

Stories of Us

Episode 2: RELATIONSHIPS

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 16 minutes)

■ 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 Sophie be feeling about Rose and Sarah? [Hurt; guilty; isolated; unsure how to repair the friendship.]
- How might she feel about Rachel and her group? [Disillusioned; bitter; let down; isolated; hurt.]
- How might Gary be feeling about Marcus and Steven? [Disappointed; angry; manipulated; used; not respected.]
- What has happened to Sophie to get her to this point? [Break down the different stages of her story step by step.]
- What has happened to Gary to get him to this point? [Break down the different stages of his story step by step.]

i 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.

For example, the girls might take it in turns to play Sophie as she talks to Rose and Sarah (one week later) in an effort to heal their relationship. The boys could explore how Gary might talk to Marcus about how he has been treated – explaining how he feels and trying to understand why Marcus behaved as he did.

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

i TEACHER SUPPORT INFORMATION FOR *SEGMENT B*

- S.N.A.G. stands for 'Sensitive New Age Guy'.

Segment C

▶ **PLAY SEGMENT C**
(Duration 2 minutes 7 seconds)

|| **SUMMARISE SEGMENT C**

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

- Marcus and his mates tell the substitute teacher that Gary wrote the note, which leads to him being embarrassed in front of the class.
- Gary is being bullied by some older boys but Marcus and Steve offer no support.

? **SEGMENT C QUESTIONS**

- Why would Marcus and Steven say that Gary wrote the note? [A joke at his expense; teaming against him as a show of power/control.]
- Is this something real friends should do? [Aim for more than a simple yes or no – encourage them to explore why.]
- Gary is being hassled by some older boys – as someone new to the school, could Gary react differently? [He might feel a greater need to make a show of standing up for himself; he also might feel more vulnerable and unable to do anything.]

i TEACHER SUPPORT INFORMATION FOR *SEGMENT C*

- Sophie's Mother is unhappy with her going to school 'like that' because she has hitched up her dress, let her hair down and generally relaxed her appearance.
- The insult 'foreskin' refers to Gary's surname (Forsyth – which we learn later when the boys visit his father's supermarket).

Segment D

▶ **PLAY SEGMENT D**
(Duration 2 minutes 9 seconds)

|| **SUMMARISE SEGMENT D**

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

- Sophie is irritable with Sarah.
- Sophie gives the teacher 'attitude' and is told to sit down the front – next to Rachel, who is already in trouble.
- Playing some sort of game, Gary's mates repeatedly playfully insult him, which he doesn't appear to like.
- Sophie is invited to join Rachel and her group at lunch and then snubs Rose and Sarah.
- Rachel insults Sophie's friends, referring to them as 'losers' and Jenny and Kathryn laugh at Sarah as she walks past in the yard.

? **SEGMENT D QUESTIONS**

- How do you think Gary feels about his mates picking on him? [Unable to respond to the insults; sensitive/vulnerable about his position in the group; ganged up on because as a group they keep chanting the insult.]
- Why didn't Sophie say something when the new group criticised her old friends (Sarah and Rose)? [Wanted to be seen as 'cool'; distance herself from the 'un-cool' girls.]

- What might the risk be if Sophie did say something? [Rachel & co may judge her a 'loser' and reject her.]
- What could Sophie have said? ['They're good friends – caring, supportive – but they're interested in different things'; or a more neutral response, e.g. 'They're okay, just different'.]
- Why might Sophie want to join Rachel and her group? [Cool; adventurous; a bit dangerous – which can be exciting.]
- Do you think Sophie could still be friends with Rose and Sarah now that she's joined Rachel's group? [Possibly but they felt rejected by the way she left them; she will also have to contend with the negative attitudes of Rachel's group.]

i TEACHER SUPPORT INFORMATION FOR *SEGMENT D*

- The games the boys are playing involves throwing something back and forth between them. Whoever is holding it when the siren goes is a 'poofter'.

Segment E

▶ **PLAY *SEGMENT E***
(Duration 1 minute 40 seconds)

|| **SUMMARISE *SEGMENT E***

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

- Rose and Sarah appear unhappy (presumably about Sophie).
- Sophie has joined Rachel's group.
- Gary rides with his mates to his father's (Mr Forsyth's) supermarket.
- Marcus steals a chocolate bar and also puts one in Gary's pocket – which Gary is not happy about.

? ***SEGMENT E* QUESTIONS**

- Why might Marcus steal a chocolate bar in Gary's parents' shop? [Thought he could get away with it; to feel power over Gary.]
- Why would Marcus put a chocolate bar in Gary's pocket? [Test his control over Gary by challenging him to do something about it.]
- How could Gary respond to the situation? [Put it back; challenge Marcus to put it back; ask Marcus why he did it; diffuse the situation by openly eating it – it is his family shop – and then tell his father.]
- What would be the consequences of (a) putting it back; or (b) walking out with it? [(a) losing face with Marcus; increasing his own power in the relationship; (b) guilt that he knows it was pointless and wrong, weakened by handing power to Marcus.]
- Do you think Marcus is trying to take advantage of Gary and their friendship? [Ask for more than yes or no – explore why.]

i TEACHER SUPPORT INFORMATION FOR *SEGMENT E*

- The supermarket is run by Gary's father, Mr Forsyth. When they arrive Gary calls him 'Dad' and the boys call him 'Mr Forsyth'.