# SCENARIO DISCUSSIONS for CONFRONTING SEXUAL HARASSMENT

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SCENARIO DISCUSSION Instructions

Directions:
1. Divide the class into three smaller groups. Make sure that the groups do not form on their own or they will probably be imbalanced by gender or race. Have the group members sit together in one of three designated places in the room.

2. Have each small group decide on whom their small group leader will be (allow only about 30 seconds for this).

3. Quickly go around the room and confirm each small group leader.

4. Give each small group leader a "Scenario Discussion Sheet" which corresponds to the scenario that his/her group is reviewing (e.g., group #1 gets the discussion sheet for scenario #1). ONLY the small group leader should see the sheet.

5. Explain that it will be his/her job to:
   a) make certain his/her small group is on task; he/she can read the scenario out loud while the group members read along
   b) ask the questions on the Scenario Discussion sheet
   c) report to the rest of the class what happened in the process of discussing the questions in his/her small group

6. Pass out Scenario 1 to group 1, Scenario 2 to group 2, and Scenario 3 to group 3.

7. Explain: The task of each small group is to discuss your scenario. Try to agree on whether the situation constitutes sexual harassment or not. Also, each team should try to answer the questions provided with the scenarios. Team 1 will work on scenario #1, Team 2 on scenario #2, and Team 3 will work on Scenario #3.

8. Give each team 5-6 minutes to complete their tasks. You can walk around the room to monitor their progress.

9. When each team has completed their task, or at the end of the allotted time, begin to discuss each scenario. Each team's small group leader should read the scenario and report on the team's decision. Then, prompt each small group leader to tell about the various factors that were considered and what happened in the process. Use the following discussion questions:
   a) What happened when the group tried to agree?
   b) What was one issue where almost everyone agreed?
   c) What was one issue where almost everyone disagreed?
   d) How did the group's answers to the questions compare to the written answers on the leader's handout?
SCENARIO 1: Teacher copy

Brian and Joe, both in the same English class, sometimes make comments about what type of girls they like. One day Brian says to Joe, "I like 'em with little round butts" in front of Jill, a girl who sits in the next row. Brian laughed as usual. Jill told them that she found such comments disgusting and asked them to stop. Both Brian and Joe apologized to Jill. The next day, Jill once again overheard Brian in a loud voice tell Joe a similar comment. Brian and Joe continued to ignore Jill's confrontations. Jill began to feel helpless and upset. She found it very difficult to concentrate in school.

SCENARIO #1 QUESTIONS

1. Is this sexual harassment? Why? HEB 331
(ANSWER: Yes, Brian and Joe are guilty of sexual harassment. Even though the comments may not be offensive to every person, they are offensive to Jill. Therefore, Brian and Joe are creating a "hostile environment" for Jill. A hostile environment is when a person makes a situation very difficult for someone else to concentrate, study, and ultimately make good grades. If Jill really thought the comments were funny and played along, the situation would not be considered sexual harassment.)

2. What else could Jill have done to make it stop? HEB 135
(ANSWER: Most people would like to make the victim responsible by saying things like, "She should just walk away," or "It's not the boys' fault that she can't take a joke." However, responsibility for preventing sexual harassment relies on all people involved. It is never the victim's fault for being sexually harassed.)

IF THE STUDENTS HAVE TROUBLE COMING UP WITH IDEAS, YOU MIGHT SAY ... "Most people would have trouble coming up with ideas for Jill to stop the vulgar comments made by Brian and Joe. The problem is that it is difficult to control someone else's behavior. That is why it is the harasser's responsibility to stop. One thing Jill could do is to file an official complaint with a teacher, counselor, administrator, or even the school resource officer."

3. How else might Brian and Joe respond to Jill's complaints? HEB 332
(ANSWER: Brian and Joe are either being insensitive or very forgetful in this case. They should have taken Jill very seriously the first time. Also, Brian and Joe could talk to Jill about her feelings.)

4. In addition to being offensive to Jill, what else is wrong with comments such as the one Brian and Joe made? HEB 337
(ANSWER: Even if Jill didn't care about comments like the one Brian and Joe made ("I like 'em with small butts"), there is still something wrong. Such comments reflect a certain attitude towards females. Many people who say things like that see women as objects. Such comments can show that the person does not recognize the other as someone who has feelings and may get hurt.)
**SCENARIO 2:**

Carl rides the bus to school and back home every day. Just for fun, he wrote a note to Juanita and passed it to her. The note to Juanita read, "You have a really fresh body. How about you and I get together? Come over tonight!" After Juanita read the note and looked up at Carl, he made some sexual gestures with his eyebrows and lips.

**SCENARIO #2 QUESTIONS**

1. **Is this sexual harassment? Why? HEB 331**  
   (ANSWER: MAYBE. It depends on whether Juanita is receptive to Carl's remarks or not. If Juanita enjoys this kind of attention, then it would not be sexual harassment. But if she found the remarks to be offensive and if Carl would not stop, then it would considered sexual harassment. This type of sexual harassment would be considered visual, the most obvious and recognized. Carl may assume that such behavior is O.K. with Juanita and risks hurting her feelings and jeopardizing his career.)

