

THE TALK DECK

Teacher Instructions

A weekly, teacher-led classroom program on peer pressure and healthy relationships

For ages from 14 and up • Ungraded • No technology required
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Contents

Before You Begin — Important Notes 3

Program Objectives 4

Content Safety Principles 5

Weekly Session Structure 6

Problem-Handling Protocol 8

Frequently Asked Questions 10

Worked Sample Card — Week 1 12

A Final Note 13

Before You Begin — Important Notes

A note on names

All student names used in Talk Deck scenarios are fictional and randomly assigned. They do not represent, refer to, or resemble any real student, staff member, public figure, or media character. Any resemblance is coincidental. You may substitute names during a session if it helps the discussion feel more natural for your class — as long as substitutes remain generic and don't reference anyone specific.

If your school or institution doesn't have a formal counselor or reporting protocol in place

You are not on your own, and this program does not assume you have one. See the Problem-Handling Protocol section for a one-time, 5-minute pre-semester check — including how to find the right local resource for your area — so you're prepared before Week 1 rather than during a crisis.

What This Program Is

The Talk Deck is a weekly, roughly 10-minute classroom activity for high schoolers and young students, run across a full semester. Each week, you introduce one card, read its short scenario aloud, and lead a brief unscored discussion using the 2–3 fixed questions on the back. There is no scoring, no "correct answer," and no technology required — paper only.

What This Program Is Not

- It is not graded, and it is not a test.
- It is not a substitute for your school's or institution's existing safety-reporting or mandated-reporting obligations.
- It is not a proven method for reducing abuse or harmful behavior. It is designed in line with evidence-adjacent approaches (see below), but it has not yet been piloted in real classrooms. The honest claim is a shift in awareness and attitudes — not a guarantee of behavior change.

Where This Comes From

The Talk Deck adapts two evidence-informed approaches:

- Coaching Boys Into Men (CBIM) — a trusted-messenger model where a trusted adult delivers short, weekly, card-guided conversations over a full season. Evidence is real but mixed: it shows stronger effects on bystander behavior and recognition of abuse than on rates of actual perpetration.
- Green Dot — a bystander-intervention framework built on "norms correction": revealing that people's private opinions are usually less tolerant of harmful behavior than public performance suggests. It uses three named moves: Direct, Delegate, Distract.

Neither program depends on scoring, technology, or timers — which is why the Talk Deck is a simple, zero-cost, paper-based format.

About the Exit Violence Initiative

Exit Violence is an initiative dedicated to protection, support, and prevention surrounding domestic and intimate partner violence. It bridges two complementary pillars: discreet digital crisis assistance and proactive educational prevention work.

On the digital level, the initiative enables any website to embed an invisible, traceless support portal, giving affected individuals confidential access to emergency contacts, safety guides, and support services without leaving traces in browser history or storage cache. On the prevention level, Exit Violence provides low-barrier educational resources such as ***The Talk Deck***—a weekly, paper-based conversation format for secondary schools and universities (ages 14 and up), grounded in bystander intervention and peer norm correction approaches.

For questions and comments, the Exit Violence team is available at hello@exitviolence.org

Program Objectives

Every card and discussion question in this deck is designed to support one or more of the following:

1. Increased recognition of coercive or manipulative language when used by peers.
2. Increased comfort naming a concern out loud in a group setting.
3. Reduced belief that peers privately endorse harmful behavior more than they actually do.
4. Increased familiarity with named intervention moves (Direct / Distract / Delegate).

These objectives are also what the optional pre/post survey measures (see the separate Survey document). The survey is a project-specific tool, not a validated clinical instrument — treat results as a directional signal only.

Content Safety Principles

Every card in this deck was checked against the following before being finalized. Understanding these principles will help you facilitate consistently, especially if you ever adapt wording.

1. No card option or outcome ever presents a harmful or coercive choice as costless, funny, or socially rewarded.
2. No discussion question implies a predetermined "correct" answer — questions are written to be genuinely open.
3. Content is tiered by severity: Level 1 (warm-up/bystander), Level 3 (interpersonal balance), and Level 5 (severe, abuse-adjacent). Level 5 cards received an additional review pass.
4. No question ever asks a student to confess, vote on, or reveal a personal experience in a way that could be attributed back to them.
5. You, the teacher, are the facilitator for every session — never a peer or a script standing in alone.
6. There are no points, streaks, winners, or "best answer" call-outs anywhere in this program.

