



Adultism

Reprinted from *Making the Peace:
A 15-Session Violence Prevention Curriculum
for Young People*

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What it is

Adultism is the systematic exploitation, mistreatment, and abuse of young people by adults. (*Exploitation* means to take advantage of or to rob someone or a group of people of their labor, culture, energy, or possessions. *Mistreatment* means to treat unfairly or unjustly. *Abuse* is any form of violence—verbal, emotional, physical, or sexual.)

Who it affects

Everyone, particularly young people.

How it is enforced

Physical and sexual violence; neglect; police harassment; lack of trust and respect from adults; extreme pressure to succeed or harsh criticism of abilities; attacks on self-esteem; being paid less for equal work; lack of safe alternative living arrangements for youth in abusive families; adult stereotypes of young people.

How it might look at school

Lack of youth participation in decisions about curriculum, teaching methods, staffing, and how resources are distributed; arbitrary and unequal distribution of money and equipment to schools; tracking or separating students by ability or grade point average; inadequate funding for schools, youth recreations, and youth health; withholding of information and services from young people; blaming youth for violence, drugs, teenage sexuality, and bad schools.



How it is internalized

Violence against peers: Fights between guys and fights between girls; gossip and rumors; academic, athletic, and physical competition; put-downs and disrespect; gang violence; dating violence.

Self-destructive violence: Self-blame; apathy; hopelessness; drug use; suicide; eating disorders; high-risk activity and high-risk sexual activity; compulsive achievement; promiscuity; prostitution.

Who are allies

Adults can be allies to young people, and young people can be allies to each other.

How it has been resisted

Youth have led many of the struggles for freedom and democracy and the end of injustice including the civil rights movement in the United States, the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, the Intifada in Palestine and Israel, and the movement for democracy in China and several eastern European countries. Forms of resistance include protests, youth organizing, youth solidarity, passive and active resistance to adult authority, and innovative cultural forms such as music (rock and roll, rap), graffiti, and styles of dress.

Please send comments, feedback, resources, and suggestions for distribution to paul@paulkivel.com. Further resources are available at www.paulkivel.com.