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INTRODUCTION

End Gang Life – Myths & Realities is a series of six gang prevention and education videos that provide a unique, thought-provoking look into many of the main myths surrounding gangs. The videos expose the truths and perils of gang life with the aim of promoting conversations about gangs and the effects gangs have on communities. The primary goal of this resource is to prevent and deter youth and young adults from entering gang life.

Each video runs between 7 and 10 minutes long and features interviews with parents who have lost children to gang-related murders, police officers who have spent years investigating gangs and gang-related murders, and former gang members who give rare insight into the world of gangs and gang violence.

This six-part video series is comprised of interwoven, real-life anecdotes told from the perspective of former gangsters, parents of slain gang members, as well as police officers who have dealt with both the enforcement of gangsters in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia as well as with the bloody aftermaths of gang-related violence. The Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit of BC (CFSEU-BC) worked in collaboration with Odd Squad Productions and Bright Light Studios to put together this sophisticated video project that dispels many of the common myths around gangs.

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COMBINED FORCES SPECIAL ENFORCEMENT UNIT
BRITISH COLUMBIA

To learn about gang prevention, visit www.endganglife.ca.
Safely ask questions and connect on social media.
Twitter: @cfseubc

To inquire about these videos and other End Gang Life gang prevention products, please contact CFSEU-BC at
Email: inquiries@cfseu.bc.ca
Phone: 778-290-2040

Odd Squad Productions
For questions about media production, please contact
Doug Charlton, Executive Director
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As a facilitator presenting these videos, you are in a position to initiate frank and informative conversations among students while they are in a safe learning environment. For some students, this may present a first opportunity to learn about gang life and ask questions. For others, this may be a familiar topic if friends or family members have previously been impacted by gang-related violence or activity (see NOTE below).

We have designed this guide to help you create an engaging, active learning environment for students who will be watching the videos. The activities and questions included in this Facilitator’s Guide encourage students to express their perspectives and apply those perspectives to the choices they may be making or to those choices that other individuals in their lives may be making.

The overall goal of this project is to prevent youth involvement in gang life. As such, there are several specific Learning Outcomes for these videos and the activities in this Facilitator’s Guide.

After watching these videos and engaging in the active learning activities detailed in this guide, students will achieve the following:

- Increased knowledge of and awareness around the realities of gang life
- Ability to identify the common myths associated with gang life
- Ability to identify the most common techniques used by gangs to recruit youth into criminal activity
- Ability to identify the early warning signs that friends or family members may be involved or getting involved in gang life
- A deeper understanding of the consequences that gang activity can have on family, friends, and the community
- Increased knowledge of where to go for help if they need it
- An opportunity to voice opinions about gang life and to participate in a collaborative discussion about possible solutions and strategies to keep youth out of such criminal activity

**Suggested audiences:** Students at the secondary school grade levels, parents, and interested community stakeholders.

**NOTE:** Care should be taken when presenting these videos to students who may have been (or are currently being) affected by gang-related activities. Students may have first-hand involvement in such activity or they may be affected by the activities of someone close to them.
End Gang Life – Myths & Realities has been divided into six video modules. The videos can be shown independently of one another or the documentary can be shown in full. Each module focuses its content on one or more identified gang-related myth.

The Facilitator’s Guide is organized around the video modules. Each section begins by identifying the “Myths” highlighted in the video module. A concise overview of the module is provided for you. In addition, a list of key quotes from the video is provided.

This Guide provides three teaching options that can help you to initiate discussion and encourage student participation.

- **Journal Topics** – Allow students to reflect on a topic and offer their individual perspectives through writing. The teaching facilitator determines the format and length of each journal activity.

- **Debate Topics** – Provide students with the opportunity to interact with each other and offer their different opinions. Facilitators may want students to list pros and cons or positive and negative perspectives. Or they may want to place students on debate teams. Each side can be asked to prepare arguments that support or reject a position, and then present them—within a designated timeframe.

- **Open Discussion Topics** – Give students a chance to openly discuss the issues raised in each module.

Facilitators are invited to choose one or more of these teaching options that best suit the class structure and teaching timetables.

Finally, there is a “General Topics for Discussion” section at the end of this Guide to further promote lively conversations and debate in the classroom. These questions could also form the basis of take-home written assignments or poster board projects.
**Myth:** You’ll have lots of money, have expensive cars, lots of stuff, and be powerful; Selling or transporting a little bit of drugs isn’t a big deal.
Overview: The first module disputes the myth of having lots of money, fancy cars, power and that transporting drugs is no big deal. The basis of the first module is essentially high risk, high reward.

JOURNAL TOPICS

1. If you were worried about a friend because you suspected that he/she was thinking about getting involved in the gang life (or was already involved), what kinds of things could you do to help your friend?