Weekly Session Structure (~10 Minutes)

Step	Time	Action
1. Open	~1 min	Fixed opening line (below) — same every week, builds ritual and safety.
2. Read the card	~1 min	Read the front scenario aloud once, without commentary.
3. Discuss	~6 min	Ask the 2–3 back questions, in order. Open floor — no cold-calling.
4. Close	~2 min	Fixed closing line (below). No summary verdict is given.

Fixed Opening Line (use every week, word for word)

“Alright, it's Talk Deck time. Same as always — I'm going to read a short scenario, and then we'll talk about it for a few minutes. There's no right answer we're looking for, and nothing said in here gets repeated outside this room unless it's a safety issue. If you don't want to talk today, that's fine — just listening counts too.”

Fixed Closing Line (use every week, word for word)

“That's our Talk Deck for this week. We're not trying to land on one answer — just get better at noticing this stuff and thinking about what we'd actually do. See you next week.”

In-Discussion Facilitator Moves

If students deflect (“well, it depends...”)

Say: “Sure — let's say it's [a version you personally wouldn't feel great about]. What then?” This redirects without dismissing the student's point.

If the room says “this is obvious” or disengages

Say: “It's funny how a lot of us say that, and then this stuff still happens all the time. Why do you think that is?” This turns the deflection itself into discussion material, without singling anyone out.

If a question is met with silence

Wait at least 10 seconds before rephrasing or moving on. Silence on harder cards — especially Level 5 — is normal, not a sign the activity isn't working.

Before Level 1 cards that feel personal (e.g., a hobby-teasing scenario)

Say: “Quick reminder — these scenarios are about patterns we see everywhere, not about anyone specific in this room.”

Sequencing

- Week 1 must be the lowest-stakes Level 1 card — it establishes the ritual safely.
- General order: Level 1 cards first, then Level 3, then Level 5.
- Before the first Level 5 card, add a brief framing line: “This one’s a bit heavier than what we’ve done — take a second before we start.”
- Don’t front-load or rush Level 5 cards into the last two weeks of the semester — space them out.

Problem-Handling Protocol

This section covers what to do if something comes up during a session that goes beyond ordinary discussion. Your judgment is trusted over this script — this is guidance, not a rigid checklist.

If a student becomes visibly upset

1. Don't stop the whole-class discussion abruptly or draw attention to the student in front of peers.
2. Continue facilitating normally; check in with that student individually after class or during independent work time.
3. If they want to talk, listen without probing for details about what specifically upset them — this is a check-in, not an investigation.
4. Follow your school's or institution's existing referral pathway (counselor, social worker, or equivalent) if one exists.
5. Don't log anything about the specific content beyond what your school's or institution's standard process already requires.

If a student discloses a real (not hypothetical) experience

This is most likely to come up during the deck's most severe card, which depicts a physical mark left during an argument — but the steps below apply to any card.

1. Don't investigate or ask follow-up questions about details in front of the class.
2. Redirect gently and immediately: “I hear you — let's talk about that after class, okay?” Then bring the group back to the hypothetical.
3. Follow up privately, right after the session. Ask directly if the student is safe and whether they'd like to talk to someone.
4. Apply your school's or institution's existing safety-reporting obligations exactly as you would for any other disclosure. This protocol does not create new rules — it defers entirely to your school's or institution's official policy.
5. Never ask the rest of the class to weigh in on a real disclosure. If others clearly recognize what's happening, redirect attention back to the fictional scenario without confirming or denying anything.

You should feel free to skip or delay the most severe card for a given class if you judge the group isn't ready — you don't need to justify that choice to students.

If the discussion becomes heated between students

1. Use a fixed, calm redirect every time: “Let's bring it back to the card — what would you want to happen for [character name] here?”
2. Don't force two students to “resolve it” in front of the class — table it, address it individually afterward if needed.
3. If the room doesn't settle, it's fine to end the session early using the standard closing line. Ending early is not a failure state.

4. Don't use the moment to “teach a lesson” about the specific real conflict — that risks turning a real peer conflict into classroom content.

If your school or institution doesn't have a formal counselor or reporting protocol

Many schools and institutions this program reaches may not yet have a designated counselor or formal protocol. That should not be a barrier to running the program responsibly.

Pre-semester check (once, before Week 1) — be able to answer:

1. Who is the nearest adult in my building I could bring a student-safety concern to (any counselor, social worker, nurse, or administrator — doesn't need to be a specialist)?
2. What is my personal reporting obligation as an educator in my role, and do I know how to act on it?
3. If genuinely no one in my building fills this role, what's the nearest external resource?

