



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1984 Volume V: American Adolescents in the Public Eye

Anger, Aggression, and Adolescents

Guide for Curriculum Unit 84.05.07

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Why do fights highlight the discussion of the day in the classroom? Why do we spend so much classroom time on inter-personal relationships? Why at the slightest provocation or frustration a stream of profanity follows in the hall if not in the classroom? What is aggression? What are some of the historical and current cultural issues that influence this generation of teens and how aggression is manifested? Finally, what are some of the ways we can help our students see and use alternatives to fighting in school and out? These are the questions I consider in my unit.

Americans have traditionally had a love-hate relationship with aggression. Are we frontiersmen or civilized folk? Today our ambivalence about aggression is particularly acute. What are the boundaries between expressing your feelings and the rights of others. Some of the events of the sixties, parenting changes, loss of innocence in childhood, TV, role of women, working parents, single parents have contributed to this ambivalence.

Lastly in my unit there are ideas for helping our students to cope with their aggressive feelings with decision making strategies. Unit ideas provide opportunity for students to discuss their views about positive and negative coping and to build an increased vocabulary of styles of coping. Unit ideas include: prepared sheet of alternatives for coping with difficult situations; case studies or scenes in which students identify the conflict and coping style and then discuss alternatives; essay ideas for developing self-awareness and writing skill; and film ideas. The goal is to help our students be competent and assertive, not hostile and aggressive.

(Recommended for grades 9 through 12 Family Life classes at Cross and Lee, and grade 9 Urban Study classes)

Key Words

American Adolescent Personality

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