2. Choose a song / music video, film, or video game that you think glorifies gang life. What are the gang elements that are present and what message(s) do you think is/are being conveyed? Do you think the message(s) is/are accurate?

3. What are the different ways that a person’s involvement in gang life can affect their families?

DEBATE TOPICS

1. Popular culture (e.g. songs / music videos, films, video games) is responsible for kids getting involved in gang life.

2. Stiffer prison penalties will discourage people from getting involved in gang life.

3. Making marijuana legal will solve the gang issue in Canada.

KEY QUOTES:

- “The word gangster has just become a trite saying that kids throw around, ‘That looks gangster, this looks gangster’, and I don’t believe they truly understand the depth of that lifestyle.”

- “All they did to recruit me was show me all this stuff, show me the little bit of money that you could get.”

- “I think in the beginning it was all about the money and the cars and the parties and the nice things, and I would say it lasted a year, a year and a half. And then it wasn’t just about that. It was about living in fear and being controlled.”

- “You can’t separate guns, gangs, drugs, and murders. They are all part of a continuum...people have been murdered and probably will continue to be murdered over small-time drug dealing, so it’s not as minor. It could cost you your life.”

OPEN DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. In Module 1, you hear from the parents of two victims who died as a result of being associated with the gang life. Aside from the families of victims, who else is affected by gangs and gang-related violence?

2. What kinds of costs are linked to gangs and gang-related violence?

3. How can social media be used to keep kids and teens from joining the gang life? How do gangs use social media to recruit kids and teens into the gang life?
**Myths:** As a gangster’s girlfriend or wife, you’ll have everything you want; Girls and women aren’t allowed to join gangs.


Overview: The second module focuses specifically on female involvement in gangs. Girls have a role to play too, and they aren’t immune to the violence that accompanies the lifestyle.

Journal Topics

1. What do you think motivates girls to become romantically involved with gangsters?

2. Girls are at risk while they are in relationships with gangsters, in part, because there is an imbalance of power in the relationship. What other kinds of relationships can girls become involved in where they are at risk because of a power imbalance?

3. What kinds of messages do girls receive in society that make relationships with gangsters seem normal?

Debate Topics

1. A girl who is romantically involved with a gangster has made a choice to be with him, so she should be treated as a criminal just like her boyfriend or husband.

2. It is ok for girls to date gangsters as long as the girls don’t break the law themselves.

3. Bad parenting is to blame for girls becoming romantically involved with gangsters. Parents should be more strict and force their daughters to end such relationships.

Open Discussion Topics

1. What kinds of risks are involved for girls who join gangs or who become romantically involved with gangsters?

2. Many girls feel like they are trapped in their relationships with gangsters. What can be done to help them escape those relationships?

3. Why do some girls not understand the risks associated with dating or marrying gangsters?

Key Quotes:

- “It can easily start off as you do a favour for them and they pay you back with a nice new handbag. But that also comes with strings attached. That new handbag is now your obligation to them.”

- “Lots of my former associates were violent with their girlfriends...I can think of two cases right off the top of my head where young women had been shot to death, and it’s because they were driving the wrong car and happened to be with the wrong men, and that’s pretty sad.”

- “I would tell her I was concerned that, you know, one day I might hear that she’s been murdered, and her comment was ‘Mom, they don’t murder girls. They don’t shoot girls.’ Well, the rules have changed.”
Myths: You’ll have plenty of friends and they won’t care if you’re a gangster; You’ll be respected and feared wherever you go; You can always get out whenever you want.
MODULE ACTIVITIES

**Overview:** The third module highlights the misconception that gang members will be your friends, people you count on, and that this lifestyle will earn you respect. Gang life is a book that gets judged by its cover. The horrors aren't revealed until later.

**Journal Topics**

1. Choose one person in your life (e.g. a family member, a teacher, a coach, a friend, etc.) who you look up to and respect. Write about why you like and respect this person so much.

2. Think about one or two of your closest friends. Write about why you think these friendships are so strong. What are 3-5 traits/characteristics that best describe these friendships?

3. Write about an experience you have had or a situation you have encountered where your expectations ended up being very different from the reality of the experience or situation.

**Debate Topics**

1. I can join a gang and still have my old life (e.g. friends, family, extracurricular activities, etc.) at the same time.

2. Economically disadvantaged kids and teens are the most likely to join gangs.

3. Joining a gang gives a person more independence and more control over his/her life decisions.

**Open Discussion Topics**

1. What can your school and your community do to better provide kids and teens with a sense of belonging and of being accepted? What can you as students do to help provide this for peers who may be feeling isolated?

2. How would you describe a healthy friendship? To what extent do you think the gang life provides an environment suitable for healthy friendships?

3. How does involvement in gang life further isolate kids and teens who think that joining a gang will provide a sense of family and belonging?

