

# THE EMPOWER YOUTH PROGRAM



**Exploitation:**  
Taking advantage of someone's vulnerability in order to achieve personal gain.

## INTRODUCTION

### PURPOSE

The Empower Youth Program is a tool through which you can facilitate prevention-focused conversations with youth about exploitation and empathy in order to empower them with protective strategies.

Exploitation comes in many forms, such as bullying, neglect, and emotional, physical and sexual abuse. Human trafficking, perhaps the most extreme form of exploitation, is a form that many youth know little about, yet it occurs in virtually every U.S. community.

Many factors can make a person vulnerable to exploitation. Personal factors, such as poverty or unstable home environments, and cultural factors, such as hyper-sexualized media, can push youth into vulnerability. Exploitative people target those who are vulnerable, seeking to pull them down further in order to obtain personal gain.

Youth need to be empowered to safely navigate the factors in their lives that could otherwise make them vulnerable to exploitation. The Empower Youth Program unveils the system of negative pushes and pulls that entrap youth and empowers them with alternative, positive pulls that can lead to success and safety. It also empowers youth to respond if exploitation is happening among their peers or family.

### STRATEGY

At the heart of our curriculum is the concept of empathy. Empathy is a characteristic that our culture is in great need of cultivating. Few of us are completely apathetic (choosing to disregard another's suffering), but many of us get stuck in sympathy (feeling badly for the suffering of others). Empathy (an active response to the suffering of others) is the solution to issues of exploitation because it implies action. By inspiring students to develop empathy for those around them, our program distinguishes itself as both an exploitation prevention tool and a character education program with far-reaching transformative potential for your school, classroom, neighborhood, or youth program.

### Empower Youth Program Goals:

- Empower youth with strategies to stay safe from exploitation.
- Nurture the development of empathy, so youth will help others stay safe, too.

### Key Module Learning Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate how empathy generates solutions to problems in their own communities.
2. Explain the concept of negative pushes and apply it to their lives.
3. Identify the five disguises and use the skill of identifying disguises in their own lives.
4. Explain the concept of Positive Pulls and apply them to their lives by identifying their own positive pulls.
5. Create a Positive Pull plan to safely navigate personal vulnerability while also knowing how to safely be a Positive Pull for others.



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# DEVELOP A RESPONSE PROTOCOL

## BEFORE YOU GET STARTED:

It is essential to have a response protocol worked out with your administration and counseling staff prior to beginning the curriculum. Should youth self-identify (or peer-identify), you need to be ready to help. We recommend the following steps:

### 1. MEDICAL SERVICES

First and foremost, always assess the physical or medical needs of the youth. Does s/he need immediate intervention? Be ready to contact your local medical service provider, and if s/he needs attention because of rape or sexual assault, contact your local SART (Sexual Assault Response Team).

### 2. HUMAN SERVICES/DEPARTMENT OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

When you make this call, you should receive a reference number. Ask what steps Human Services will take, and empower yourself to follow up to ensure action was taken.

### 3. LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT

Human services will send a representative to the home the youth is listed under; they will not go to a different location, even if s/he is not living at the home the government associates him/her with. If the crime occurred elsewhere, law enforcement will go to that actual location. This is why it is important to call both law enforcement and human services. Provide law enforcement with the reference number you received from human services, and vice versa.

### 4. NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING RESOURCE CENTER HOTLINE: 1-888-3737-888

Specialists run this hotline to assist callers in determining how to assess suspected exploitation, and how to proceed. Information you provide will be also compiled into an FBI database to plan nationwide stings to recover victims and arrest perpetrators.

### 5. BE PREPARED WITH WORDS OF COMFORT AND NON-JUDGEMENT:

If a youth approaches you for a help, s/he has taken a leap of faith and courage. S/he may be revealing things s/he finds embarrassing or shameful. Even if you suspect s/he made poor or illegal choices, if you react with judgement, shock, or disgust, s/he may not trust another adult again. Let compassion, empathy, and patience guide. And as you follow your protocol, tell the youth what steps you are taking, and why.

Does this apply to me if I'm not delivering the content in a school?

Yes! Be prepared with a response protocol no matter what context in which you are facilitating the Empower Youth Program.

Don't just wait for youth to self or peer-identify. Be on the lookout for signs of a youth who may be affected by the material yet needs you to initiate a conversation.

As you deliver the Empower Youth Program, keep an eye out for behaviors which may signal a youth who has been triggered due to personal experiences. Examples include:

- Emotional outbursts or departures from normal behavior, whether through tears, rage, or withdrawn or argumentative behavior
- "Fight or flight" reactions
- Requests to avoid the content

# INTRODUCTION

## THIS GUIDE IS FOR YOU:

### A TEACHER'S RESOURCE:

This guide is intended to give you the information you need to facilitate learning about exploitation and empathy. Aside from the exercise pages which can be copied for use by your students, it is not intended to be distributed among students. If you have any questions as you prepare, we'd be happy to assist you!

