



GIRL RISING

Trauma-Informed Support

Introduction

The girls of *Girl Rising* show extraordinary courage and resilience as they face daunting challenges in their lives. They, and their stories, represent possibility and hope. But the issues the girls and the stories confront – extreme poverty, gender-based violence, child marriage and homelessness, among them – are difficult and we know that they can surface current or past experiences, memories, and complex emotions for students and educators alike.

As an additional support for our community, we've developed this guide for creating a safe and supportive environment where meaningful discussions around these difficult issues can take place. This resource includes suggestions on how to frame the *Girl Rising* videos for your students, how to facilitate the discussions around them, brief summaries of each video and the issues raised, and a list of supplementary resources.

The guide is grounded in current research into trauma-informed practices.

Creating a Supportive Environment

Here are some suggestions for how you might create an atmosphere where your students will feel comfortable and safe discussing issues raised by the *Girl Rising* film or videos. Because of personal experiences, some topics may trigger emotional responses in some of your students.

The goal is to create an environment that prioritizes the following:

1. Safety, both emotional and physical
2. Trustworthiness and transparency
3. Ample opportunities for peer support so participants can connect with one another
4. Empowerment of young people so they can design and structure the viewing and learning experience in collaboration with their educators
5. Educator awareness about the impact that cultural, historical and gender issues may have on students

Facilitation Tips

Viewing the Film/Videos:

- Be mindful of your class or program structure. Be sure to build in plenty of time to discuss the video chapter(s) and for students to process whatever they are feeling.
- Choose the video chapters that best fit the group you are working with and omit chapters you feel might not be right for your students. While the topics covered in the videos can be challenging, there is no graphic content. The creative choices made by the film's director can provide discussion points around the power of metaphor, storytelling, and critical thinking.
- Be clear with young people what the film or video chapter(s) is about and why you are including it in your class or program. Tell them in advance that you will be offering opportunities to discuss and offer them paper and pen to write, draw, or generate questions while they view the stories.
- Offer your students the option to step out of the room during the video if it becomes too intense or triggers an adverse emotional reaction.
- Have a plan for those who step out and a designated space. For example, they can sit in the hall outside the classroom and journal until they feel ready to re-join or the video is finished.

Guiding the Discussion:

- Allow the young people to lead and steer the conversation. Practice leading with curiosity rather than offering advice or judgment. Model this for participants so they can do the same for others.

For example, have students write down a few questions they have while watching and use those to guide the discussion.

- Be aware of the power differential between yourself and your students and avoid steering the conversation based on your own preferences or bias. If you, as the adult, offer too many suggestions or ideas, you can inadvertently signal what ideas are acceptable and/or valid.

For example, ask your class or group for suggestions on the best ways to facilitate conversations around challenging material. Collaborating with them in the planning process can increase engagement and participation.

- Assume your students are the subject matter experts of their lives. This means believing their experiences, taking their concerns seriously, and not downplaying or dismissing events in their lives or ideas they share.

For example, there are moments in the film/videos where girls experience injustice and do not go to the authorities. You might be someone who trusts the police and the justice system and thus be tempted to offer going to the police as a good solution to a challenging situation; however, feeling safe around the police is not an experience shared by all.

- Be mindful that we only truly know our singular, objective experience. Emotions and emotional reactions to stimuli are based on context, culture, and how we have been socialized; that looks different for every person. Remain open to all experiences and lead with listening rather than suggesting solutions.

For example, avoid offering judgements on students' emotional reactions to the videos. Let them process in ways that are authentic to them.

- Create ways for students to acknowledge and support their peers.

For example, giving a thumbs up when someone says something they agree with or support. This is also a great time to invite participants in to decide on a method of support for their group.

- Remind participants that the goal when discussing the film/video(s) is not to judge the girls or their cultures; it is to analyze how their stories represent global issues that contribute to lack of equal treatment for girls.

*For example, connect the themes presented in *Girl Rising* to the lives of your participants by asking them to discuss how the lessons from the film/video(s) relate to issues in their own lives and communities.*

- Use open-ended questions and avoid leading participants to answers or one point of view.

For example: How would you respond in this situation? Does this remind you of anything you have seen or experienced? How did the way the story was told impact you?

- Remember, silence does not immediately need to be filled during a discussion. Allow space for students to process and respond without jumping in and rushing the conversation.

For example, students might take time to process each story and the accompanying facts before they can share with a group. Slow responses are not an indication of a lack of engagement

- Support diverse learning styles and comfort levels by offering a variety of ways for students to participate beyond large group discussions.

For example, creating art, writing personal reflections or poems and working in small groups, among many others, are all excellent methods of sharing. Offer those as equally valid options.

Chapter Previews

Below is a brief summary of each video chapter to help you identify potential triggers for students. The Girl Rising team crafted the film with intention so there is no graphic content in the videos.

Sokha

While she dreams of being able to attend school and eventually makes that a reality, the story opens earlier and details how she grew up scavenging in a vast and dangerous garbage dump to survive.

Wadley

She is a determined young woman and school is her highest priority. She cares deeply for her friends and supports them, especially after one loses her father in a shooting. Her life is disrupted when her home and country are destroyed by an earthquake and she loses her home. She fights to stay in school despite the challenges and makes her goal a reality.

Suma

In order to survive her experience as a child in bonded labor, she writes songs about the physical and emotional abuse she endures. When she is finally liberated from what she has come to understand as slavery, she becomes an advocate for freedom and education for all.

Yasmin

Told in a format that blends interviews and animation, Yasmin shares her story of being a victim of sexual violence. In her telling of the story, she imagines herself a superhero, using force to defend against evil. The chapter unfolds as she and her mother are in the police station detailing her experience.

Azmera

Her story, which opens after the death of her father and sister, is one of family, breaking customs, and new beginnings. Following cultural tradition, her mother offers her in marriage at a young age; however, her brother wants her to continue her schooling and helps fight for her freedom.

Ruksana

Her creative mind is constantly distracted in school and filling her surroundings with her unique, artful view of the world. This ability to envision beauty helps her manage the reality of her family's poverty and their temporary home on the pavement of Kolkata. She experiences humiliation by her teacher and threats of violence from a group of local young men, but her father supports her dreams as the family fights harsh conditions for a better future.

Senna

She is a young poet who is thriving despite her challenging reality. She lives in a poor mining village in Peru where there are few economic options, forcing some women in the village to turn to sex work and many to do hard manual labor to survive. Her father's encouragement inspires

her to stay in school and work hard to succeed, despite the sorrow she feels when he dies, the result of a mining accident and lack of access to medical care.

Mariama

After her father's death, Mariama's mother remarried to keep their family safe and follow local traditions. Mariama is an outgoing, passionate young woman who starts a radio show to offer advice to young women in her community who are struggling with a variety of issues.

Occasionally, her advice defies traditional ideas of what women should do, and her stepfather does not like her breaking traditional gender roles. He demands she stop doing the program. Her aunt steps in to advocate for the benefits of the work she is doing, even if it defies customary thinking about what young women should and should not do.

Amina

Her reality is common for too many young women around the globe. As a girl in the culture of her Afghan community, she is seen as valuable only as a worker and wife. She is expected to work from the age of three and is married off at age eleven. While her story shows the painful impact of gender based violence, sexual violence, and child pregnancy, she remains hopeful for a new future for the women of Afghanistan.

Supplementary Resources

- The CDC's list of [six principles of a trauma informed approach](#)
- [National Childhood Traumatic Stress Network Resources](#)
- [SAMHSA white page](#) on Trauma Informed Practices