avoids directly answering her questions.
- Vince won't talk to Jason about the bullying but he does talk to Anna.
- Luke is quick to blame Vince for the flat tyre on his car and pushes him around.

? SEGMENT C QUESTIONS

- What is Luke's problem? Why does he appear so angry – what is going on for him? [Lost his job and can't buy the car speaker he wants; has trouble inviting Christina out; quick to blame Vince for the flat tyre.]
- What is Luke's reaction when Christina and Anna help Vince by picking up the books Luke had intentionally knocked from his hands? [Angry; possibly losing face with Christina – whom he was trying to invite out.]
- How is Vince feeling about the situation and what effect does this have on how he is dealing with it? Is he looking for support? [Clearly unhappy and falling behind in his school work (which we learn from when he talks to Jason); starting to seek help, he talks to Anna about his problem.]



- Why does Vince decide to talk to Anna, when he won't talk to Jason? [Explore why this might happen – see Teacher Support note below.]
- What is Alison's problem – why do you think she is causing conflict with Mia? What is going on for her? [Unhappy that Jason invited Mia to the formal – she had hoped he would invite her – so she takes it out on Mia.]
- How are Alison's friends being affected by her attitude to Mia? [Alison lies to turn them against Mia... Explore why she would do this and why they would believe her.]
- What are Mia's options at this stage for dealing with the situation – to try to prevent it getting worse? [Talk to Madison and Nadia.]

TEACHER SUPPORT INFORMATION FOR SEGMENT C

- Alison is negative about Madison's hair, telling Mia that 'you can't really see the black streaks' – which she later tells the girls Mia had said.
- Alison also undermines Mia's confidence in her choice of formal dress – which she had previously said she had liked (when they were looking at the magazine in the yard).
- Mia had been clearly sincere when she earlier told Madison that she liked her hair – which it might prove useful to highlight, because if Madison had confidence in her reading of Mia's sincerity she would be less likely to accept Alison's version of what happened.
- Luke lost his job and can't buy the car speaker ('sub-woofer') he wants and he is awkward and disappointed in his failed attempt to invite Christina on a date.
- Anna and Christina supporting Vince by picking up his books is an example of how bystanders can help by sending a message to the bully that their behaviour is not acceptable.
- Vince avoids talking to Jason about his trouble with Luke but is comfortable discussing it with Anna. Some of the factors here may be that he is ashamed to admit his fear of Luke to Jason; he knows Jason is afraid of becoming a victim and doesn't want to put him in the position of having to admit this or feeling obliged to stand up for Vince; with Anna, it is commonly understood that males are more likely to turn to females for emotional support, feeling they will be more sensitive and attentive.]

Segment D

 **PLAY SEGMENT D**
(Duration 2 minutes 30 seconds)

 **SUMMARISE SEGMENT D**

At the *End Segment D* prompt, summarise what we have learnt.

- The bullying behaviour towards both Mia and Vince gets worse.
- Mia is now excluded from the group, with all three girls against her.
- Vince tries to talk to the teacher but she is in a hurry and he doesn't want to arrange another time.

 **SEGMENT D QUESTIONS**

- Attempting to ask the teacher for support is obviously hard for Vince – what would make seeking support easier for him? [Support of others (a trusted family member or friend); support information about bullying and how best to deal with it from websites like *Bullying. No Way!* or phoning *Kids Helpline*.]
- What would be the best ways of approaching a teacher for help? [At the end of class, arrange a meeting with them as soon as possible (at recess, lunch or after school); or email the teacher to arrange a meeting (if email is available).]
- Who else at school could he approach for support? [Student Counsellor or Student Wellbeing Coordinator, Year Level Coordinator, Home Group teacher, a teacher with whom he feels comfortable or a Peer Support student.]
- Could his friends help? [Jason or Anna could help by supporting him, reinforcing that bullying is not acceptable, even going to a teacher or counsellor with him.]

 **TEACHER SUPPORT INFORMATION FOR SEGMENT D**

- Vince chose a difficult time to talk to the teacher (with the teacher rushing to get to the next class) but then he is under a lot of stress as a result of his situation and may not be thinking clearly.