### ANTICIPATING STUDENT REACTIONS:

Again and again, students have told us that they love The Empower Youth Program and wish more kids had access to it, too. Some of the feedback we've received from them includes:

- I learned how to deal with problems and anger without hurting myself.
- The most helpful part was showing how someone's life can change by doing something small.
- This program made me feel safe and supported. It made me feel happy to know that I am NOT alone.
- It helped me understand what empathy is and what I could do to change things in the community.
- Thank you guys for doing this. Now I know who the negatives wearing disguises in my life are.

For some students, the topics will be completely foreign. For others, it may hit quite close to home. Some may have experienced exploitation, such as bullying, neglect, physical or sexual abuse, or even trafficking. Others may have friends or family members engaged in exploitative behaviors. Whatever the case, this may be a sensitive subject for youth to discuss. This can be compounded by our culture's way of normalizing or even glamorizing certain aspects of exploitation, such as pimping. Empathize with your students. As the program progresses, the modules will help you facilitate a conversation about the realities of exploitation.

Many students have expressed that time for discussion was the most impactful and helpful aspect of this program. Talk with your staff about your plan for engaging students in productive, safe discussion. Some things to plan ahead for include:

- What procedures can you establish with students ahead of time to set expectations for an environment of empathetic sharing?
- If students start to over-share, how can you affirm them while also guiding them toward privately sharing with you later instead of in front of the group?
- If a student is dismissive of the content or what others have to say, how can you redirect to create a safe environment for sharing?

If you do have questions, please send us an email! We want to help you be successful.

Contact [info@iempathize.org](mailto:info@iempathize.org).

Can I use this material outside of a classroom environment?

Absolutely! This guide will use "classroom-like" language, but the material is great for group homes, after-school programs, clubs, individual family-time, etc.

# MODULE TWO: NEGATIVE PUSHES

## NEGATIVE PUSHES



### OBJECTIVE:

- Students will be able to explain the concept of negative personal and cultural pushes and apply it to their lives.
- Students will be able to define human trafficking.

### ESSENTIAL QUESTION OF MODULE TWO:

How can I navigate negative pushes in my life?

#### STEP 1: TRANSITION

Review the day's objective. Tell the students that today you'll discuss the concept of human trafficking, which can happen when people get pushed out of safety. Be sure to define human trafficking as a class. See the optional additions page (page 18) for more resources on how to define and explain human trafficking.

#### STEP 2: MEDIA

Play Module Two Media. This media introduces the concept of negative pushes. It also introduces the issue of trafficking.

#### STEP 3: DISCUSSION

The film ends with a group discussion question: "What are some examples of situations that could push an individual into vulnerability? What are some examples of situations that could push a whole group of people into vulnerability?" See page 16 for extended discussion questions.

#### STEP 4: CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Distribute the wallet cards, which have the National Human Trafficking Hotline on them. Ask students to put the number in their phone, explain the purpose of the hotline, and consider talking through the warning signs listed on page 45.

#### STEP 5: MEDIA ACTIVITY

Play the Negative Pushes Media Activity. Then, distribute the Negative Pushes handout (page 19).

### Human Trafficking is:

When one person coerces (persuades someone through deceit, force, or threats) another for the purpose of exploiting them. Human trafficking is modern day slavery.

### The Hotline

For additional information about the hotline that you can explain to your students, see page 37.

# MODULE TWO: NEGATIVE PUSHES

There are many examples. Here are a few:

A People Group:  
War, Racism, Poverty, Natural disasters

Example: When a natural disaster like a hurricane hits a community, people are displaced from their homes and safe-guarding infrastructures are broken. This makes the community very vulnerable, and some people will exploit that vulnerability.

An Individual:  
Neglect, Abuse, Poverty

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

FINAL QUESTION IN THE MEDIA:

What are some examples of situations that could push a people group into vulnerability? What could push an individual into vulnerability?

1. Thinking about the two teens in the narrative - Darryl and Marie - what issues in their lives do you think could become push factors?
2. What are the personal factors that you think are pushing students to feel the need to look for empathy outside of home or school?
3. How do cultural pushes make personal pushes even more difficult to navigate?
4. How can staying isolated from people make you vulnerable?
5. Taylor talked about choosing life on the streets as a way to have some sense of control of her own life, but the streets ended up being just as harmful. What are some ways you can have control without putting yourself in an unsafe position?
6. Is there such a thing as a positive push?

Cultural Pushes

Lead students to a discussion of how things like gender stereotypes, sex in advertising, and pornography create false definitions about what it is to be a real man or a real women.

Don't isolate!

Taylor talks about how tempting it is to believe that no one understands or can help. But that is just not true. Bad things will happen to all of us; if we have people in our lives to help us, we can find ways to make it through.

