

HANDGUNS: MADE FOR KILLING, NOT FOR KIDS

Live-action Video • 19 minutes • Grades 4-10
Closed Captioned • Discussion Guide

Discussion Guide

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Synopsis

Handguns: Made for Killing, Not for Kids

Uses three real-life cases to illustrate that guns are deadly and can lead to serious emotional, legal and physical consequences. The video opens with children getting off a school bus, going to their lockers and then to class. As a classroom full of students fades into an empty classroom, a Narrator relates the tragic statistic: Every two days 30 kids are killed by guns, possibly the same number of students in the viewer's own classroom.

Case #1

Joe Thompson, now 16 years old, begins to tell the story of how a handgun changed his life. In the dramatic re-enactment that follows, the 13-year-old Joe leaves his weekend job at his grandfather's automotive shop and meets some neighborhood friends. While they are talking at a friend's house, two bullies drive up. One confronts Joe and accuses him of talking behind his back. Joe denies this, but the bully beats him up anyway. Joe races home on his bicycle, scared and confused. When he looks in the mirror and sees his bruised and bloodied face, he becomes enraged. He searches for and then finds his father's gun. Uncertain of his next move, he walks defiantly back to his friend's home where he faces the bully and then starts shooting. Joe wounds him in the chest. The bully's friend wrestles the gun away from Joe but is wounded in the leg.

Back on camera, the real Joe Thompson explains that after a humiliating arrest and conviction, he is still paying the legal and social consequences two years later. He had to go to court and was put on probation for most of his teenage years. His parents' lives were disrupted since they were the ones who were responsible for taking him to the probation department. For many months he wasn't able to leave his house without parental supervision. Joe feels he's lost most of his teen years and was a burden on his family. He also realizes that it could have been worse - that he could have killed someone or have been killed himself.

Joe's case is followed by a brief interview with a Police Officer who explains that guns are illegal to use and could change the course of a young person's life. As he begins to explain the arrest process, a brief re-enactment showing a boy being handcuffed, fingerprinted and put behind bars dramatizes how a person is stripped of dignity and freedom for using a gun.

Case #2

In another re-enactment based upon an actual incident, Brian and his sister come home from school. They are playful and loving. Tina helps Brian with his homework and then retreats to the TV and talks on the telephone. Their dad comes home from work before their mom and goes to the bedroom where he places his handgun on a bedside table. Brian rushes in to tell his father he's hungry. His father goes to get some hamburgers, forgetting to put the gun away. While he is gone, Brian stays in his parents' room watching TV. He picks up the gun and starts playing with it. He walks through the house pretending he's shooting at imaginary targets. When he approaches his sister, the gun discharges and kills her.

In a brief interview, the Real Parents tell how devastated they are. They know that the accident could have been prevented, and they want every parent and child to know this as well. Their son Brian will not talk about the accident.

A Second Police Officer talks about how most kids are so accustomed to seeing people shot on television they don't realize that guns and bullets are real. As he talks, we watch a bullet dramatically wound a movie stunt man who then gets up after the scene is over.

Case #3

This third case involves a promising athlete who had been awarded a college football scholarship before he was wounded in a random drive-by shooting. Marvin is now paralyzed from the waist down and is confined to a wheelchair, his dreams of an athletic career shattered. Marvin tells what happened and how difficult it has been for him to cope.

The video closes with comments from people who have been personally affected by a gun speaking over images from a quilt memorializing young people killed by a guns.

Program Goals

The goal of **Handguns: Made for Killing, Not for Kids** is to educate kids about the dangers associated with handguns before they are confronted with the opportunity to handle or use a handgun. This video:

- Shows young people that one bad decision with a handgun can ruin their lives.
- Delivers three strong messages - never pick up a gun, guns should not be treated as toys, and guns do not resolve conflicts.
- Emphasizes that guns, when misused, produce tragic and often irreversible consequences.
- Encourages personal responsibility and accountability.

"Our goal is to teach children that handguns are deadly and can lead to serious legal, emotional and physical consequences," add the video's producers. "We hope to offer kids positive alternatives when faced with potentially violent situations and to encourage personal responsibility and accountability."

Overview of Problem

HANDGUNS AND CHILDREN FACTS AND FIGURES

- Firearms are the second leading cause of traumatic death for all youths 10 to 19 years of age, behind motor vehicle injury fatalities.
- More children are now killed by handguns than all natural causes combined.
- Fifteen children under 19 years of age are killed by handguns every day in America.
- Guns are used to murder at least one American child every 90 minutes. At least 30 children, the equivalent of one classroom of students, die every two days.
- Almost 100 children are injured by gunfire a day.

- Some 14,000 new guns are manufactured every day for the American market.
- Each day more than 100,000 students bring a gun to school; 80% of these guns come from the students' homes. Rural students are twice as likely to carry a gun to school than the national average.
- In 1992, handguns were used to murder 13,495 people in the United States. Fewer than 400 people were murdered with guns during the same time period in Sweden, Switzerland, Japan, Canada, Great Britain and Australia combined.
- The annual cost of gunshot wounds of children ages 0 to 14 is \$6.8 billion. These costs include wounds due to assault, suicide and unintentional injury.
- Lifetime medical costs for the average child hospitalized for a nonfatal gunshot wound exceed \$27,000. Medical costs for some paralyzed and brain-damaged victims exceed \$1 million.
- It costs more than \$14,000 to treat each child wounded by gunfire — enough to pay for a full year at a private college.
- A gun in the home is 43 times more likely to kill a family member or friend than it is to be used in self-defense.
- The National Safe Kids Campaign expresses a concern that gun owners underestimate a child's ability to gain access to and fire a gun and overestimate a child's ability to distinguish between real and toy guns, make good judgments about handling a gun and follow rules about gun safety consistently.

Suggestions for the Facilitator prior to viewing

Ask students to spend two weeks before watching the video collecting newspaper articles about incidents involving young people and handguns. This will make them aware of the problem.

Hold a class discussion in which students share the stories they have gathered. Make a list on the board to help them see "why" and "how" kids are being shot (e.g. unintentional, retaliatory, gang-related).

Ask them to select one article and write a paragraph about their perspective of what happened and how the incident could have been prevented.

Make sure students and/or parents know these stories are true.