**Key Quotes:**

- “It’s a short-lived lifestyle. You’re up there for a couple of minutes, and the next thing you know you’re gone. Somebody else takes your spot. And there’s a big lineup of people waiting to take your spot.”

- “Fear and respect are two very different things...and I think I was always feared a lot, but I was never really respected.”

- “Exiting a gang, you can get killed. All your friends can turn on you. You might know too much.”
**Myths:** Someone will always have your back and you’ll be protected; Even if you do end up in prison, your gang will protect you.
Overview: The fourth module focuses on the belief that a gang is like a brotherhood and support system. The reality of the situation is that you are entirely alone, fighting a losing battle.

Journal Topics

1. Write about one gangster (real or fictional) who you know something about. This can be someone you have seen on the news, read about in books, seen in movies, etc. How would you describe this gangster to someone who had never heard of him/her?

2. Write about a situation in your life where your loyalty to a friend was tested. How was the situation resolved? Do you think the loyalty you and your friend(s) feel towards one another is similar to or different from the loyalty that gang members profess to have for one another?

3. Violence in the prison system is discussed in graphic terms in Module 4 and such violence can significantly traumatize prisoners, especially young ones. How do you think the incarceration of a young gang member affects that gang member’s family and friends?

Debate Topics

1. Police should not interfere when gangs are in conflict with each other. Instead, the police should let gangsters kill each other and save society the trouble of arresting, prosecuting, and putting them in jail.

2. Gangs in Canada are not as violent as gangs in the United States because Canada’s gun laws are much more strict.

3. A person who chooses gang life can control how involved he/she becomes in criminal activity.

Key Quotes:

- “You might be kicking a door at 3:30 in the morning with guns, you know. It’s scary to be on either side of that door.”
- “I could have been killed that night. My daughter could have been killed that night.”
- “I am thirty years old and I have ten years in prison.”
- “This past five or ten years, I’ve seen over a dozen of my friends be murdered. Murdered in cold blood.”
- “We are not bulletproof.”
OPEN DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. Given the fact that there is legal medical marijuana use in Canada and that several states in the United States have legalized marijuana, should authorities bother to police the production, transportation, and sale of marijuana at all? Is dealing small amounts of marijuana really a serious problem?

2. What can communities, law enforcement, and the prison system do to reintegrate convicted gang members back into society when they are released from prison?

3. Is prison the best place to send young gang members convicted of crimes, especially if such an experience is likely to turn them into hardened, lifelong criminals?
Myth: You’ll live a long and happy life.
Overview: The myth of living a long and happy life is demystified entirely in the fifth module. It is no secret, but many gangsters don’t live past the age of 30.

JOURNAL TOPICS

1. Imagine that someone you care about (e.g. a sibling, a friend) was involved in gang life. Describe the emotions you think you would be feeling and describe how you think the situation would affect you.

2. Imagine that someone you care about (e.g. a sibling, a friend) is involved in gang life. Write a letter to that person to tell him/her what you are feeling.

3. Module 5 describes the experiences of several parents whose children were victims of gang life. Aside from grieving the loss of their children, how do you think the gang life has affected them?

DEBATE TOPICS

1. Not every gang member is at risk to become a victim of violence.

2. Bad parenting is to blame for kids joining gangs.

3. Kids join gangs to escape a bad life at home.

OPEN DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. What can schools, communities, and law enforcement do to help young gang members escape criminal life before those gang members become victims of violence?

2. What can schools, communities, and law enforcement do to support families who are trying to get their children out of gang life?

3. Why do so many young people get involved in gang life even though so much violence is associated with the lifestyle?

KEY QUOTES:

- “The life expectancy for a gangster is about 30 years old.”
- “All these people that have been murdered, they’re young people.”
- “Normally it ends in death, imprisonment, or being on the run.”
- “That was the day. The sun doesn’t rise in my life anymore.”
Myths: All gangsters deserve what they get. Their injuries and deaths are victimless crimes.

Gangs are only a lower class, ethnic problem;
No one in 'my' family would ever be in a gang

Once kids join a gang, there's no hope for them
Overview: The sixth module serves to eliminate the stigma that surrounds gang life. It is easy to brush it off and say that these people got what they deserved, and that the murder of a gangster is a victimless crime. But there are victims: the parents, spouses, and children who are left behind to suffer.

JOURNAL TOPICS

1. Write about one person you feel you can always talk to about any subject. Describe what it is about that person that allows you to trust them.

2. When gang members are murdered, society sometimes characterizes the homicide as a victimless crime. Do you agree or disagree with this view? Why?

3. When a young person dies as a result of his or her involvement in gang life, society often takes the position that the gang member got what they deserved because he or she failed to make good personal choices. Is the dead gang member the only one who is responsible?

