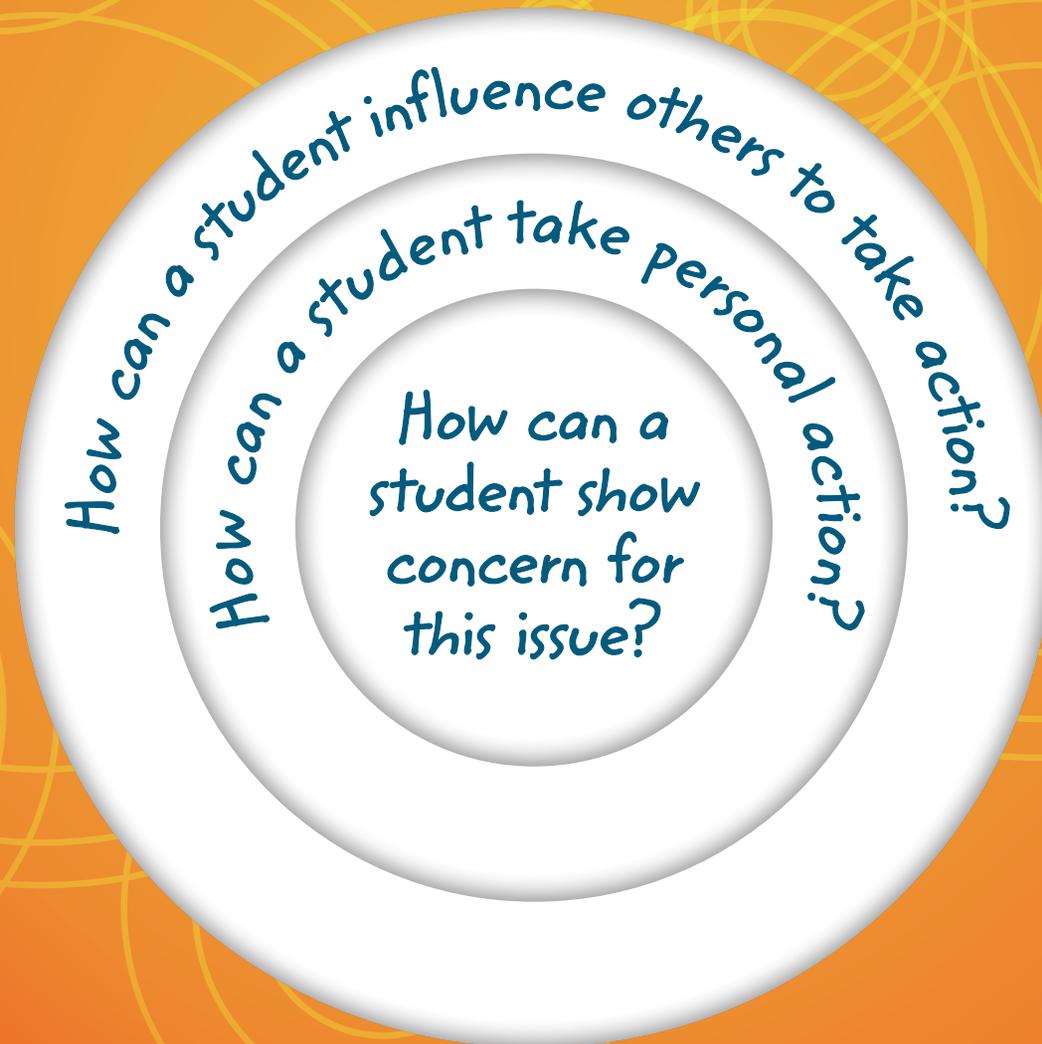


5.4.1

Discovering  
Activity

# Circles of Action

Scenario: A group of students is being bullied at school.



unit **2**

activity **16**

## speaking truth to power

**OVERVIEW:** By writing songs and poetry, students practice speaking up for gender equality in relationships. Before starting this activity, each group should have completed at least one of the following activities in this book: 1, 3, 5, or 6.

**OBJECTIVES:** To help students to analyze and identify unequal power in male–female relationships.

### DURATION:

Steps 1–7: 45 minutes

Step 8: 45 minutes

### MATERIALS:

You may want to show students some examples of songs, rap lyrics, or poetry.

### TO PREPARE:

Familiarize yourself with the music popular among your students. For Step 4, consider whether to add any scenarios that are appropriate to your setting. Encourage your students to think of their own scenarios and describe them to you. Decide whether you will assign some students as judges (see Step 6).

### INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Explain that this activity will explore how gender roles sometimes lead to power differences within our relationships. Ask:
  - What are some of the things we have learned about gender roles and equality?
  - How might gender roles affect whether people have equal power in their interpersonal relationships? *[Allow five to ten minutes for responses.]*
- 2 Explain to students that they will explore this topic by writing poetry or songs. They may use hip-hop, spoken word, rap, or other styles.
- 3 Have students form pairs (single sex or boy–girl) and discuss with their partner how they want to divide the work, for example, to write and perform their piece together or to have one person take the lead in writing and the other in performing.
- 4 Suggest examples of scenarios that students could use as a basis for their song or poem.
  - A boy defending his gay friend
  - A man telling his friend he does not have the right to force his wife to have sex
  - A banker explaining to a resistant husband why he is granting the man’s wife a loan of her own (or the wife saying why she needs and deserves to have her own money)
  - A teenaged girl facing sexual harassment by older males
  - A husband insisting that his wife should do all of the housework and cooking and childcare although they both work full time
  - A girl facing stigma when she returns to her community after having been sold into sex work
  - A young wife being punished by her husband for her small dowry
  - A boy being ridiculed by other boys because his behavior is not macho

- A wife or girlfriend trying to convince her husband/boyfriend to use condoms when he does not want to
  - A boy defending his mother when his father becomes violent toward her
  - A different kind of idea: The statement by former Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan: “We know what it takes to turn the tide against this (AIDS) epidemic... . It requires real, positive change that will give more power and confidence to women and girls, and transform relations between women and men at all levels of society.”
  - Another idea that you think of yourselves, but which requires the teacher’s approval
- 5** Give students guidance to complete the assignment:
- Take a few minutes with your partner to decide which scenario you want to write about.
  - Spend the rest of the class period writing your song or poem.
  - Think about the arguments the various people in these scenarios might make, and what they might say to prove their points.
  - Also think about how it might feel to be a person in the story and how he or she would want to express feelings through words.
  - Remember that this is not a joke or a time to make light of violence.

- 6** Explain when they will be presenting the results of their work. If you decide to have a panel of judges, ask three or four students to select their three favorite performances. You may want to choose students who feel uncomfortable with performing.
- 7** Give students 25–30 minutes to write their song or poem. Allow them to finish this project as homework if needed.
- 8** When the presentations begin (this may be a separate session), assemble any student-judges and clarify the criteria for selecting winners (for example, best message, best performance, best song, best poem). Ask students to perform.

**Homework:** Pick two of the following questions and write a full paragraph about each of them in your journal or notebook:

- Who usually has more power in an intimate male–female relationship?
- What are the costs of power imbalances in relationships?
- Can unequal power also exist in same-sex relationships?
- What are some ways that people can try to gain greater equality in their close relationships?