



Develop Your Own Theater Skits or Video

Create your own Theatre Skit or YouTube Video! Here are steps to help youth in your community create their very own That's Not Cool theatre skit or YouTube video. This is a great way to help them draw their digital line and rally their friends to stand up against abuse and harassment both on and off line.

Identify Partners: We suggest you identify and form relationships with one of the following individuals: the theatre or media teacher at your school, a community arts organization, or teens and adults in your community with a passion for the performing arts.

The thought of producing a theatre production or creating a video might be intimidating, but these projects don't need a lot of time or resources to be meaningful and educational. Some work can be done very spontaneously and may not take more than five to ten meetings, or you may choose to develop a high quality production that takes more resources. For example, *Start Strong Austin* works with the Changing Lives Youth Theatre Ensemble in a year round, intensive program. Students rehearse twice a week, devise and perform their own show and tour their shows in both middle and high schools, as well as in the community. *Start Strong Austin* also works with youth leaders in schools who create videos and skits within eight to ten classroom lessons. Students in both settings engage with *That's Not Cool* during the creation of their work, and bring the campaign to their community during their performances.

Youth Training and Development: The key to working with youth on developing their own creative work about preventing digital abuse is finding a balance between education/exploration, team building, creative expression and leadership development.

- I. **Education and exploration:** Youth begin the process by immersing themselves in understanding control, pressure, power in relationships, violation of privacy, gender stereotypes, bullying, cyberbullying, sexting, and dating abuse. They then critically examine the role of technology and media in their lives. In exploring the *That's Not Cool* website they identify and understand control, pressure and privacy violation on-line. They assess their own behaviors and focus on one central question: how can they

help their friends and peers to take action to end, prevent or report abuse and harassment.

II. Team building: The youth work together as an ensemble and begin to shape their ideas as a group. Team building exercises that allow group members to feel comfortable, engaged, and respected lay the foundation for a successful experience.

III. Creative expression: Once each group is ready to move forward, they begin to brainstorm ideas for their productions. Here are some of the ways we've gotten the creative juices flowing:

A. "Town Hall Meeting:" Ask students to hold a mock town hall meeting where they will debate cell phone use in schools. Explain to them that during this Town Hall, the following questions will need to be addressed:

- Should cell phone be banned on school grounds?
- Or to take it even further, should cell phone use be restricted to students 16 years and older?

Assign each student a character to portray. Make sure your cast of characters includes diverse views and experiences. For example, you can include the following roles:

- Parents of a middle school girl concerned about texts found on their daughter's phone pressuring her to send nude pictures.
- A high school junior who believes cell phones should not be restricted because they are an important part of the world teens live in now and adults don't understand that
- A junior high school students who feels like his independence will be taken away if he cannot have his cell phone;
- A junior high girl who has been picked on through texts;
- A high school freshman who has recently had a problem with some sexy pics that were passed around without her/ his permission;
- A teacher who feels that cell phones are a distraction on campus;
- A school administrator who supports the proposal because cell phones have been used as tools for bullying and cheating at his/her school;
- A school counselor who is concerned about the wave of student suicides in response to cyber bullying and texting.

The debate will certainly be lively and may lead to developing a skit, PSA or other video.

B. Recipes provide key ingredients for a devising and improvising activity in small groups. In this exercise, the group is asked to use the key ingredients for developing a skit with a clear beginning, middle, and end. Here are some suggestions for recipes that have worked:

- Recipe 1: Make a list describing how cyber bullying hurts people. Choose your top 3 lines of text to be spoken in your performance (these may be repeated, mixed up, layered, sung). Add the following ingredients:

- Emotional expression (e.g. stomping, clapping, breath, movement)
 - 3 moments of reaching out and being shot down
 - Big laugh at one person's expense
 - Breaking point
 - Shift in rhythm or tempo
- Recipe 2: Think about ways people pressure someone to send nude pictures. Choose one or two and use them in your performance. Add the following ingredients:
 - Mounting pressure
 - A decision
 - A moment of disgust
 - A big sigh
 - Shift in rhythm
 - End with a moment of choice
 - Recipe 3 list of ingredients: Choose a theme from a digital abuse list for your group to explore. Make 3 still images:
 - Create "REAL" image (What does digital abuse look like? Who is involved? How do people feel and act?)
 - Create "IDEAL" image (What would be the best resolution?)
 - Create "TRANSITIONAL" image (How can we get from the real image to the ideal image?)

Put all three together in order and take care to work on the transitional image. What will motivate people, your peers, to engage and become up standers who end or prevent digital abuse?

- II. Leadership development: Work with youth on refining their ideas. Elaborate on the script and engage them in critically viewing their work. Are they getting their messages out? Are their ideas engaging? What are they asking their audience to do?

Video Creation and Show Production: After the training and development stages, youth are ready to work on producing their show or video! For examples of videos and skits created by teens, please visit www.expectrespectaustin.org. You can also view a documentary about the Changing Lives Youth Theatre Ensemble that describes the process of teens devising and performing their show.