KEY QUOTES:

- “They’re no less of a person than any other victim of a homicide.”
- “There shouldn’t be a stigma on how someone’s died.”
- “If you start to look down that list of people that have been murdered, or that have been charged, they come from every walk of life. They can be university students, high school students, professionals. It doesn’t matter.”

DEBATE TOPICS

1. If you come from an emotionally and financially stable family, you are less likely to join a gang.

2. Gang members are criminals by choice and do not deserve sympathy or help.

3. If society ostracizes gang members, treating them as outcasts, young people will be less likely to become involved in gang life.

OPEN DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. What are the warning signs that someone you care about may be involved in gang life?

2. What can schools, family members, and friends do to help young people make better life choices with regards to joining gangs and participating in criminal activity?

3. Should the gang problem be left for police to deal with? Is there a role for schools and communities to play in keeping young people out of gang life?
GENERAL TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is a Dial-a-Doper? Why is the Dial-a-Doper such an effective recruiting technique for gangs?

2. What are the signs that someone you might know is involved in Dial-a-Doper activities?

3. Gangs recruit youth from a diversity of backgrounds (e.g. ethnicity, gender, age, socio-economic status, etc.). What do such youths have in common? Are there common risk factors?

4. If you were “in trouble,” what might prevent you from approaching a parent / a teacher / a police officer for help?

5. What kinds of legal consequences are there when someone is charged and/or convicted as a result of being involved in the drug trade?

6. The illegal drug trade costs the Canadian economy billions of dollars every year. In what ways is the economy affected? That is, where do the economic costs come from?

7. When you watch TV, you might see a drug awareness public service announcement followed by a commercial for over-the-counter pharmaceutical products. Is this a mixed message? What other kinds of mixed messages do you hear/see about drugs?

8. Is there a difference between drugs like marijuana, Ecstasy, and crystal meth? Are there different perceptions about these drugs among youth? What are the similarities among these drugs?

9. What are synthetic drugs? Are synthetic drugs safer than other drugs?
10. What are the side effects of marijuana use? Discuss the differences between the short-term and long-term side effects of this drug.

11. What are the known medical benefits of marijuana use?

12. The terms “soft drugs” and “hard drugs” are often used in the media. What is your understanding of these terms? Do you think that public perception of these terms has changed? If so, how?

13. Does popular culture (e.g. songs/music videos, films, television, video games or music) play a role in the perception people have of gangs and drugs? What role do you think the media and artists should play?

14. Synthetic drugs like Ecstasy are seeing increased use by among youth in Canada despite the well-documented dangers associated with them. Why do you think that a drug like Ecstasy is becoming “mainstream” with youth, even though 64% of all Ecstasy tablets contain crystal meth (Source: RCMP Drug Awareness Service)

15. What deterrents are currently used to prevent youth from getting involved with drugs and/or participating in the drug trade? Are these deterrents effective? If not, what do you think better deterrents would be?

16. Is violent behavior a natural by-product of the drug trade, or are violent people drawn to be involved in that type of criminal lifestyle?

17. Many people Canada believe that marijuana is a harmless drug. Do you think society’s attitudes have changed towards marijuana use? If so, how have those attitudes changed?

18. Youth often turn to gangs when they are overwhelmed by life’s problems. What kinds of life problems might influence a young person’s decision to get involved with a gang?

NOTES FOR CONSIDERATION

Sensitivity should be used when discussing gang life, as students in the classroom may already be personally affected by the subject. Students may have family members or friends who are involved in gangs. The students you are working with may, themselves, be involved in gang activity or thinking about getting involved. Students in the classroom may also have been the victims of gang-related violence or be close to someone who has been a victim.

This can be a very personal, emotional topic and can shape the way a youth’s personality is formed.
RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

POTENTIAL PROTECTIVE FACTORS:

Individual Level (Internal)
- Low level of belief in violence
- Optimism and hope
- Balanced self-esteem
- Gratitude
- Forgiveness
- Humility
- Authenticity (‘being true to self’)
- School Success

Social Level (External)
- Positive relations with family and peers
- Pro-social peers
- Strong commitments to school
- Positive connections with the community
- Involvement in pro-social activities
- Parental / Adult involvement in school and leisure activities
- High expectations from teachers

POTENTIAL RISK FACTORS:

Individual Level (Internal)
- Antisocial beliefs
- Impulsivity
- Unemotional / Callous personality traits
- Early history of violence/delinquency
- Weapons use
- Substance abuse
- School failure

Social Level (External)
- Family violence
- Substance abuse in the family
- Limited parental monitoring
- Inconsistent/Inappropriate disciplinary practices
- Low socio-economic status
- High-crime neighbourhood
- Delinquent peers
- Peer rejection
- Sense of alienation