2. **How might Juanita have felt if Carl's behavior was unwanted? HEB 331**  
   (ANSWER: Juanita may have felt various unpleasant feelings including invaded, helpless, angry, or embarrassed. She had no say in Carl's offensive note and gesture. No one should be made to feel this way. Such unpleasant experiences can negatively affect Juanita's academic performance, social confidence, and self-esteem.)

3. **Why might Carl have acted this way? HEB 331**  
   (ANSWER: All sorts of reasons, none of which excuse his behavior. Carl may believe that such behavior is harmless. He may have wanted some type of attention or to create an effect and did not know of a better way of getting it. Carl also might have done it because it makes him feel playful, even at Juanita's expense. Some people, maybe even Carl, believe that girls enjoy that kind of attention, even against their will. Finally, he may simply be mean spirited and enjoys creating discomfort and even agony in others. Remember, these might be explanations for Carl's behavior but certainly not excuses. There is no justification for sexual harassment.)

**SCENARIO 3: Teacher copy**

A group of four girls frequently whistle "wolf calls" at Jamal. Jamal thought it was kind of neat and enjoyed the special attention. After a while, when the girls didn't stop, Jamal strangely began to feel embarrassed and uncomfortable. He no longer considered the attention special and began to also feel upset. He told them to quit it although they would laugh and continue. Jamal didn't really know what to do. Jamal just wanted to be left alone.

1. **Is this sexual harassment? Why? HEB 331**  
   (ANSWER: At first Jamal enjoyed the wolf calls and probably wanted the girls to continue. However, there came a time when it was no longer fun and he wanted it to
stop. The point at which he did not consent to the wolf calls, and the females continued, that became sexual harassment.

2. Do boys really experience sexual harassment? HEB 331
(ANSWER: Yes. Sexual harassment for a boy can be just as traumatizing as it is for a girl.)

3. What might the girls have thought about Jamal's request for them to stop whistling at him? Why? HEB 337
(ANSWER: Many people buy into the myth that boys are always ready and willing when it comes to sexual attention. It's simply not true. Boys are not always "turned on" by sexual attention. Boys can become uncomfortable in such a situation and want to be left alone. The sad thing is that when a boy refuses sexual attention, others may inappropriately label him as "less of a boy or man.")

4. What might some of the other boys think if they knew that Jamal requested that the girls stop whistling? HEB 337
(ANSWER: The other boys may believe Jamal's worst nightmare, that he is less of a boy, perhaps even a "sissy," because he was being ridiculed by a group of girls (often seen by boys as inferior). Of course this is not true.)

-- Have the students stay in their groups while you make some concluding comments:

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is one thing that you learned today about sexual harassment?

2. What are some examples of sexual harassment that takes place in school?
(ANSWER: Examples of sexual harassment include making comments about someone's body or a part of their body; making sexually explicit material such as posters, pictures, or hand-made drawings public; making academic achievement a condition of sexual favors; spreading rumors of a sexual nature about a person.)

3. How can sexual harassment influence production in school? On the job?
(ANSWER: Sexual harassment can seriously lessen performance on the job or at school. It is very difficult to work when you are feeling embarrassed, angry, degraded, humiliated, and disgusted. Sexual harassment also instills fear and can make the person think less of themselves.)

4. What makes the business world concerned about this problem?
(ANSWER: Sexual harassment decreases productivity which means loss of money. It kills teamwork and is against the law. A company can be sued for a lot of money if they allow sexual harassment to occur.)
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1. Is this sexual harassment? Why?

2. What else could Jill have done to make it stop?

3. How else might Brian and Joe respond to Jill's complaints?

4. In addition to being offensive to Jill, what else is wrong with comments such as the one Brian and Joe made?
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Carl rides the bus to school and back home every day. Just for fun, he wrote a note to Juanita and passed it to her. The note to Juanita read, "You have a really fresh body. How about you and I get together? Come over tonight!" After Juanita read the note and looked up at Carl, he made some sexual gestures with his eyebrows and lips.

SCENARIO #2 QUESTIONS

1. Is this sexual harassment? Why?

2. How might Juanita have felt if Carl's behavior was unwanted?

3. Why might Carl have acted this way?
SCENARIO 3: Student copy

A group of four girls frequently whistle "wolf calls" at Jamal. Jamal thought it was kind of neat and enjoyed the special attention. After a while, when the girls didn't stop, Jamal strangely began to feel embarrassed and uncomfortable. He no longer considered the attention special and began to also feel upset. He told them to quit it although they would laugh and continue. Jamal didn't really know what to do. Jamal just wanted to be left alone.

1. Is this sexual harassment? Why?

2. Do boys really experience sexual harassment?

3. What might the girls have thought about Jamal's request for them to stop whistling at him? Why?

4. What might some of the other boys think if they knew that Jamal requested that the girls stop whistling?