Positive Pushes:

People who care about us may push us to do things that we don't want to do, but that are ultimately good for us. The key difference is the intention of the person who is pushing us!

ESSENTIAL QUESTION OF THE MODULE:

How can I safely navigate negative

# MODULE TWO: NEGATIVE PUSHES

## FACILITATING THE NEGATIVE PUSHES HANDOUT

### PURPOSE:

The purpose of this activity is to engage students in thinking about the kinds of things that can make them vulnerable to exploitation. When a youth has vulnerability in his or her life, it is usually there because of circumstances beyond his or her control. However, if youth can acknowledge their personal vulnerabilities, then they can begin to take steps to ensure that those vulnerabilities are not exploited for someone else's gain.

### STEPS:

1. Distribute copies of the Module Two Negative Pushes Handout (page 19) and guide students through all three steps. Model the activity for the students by doing the activity at the same time on your whiteboard or chalkboard. (See the blue box to the right for more on this.)
2. Ask students to volunteer to share an answer to the third question step. Common answers include:
  - Feel like you are out of options
  - Feel backed into a corner
  - Want to find a way out, or someone who can help me find a way out
  - Get angry
  - Tend to internalize or stuff all the bad feelings and worries down
  - "Fight or flight" types of answers
3. Empathize with your students' reactions as expressed in that third step of the handout. Explain that your goal as you move forward with the Empower Youth Program is to help them develop strategies to navigate those vulnerabilities in productive, safe ways. Emphasize that those reactions are understandable, but not always safe, and your goal is to help them stay safe from those who might want to exploit their vulnerabilities.

### Model the Activity:

As the students work, create your own lists on the board. It is important for students to see this modeled by you, because you can not only demonstrate what safety looks like, but you can also demonstrate that you relate to what it is to feel vulnerable. Example:

<u>Safe</u>	<u>Vulnerable</u>
A place to live	Money issues
Food to eat	Stress
Clothing	Insecurity
Warmth	Selfish friends
Compassion	Lies
Empathy	Fake love
Inclusion	Isolation

### Something for You to Bear in Mind:

Not all students who have a lot of vulnerabilities will be exploited, just as not all students who have a long list of securities will be 100% safe. However, research demonstrates that students with a history of homelessness, neglect, separation from family (i.e. foster care placements, incarcerated family members, etc), or abuse are more at risk for exploitation.

# MODULE TWO: NEGATIVE PUSHES

## OPTIONAL ADDITIONS:

### TRANSITION RESOURCE:

#### Human Trafficking:

The definition provided by the United Nation's Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons is:

An act of recruiting, transporting, transferring, harboring, or receiving a person through use of force, fraud, coercion, or other means, for the purpose of exploiting them.

The definition provided on page 15 has been developed to more clearly explain the concept to teenagers. Talking through the following examples can be helpful as well:

- When someone forces or manipulates another person into working without appropriately compensating that person for his/her labor, that is called labor trafficking.
- When someone forces or manipulates another person into performing sex acts, that is called sex trafficking.
- A pimp is a trafficker. A pimp is someone who sells another person who must exchange sexual acts for money (or some other gain) for the pimp.
- Both males and females are targeted for trafficking. People of all sexes and genders can be trafficked for sex, and people of all sexes and genders can victimize others.

### READING ACTIVITY: CONCRETE LOCAL EXAMPLES:

Students respond strongly to having an example of human trafficking that is local. These examples make the issue relevant and urgent. To facilitate this, do an internet search for a story about human trafficking in your region. There are many examples available that will not sensationalize the topic in a way that would be inappropriate for students to read. Print the story and provide students with the opportunity to read and discuss it as a class.

### Finding Local Information:

In addition to perusing your regional newspapers, visit the following sources to find legitimate information:

- U.S. Department of Justice
- U.S. Department of State
- Your state's Departments of State and Health

# NEGATIVE PUSHES - STUDENT HANDOUT

## NEGATIVE PUSHES ARE:

Factors that a person or people group have little to no control over that can push them into vulnerability. (Examples of Push Factors: poverty, racism, exposure to violence, isolation, etc.)

**PURPOSE:** If you have negative pushes in your life, chances are they are there through no fault of your own. But you still have to navigate them and it's important to be prepared to do that. The first step is acknowledging what your pushes are. In another session, you'll make a plan to deal with them.

### VULNERABILITY happens when:

You don't have provision for your needs - like shelter, clothing, affection, support.  
 You don't have protection to give you security, comfort, and community.  
 Or you have someone in your life who makes false promises.

### INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Make a list of things that can make you feel safe in one column, and a list of things that can make you feel vulnerable on the other.

Safe

Vulnerable

2. Next, circle the items in both columns that you currently have in your life.
3. Finally, in the space below, explain how you tend to react or feel when your list of vulnerabilities outweighs your list of securities.