

The Toothpaste Activity: Rumor and Gossip as understood in terms of toothpaste

Activity Type:

Intended Audience: Grade 4

Intended Length: 45 minutes

Authoring Center: SAPARS

Special Considerations: Materials: Toothpaste (1 tube for every 4 students), Paper plates, Scissors, Tape, Ample towels and water for clean up

Lesson/Activity Objective:

This activity is designed to help students see graphically how once things (i.e. rumors and gossip, pictures and texts) are shared they are out in the public domain and difficult to impossible to take back.

Lesson/Activity Instructions:

After introductions and ground rules have been established, have the students move into groups of 4. Pass out a paper plate, pair of scissors and a box of toothpaste per group. Tell the students that they have a choice both as a group and as individuals to either open the box, open the tube of toothpaste or to not. The second choice that they have is to squeeze the contents of the toothpaste onto the paper plate.

Give the students several minutes to squeeze the toothpaste onto the plate and then tell the entire class to stop what they are doing. Then ask the students to put all the toothpaste back into the tube, put the tube back into the box, put the box back on the clean plate.

After the students get as close as possible to this task, allow them to go clean up their hands and their desks.

When clean up has finished begin debrief with the students. First ask the students what they were asked to do. Make certain during this piece that they remember the choice they were given at the beginning of the activity. Ask the students why they think they were asked to do this activity. Answers to this will range from team building to having fun to learning how to share. If no student brings it up, then ask the students if they know what rumors are. Renew the discussion from this point with the students focusing on how the toothpaste is like rumors.

After the connection between the activity with toothpaste and rumors has been established, begin discussing what a bystander is with the students. Establish the difference between tattling and telling, where rumors happen, school protocols for talking with supportive adults and tactics on how to refuse rumor spreading with peers.

Each local sexual assault support center has invested time and resources developing these tools for their educational programming. They are being shared here as a peer-to-peer best practices compendium. Please feel free to use these resources, but be sure to give appropriate credit to the originating agency.