



Stand Up for Tourette Syndrome

Teacher's Guide for Elementary and Middle School Students

Rationale:

The purpose of this video is twofold. First, it is to promote education and understanding about Tourette Syndrome (TS), an extremely complex and often misunderstood neurodevelopmental condition. Second, it is to teach and encourage leadership skills necessary to overcome bullying, both for the child being teased or bullied and observer(s). Students with TS are easy targets for bullying, given that symptoms often cause unusual movements, vocalizations (i.e. tics) and/ or behaviors. It is not sufficient to teach the student with TS to self-advocate, as taking a stand alone can be a daunting task. For the student with TS, communicating in stressful situations can often escalate tics and other symptoms which in turn, cause the bullying students to tease and taunt even more. This can become a vicious cycle, leaving the student with TS overwhelmed by his or her tics and symptoms and feeling helpless, isolated, and vulnerable. Therefore, empowering peers with leadership skills to support the student with TS and unite as a group when bullying occurs is a much more positive and proactive solution. Many schools are taking this proactive "natural leadership" approach and the Tourette Association of America also wanted to feature this important concept in this brief video.

Part 1: Introduction

1. Educate the group: If the student with TS is comfortable, allot a few minutes for him or her to share some general information about TS, how TS affects him or her and any experiences with bullying or teasing.
2. **Group Discussion:**
 - a. Encourage students to ask questions about TS
 - b. How do you think it feels to have tics?
 - c. What do you think when you see someone who is making unusual movements or noises? How do you feel when you are around them?
 - d. How would you feel if you were at a mall and you were making unusual movements or noises?
 - e. What would you do or say to someone who was staring at you?
 - f. What would you do or say to someone who is making the movements or noises?
 - g. What would you do or say if you saw other kids teasing or making fun of someone with TS?
 - h. Why do you think kids with TS are teased? (lack of knowledge, scared, curious)
 - i. Do you think kids with TS are typically included in activities or are they left out? What can you do?

Part 2: View the Video (03:38)

Part 3: Pointed Discussion

1. Discuss the following questions about the video:

- a. Luke initially notices that the other kids are talking about him. How do you think he felt? Has something like this ever happened to you and if so, how did you feel?
- b. What do Luke and his friends decide to do about this? What did he think at first? Why was it important for Luke to talk about taking action with his friends? Why do you think he changed his mind?
- c. What were the reactions of the kids at the table at first? How did the change? Why?
- d. Did Luke feel comfortable with his friends at first and trust them? What did they do to show him that they were really on his side?

2. What did you learn?

- a. Discuss leadership and why it is so important. Why was it better for the kids to support Luke rather than him defending himself alone?
- b. Discuss specific actions students can take when they witness bullying:
 - Take a stand: use examples and wording from the video
 - Tell an adult: explain how reporting bullying is different from tattling
 - Telling the teacher is a great step to stop bullying
- c. Discussing taking a stand together helps
 - Sometimes kids don't realize that what they are doing is hurtful
 - Having a group stand up for a bullied student shows that bullying isn't cool
 - Helps the student with TS know that he or she isn't alone: together we can make a difference
 - Sends the message that bullying is not ok and adults will enforce the rules

Supplemental Activities:

1. Help your students experience TS through the following activities:

- For students in kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grades: Have the children try to write their names while blinking their eyes and nodding their heads "yes".
- For students beyond 2nd grade: Explain that you will be giving them two tics. The first tic will be touching their pinky finger, on the hand that they are writing with to the desk. Explain that every time you clap, they will need to tic. The next tic they will have will be more like a tic of the mind. Every third word they write they will need to erase, and then rewrite. Tell the group that you are giving them 90 seconds to write the pledge, neatness is being counted, and that they are being graded. Put them in a situation in

which they would feel pressured. Walk around the classroom and look over students' shoulders. Increase clapping as you remind the class that they should be finished and to just look it over to make sure everything is spelled correctly and it is neat enough to hang in the hallway. When the 90 seconds are up, ask to see by a raise of hands who is finished. Most likely, no one will have. Ask the group to describe how they felt and what made the task difficult. How would they feel if they experienced tics every day all day?

- Let the group talk about this for a while because this exercise normally leaves a very big impression on the students.
- 2. Incorporate advocacy into your Social Studies curriculum! Discuss how our representatives and community leaders can be involved and how the law has changed to support students with TS. The Department of Education even came out with the following statement about TS:
"...we do believe that Tourette Syndrome is commonly misunderstood to be a behavioral or emotional condition, rather than a neurological condition. Therefore, including Tourette Syndrome in the definition of other health impairment may help correct the misperception of Tourette Syndrome as a behavioral or conduct disorder and prevent the misdiagnosis of their needs."
- 3. Have the students write a report about TS. Or, have them write an essay about what they think it would be like to live with TS as a creative writing assignment.

PLEASE NOTE:

This guide is based on the advice of a group of professionals. The recommendations made may or may not be relevant to a particular situation. Readers with questions should consult directly with a professional knowledgeable in TS for solutions that will meet their individual needs.