How to find the right resource

Search for your local or national child-protection or child-welfare service — often run by a government agency responsible for child safety. Separately, search for a local crisis or emotional-support helpline, relevant if a disclosure involves a student's own immediate safety. A school district or regional education office can also point you to the correct service if a direct search doesn't turn up a clear answer. In fully offline settings, asking a school or institutional administrator or district/regional office directly is an equally valid alternative to a web search.

If a real disclosure happens and no internal pathway exists

1. Follow the same in-session steps above (redirect calmly, don't investigate publicly, follow up privately).
2. Next step: contact whichever external resource you identified during the pre-semester check, or an administrator, the same day.
3. Not having a protocol is not a reason to do nothing.
4. Document only what's minimally necessary for that contact.

A note on this section

This protocol was drafted to be thorough and cautious, but it has not been reviewed by a school counselor, safeguarding specialist, or administrator. Before real classroom use, get sign-off on this section specifically from qualified local staff — more so than any other part of this program, since it governs real safety-relevant decisions.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Do I need any training to run this?

A: No specialized training is required. The script is fixed and designed to be run as-is. Reading this full document once before Week 1 — especially the Problem-Handling Protocol — is strongly recommended.

Q: What if a student refuses to participate?

A: That's fine. The opening line explicitly says listening counts as participation. Nothing about this program requires forced speech.

Q: What if I don't finish the discussion in 10 minutes?

A: End on time using the fixed closing line, even mid-conversation. A card can be revisited briefly the following week if needed.

Q: Can I skip a card?

A: Yes — especially Level 5 cards, if you judge a specific class isn't ready. You don't owe anyone a justification for skipping a card.

Q: What if students bring up something that happened outside school or the institution, or between students I know personally?

A: Follow the Problem-Handling Protocol above — redirect gently in the moment, follow up privately afterward, and use your school's or institution's existing process (or the fallback path if your school or institution doesn't have one yet).

Q: Is this a graded assignment?

A: No. There is no scoring, grading, or academic credit tied to participation.

Q: Will parents or guardians ask about this program?

A: Possibly. At minimum, you can describe it as: a weekly, ungraded classroom discussion activity about peer pressure and healthy relationships, using fictional scenarios, with no student responses recorded or shared.

Q: What if a student asks whether a scenario is “based on someone real”?

A: No card is based on a real student. Names are fictional and randomly assigned. You can simply say scenarios are fictional and general, not modeled on anyone in the school / institution.

Q: Does this program prove it reduces harmful behavior?

A: No, and it's important not to imply otherwise to administrators, parents, or students. This program is designed in line with evidence-adjacent approaches, but it has not been piloted. The honest claim is a shift in awareness and attitudes — not a proven reduction in incidents.

Q: What if I want to change a card's wording?

A: Every card was checked against the content safety principles specifically to avoid implying a “correct answer” or rewarding harmful behavior. If you adapt wording, re-check it against those principles first.

Q: What if a student discloses something and I'm not sure it's “serious enough” to escalate?

A: When in doubt, escalate. Following the protocol is never the wrong call, even if it turns out not to have been strictly necessary.

Q: Can I use this with a class younger than 14 or older than 18?

A: The deck is designed and safety-reviewed for ages 14–18. Using it with a younger age group hasn't been reviewed and isn't recommended without a separate content-appropriateness pass.

Worked Sample Card — Week 1

This is the card you'll use to open the semester. It's intentionally the lowest-stakes card in the deck.

CARD 1: THE GROUP CHAT

FRONT (read aloud):

Marcus notices that his friend Dev hasn't been added back to the group chat since he disagreed with someone last week. Nobody talks about it — Dev just isn't there anymore.

BACK (discussion questions):

1. What are some reasons someone might get quietly left out like this?
2. What could Marcus do if he noticed this happening?
3. Why might people go along with something like this without really deciding to?

Facilitator note: This card is designed to be an easy, low-stakes entry point. If the room finds it “too obvious,” that's fine — the goal in Week 1 is establishing the weekly ritual and the norm that there's no correct answer, not generating a deep discussion yet.

A Final Note

The Talk Deck is currently unpiloted. It was designed in line with evidence-adjacent mechanisms from Coaching Boys Into Men and Green Dot, and every card went through a structured safety review — but no classroom has run it yet, and its own pre/post survey is a directional tool, not a validated instrument. If you run this program, your observations (what worked, what fell flat, what needed adjusting) are genuinely valuable data toward improving it for the next classroom that uses it.