

WHY DO GOOD PEOPLE DO BAD THINGS?



SESSION 1: Drawing you in: emotional responses.

1. Straw poll starter: how many of you would harm an innocent person?

2. Understanding harm: perpetrators and victims. Utopia activity.

- * Students in small groups to construct a utopia out of paper and card. Emphasise the need to really take care over their work.
- * After 30 minutes, circulate groups around to look at each other's work. When every utopia is being viewed by a group that didn't create it, ask each group to destroy the work in front of them.
- * Students in silence to produce a written response to their experience (especially focusing on their answer the question asked of them at the start): what did you think and feel when told to destroy someone else's work? What did you think and feel when you saw your work destroyed? Why

did you follow the order? Did you see any of the following virtues present in the classroom: Courage, Justice, Honesty, Compassion, Self-discipline, Gratitude, Humility?

- * Students to discuss their answers in their groups. What do they have in common? What answers are different? What can they learn from each other?
- * Feedback as a whole class.

3. Understanding harm: the Stanley Milgram experiment.

- * Point out that history is full of examples of ordinary people doing bad things that they later come to regret. One experiment that helps to explain how this can happen was conducted by Stanley Milgram in the 1960s. There are short videos explaining this experiment on YouTube.

SESSION 2: Moral: thinking about choosing.

1. Reconnecting.

- * What did you experience in the previous session? What did you come to know/learn in the previous session?

2. Learning more and choosing well.

- * Put the expression 'a good Samaritan' up. Ask the students to jot down in pairs what this expression evokes. Do any of them have any stories of being a good Samaritan? What questions do good Samaritan stories raise?
- * Gather together the questions evoked by 'a good Samaritan'.

3. Kitty Genovese.

- * Give students the basic facts of the story and perhaps ask them to research it and find out more (there is a good Wikipedia article about it).
- * Ask students what their emotional response to this story is. Ask them to identify why they feel what they do; in other words, what do they think/believe about what happened to Kitty (e.g. anger will stem from the belief that rights have been infringed). This will help some students identify any of their own values that are affected by this story.
- * Do the students have any explanation for why so few people came to Kitty's aid?





4. The bystander effect and diffusion of responsibility.

- * There are some good, short videos about this on YouTube, and some good resources available to explain it on the Internet.
- * Does the bystander effect help to explain what happened to Kitty? Are there other explanations?

SESSION 3: Performance: being a moral hero.

The focus of this session is to identify the practical strategies (performance virtues) that can help good people to avoid doing bad things and turn them into heroes.

1. Obama on everyday heroism.

- * There is a 56 second video of Barack Obama discussing everyday heroism on Youtube: this might be a good place to start the discussion.

2. Scenarios.

- * Ask students to go through the scenarios in small groups. What are the main barriers to acting virtuously in these situations (e.g. not wanting to upset the group, rushing into a quick decision, intending good things but failing to act (what Aristotle called 'incontinence'))?
- * Feedback ideas of barriers.
- * What would they do in each scenario to bring about a virtuous outcome and overcome the barriers? They should focus on precisely what they do to help them decide well. (N.B. the situations are generic: the students might have better ones).
- * Feedback and gather their strategies for avoiding bad situations.

5. Good people doing good things: Kitty and the virtues.

- * Ask students to re-tell the Kitty Genovese story, but this time imagine that everyone involved had acted using the 7 principal virtues. What would the outcome have been?

- * Go back to the groups: ask the groups to evaluate the strategies that have been suggested: which of them will work best and overcome the barriers identified?

- * Feedback what they think the best barriers are.

3. Zimbardo's 10 strategies

http://www.lucifereffect.com/guide_tenstep.htm
[available 02/15].

- * Ask students to go through the 10 strategies suggested by Professor Philip Zimbardo for avoiding evil (more detail on the webpage above). For each of the scenarios they have looked at, what strategies apply and what results might they yield?
- * Are Zimbardo's strategies as good as theirs?

4. Real heroes.

- * Ask students to find examples of real (everyday) heroes. There are some examples on *HeroicImaginationTV*, a Youtube channel and part of the Heroic Imagination Project (the Wesley Autry story is particularly good).
- * What is it that makes these people heroic? Which of Zimbardo's guidelines do they use? Which of the 7 principal virtues do they display?





SESSION 4: Civic virtues: getting good people to do good things in communities.

1. Case study: the London Riots of 2011.

- * How does what the students have learned about why good people do bad things help us to understand why ordinary, good people got caught up in the rioting across the UK in the summer of 2011? There are some good videos on Youtube where rioters talk about their experiences.
- * The clear up. Ask students to think about why thousands of people poured onto the streets in the days after the riots to clear up the mess and to protest about what had happened. How can what students have learned help them to explain this?

2. So what? The worst case scenario.

- * Give students information on tyranny.
- * There are some excellent video resources available on YouTube and elsewhere about the various instances of genocide from human history.

Some of them show instances of great virtue in the midst of evil actions. Ask students to reflect on how virtue is displayed in the midst of tyranny.

- * Obviously, these are worst case scenarios, however some of the ingredients are the same as the embryonic tyrannies that students may see around them (where freedom is restricted and harm done). How can students use the virtues they have seen in extreme situations to deal with the tyrannies they see?

3. Resistance movements.

- * Ask students to gather information about a resistance movement, and go through the critical questions to test its credentials. Do they think that their resistance movement was virtuous and heroic or vicious and tyrannical?

4. Plenary.

- * Sum up what has been learned about avoiding tyranny.

SESSION 5: Reflection.

1. Individual reflection.

- * Give students the five individual questions for reflection.

2. Reflection conversations.

- * Students to have four conversations with other students comparing answers and assisting each other in finding ways of developing their character.

Resources.

This is a popular and widely studied topic in Social Psychology and there is a large number of websites and videos available which are extremely useful for teaching.

- * *The Lucifer Effect* by Philip Zimbardo and www.lucifereffect.com [available 02/15].

3. Plenary and feedback.

- * As a whole group discuss the impact of the last five sessions.

- * The HeroicImaginationProject: www.heroicimagination.org [available 02/15].
- * *Obedience to Authority* by Stanley Milgram
- * *V for Vendetta*: film, great for exploring tyranny.