

The knight on the white horse¹²

“If you think you are too small to have an impact, try going to bed with a mosquito in the room.” Anita Roddick

Complexity	Level 3
Group size	10 to 20
Time	60 minutes
Overview	This activity introduces the difficulties of recognising abuse from close up and early warning signs for who could be a potential abuser. It is a good basis for a discussion on how society romanticises violence and oppression.
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To discuss the boundaries of a safe and democratic relationship • To discuss the role of education and / or youth work in preventing violence in intimate relationships
Materials	Copies of the story of the knight on a white horse for Susie, the narrator and the knight

Preparation

Familiarise yourself with the issue of violence in relationships and battery before undertaking the facilitation of this exercise. Chapter 2 of this manual, especially the sections dealing with domestic violence and abuse, is particularly helpful for clarifying the differences in various kinds of gender-based violence. Refer also to *Compass*¹³ pp. 354 to 357 for specific information on the human rights dimension of this issue.

Choose two participants or team members with whose help you feel confident to co-facilitate this exercise. Brief them in advance about what will happen during the activity. Give them a copy of the explanation of the exercise to read in advance and a copy of the story of the Knight on the white horse. If possible, the person that plays Susie (and is ‘courted’) should be female. If you do not think that any participant is suited to the role, ask a (female) team member to be Susie. The other participant or team member should be the narrator. You (the facilitator) play the knight.

Prepare the working space so that all participants can sit in front of the actors in a semi circle and can observe all the action clearly.

LEVEL: 3



GROUP: 10-20



TIME: 60 MIN.



Don't forget to read the tips for facilitators before running this activity.

¹² Adapted from an activity elaborated by NANE Women's Rights Association, Hungary <http://www.nane.hu>

¹³ www.coe.int/compass

Instructions

Explain to participants that they will hear a short story about the knight on the white horse and that afterwards there will be a discussion about the feelings it raises.

The actors move to the middle of the room. You (the facilitator) are the knight. You kneel in front of Susie, or sit next to her, and hold her hand. It is preferable for you to act out the 'courting' scenes by heart, rather than reading. So, if possible, learn the dialogue by heart in advance. The narrator stands to the side of the scene. The narrator reads out their part of the story.

The text of the story is outlined in the handouts section below.

Debriefing and evaluation

After the 'courting scene' and story have been completed, check the faces of participants for reactions or emotions. If participants seem a little shocked or upset, give the participants a very short break for them to collect themselves together.

Begin the debriefing by asking the person who played Susie to share her feelings and impressions about the little play before collecting the impressions of the other members of the group.

Keep the story in your hands for reference and remind the group of certain passages of the story as necessary.

You can initiate the discussion using the following questions as a guide:

- What does this story make you feel? Why?
- What do you think about this relationship?
- At which point do you think Susie should have realised this is a dangerous relationship?
- What other signals are there that indicate that this relationship is becoming abusive?
- What can we understand about romantic relationships from this story?
- Where does an open and democratic relationship end and an abusive one begin?
- Where do we get our knowledge about what relationships should be like from? How accurate are these sources of knowledge?

You can conclude the discussion by widening the focus to include how society romanticises violence and oppression. You can use the following questions to guide this part of the discussion.

- Where and under what circumstances do we most often come across violence and gender-based violence in particular?
- In what way is violence and / or gender-based violence depicted?
- To what extent is violence romanticised?
- How do young people engage with these images or depictions of violence?
- How does this affect the way young people develop their capacity for relating to other people and especially to members of another gender or people with a different sexuality?

- What can be done to ensure that gender-based violence is portrayed more honestly and realistically?

Tips for facilitators

This exercise can be very emotional for some participants and, therefore, needs a safe environment. This is not an exercise that can be run with a group that has just recently met. If your group works together regularly, this is an exercise for when they already know and trust each other and you (as facilitator). If your group has come together for a one-off residential activity, it is suggested that you run this activity only after the group has worked together for a few days. Participant trust in the facilitator as well as in each other is crucial for the success of this exercise.

As mentioned previously, bear in mind that you do not necessarily know ‘who is in the room’. Someone may have experienced an abusive relationship and you should avoid such people possibly feeling under pressure to disclose something they do not want to speak about with others, or in public. Try to formulate the questions you ask in the debriefing in a ‘non-personal’ manner, so that even if they have a personal experience, participants do not have to answer by referring to it directly.

Also be aware that such experiences may be painful for participants to be reminded of, and that as a facilitator it will be your responsibility to deal with the emotional consequences of running the exercise in your group. In other words, and in practical terms, if a participant gets upset or starts to cry, you have to be prepared to deal with that on a one to one basis and in the whole group. This may be as simple as taking a break, asking the participant if they want to go to their room to freshen up and telling the rest of the group that the person needed some time out and will speak about it when they are ready, or it may involve addressing the reasons for the participant getting so upset in the discussion in the whole group, with their prior consent, of course.

Suggestions for follow-up

See the activity ‘Kati’s story’ (see p. 110) and explore it with same group to develop the theme of domestic violence and abuse.

Ideas for action

Participants can get in touch with a local hotline for women experiencing trouble in their relationship and domestic violence. They can help find ways to advertise the hotline to the general public and some may even wish to become a volunteer for the hotline. If there are no such local hotlines, participants may want to look further into finding a way to establish one for the local community. It is important to note that when working for a hotline or establishing a hotline, it is extremely important to undergo training to be able to respond to the calls effectively.

HANDOUT

The knight on a white horse

Knight Wow Susie! You are so beautiful! I love your style so much! You are such an individual, and I love that about you...!

Narrator ... and Susie is very happy and feels very attracted to the man

Knight I've never felt so close to anyone. You are the only one I trust, the only one I can share my problems with and who understands them. It is so good to be with you. I love you so much...

Narrator Susie feels that she is very important to the man. She feels safe.

Knight I feel I have found my other half. We have been created for each other. We don't need anybody else, do we?

Narrator And Susie indeed feels that the whole world is left outside, and that every minute they spend away from each other shortens their love.

Knight You are so beautiful, so pretty. But don't you think that your skirt is a bit daring? Don't you understand, I'm just worried about you! I think you should wear something else. That would make me feel better. We belong together, don't we? You are mine.

Narrator And because Susie loves him, and would not want an argument for such an insignificant thing, she changes the way she dresses to suit his wishes.

Knight You spend way too much time with your girlfriends. But we have such a great time together. Am I not enough for you? You shouldn't trust them. I think they have a bad influence on you. I don't like the way you talk about them and about the things you do together. And I don't like the way you talk to me when you come back from being with them.

Narrator And because Susie wants to be nice to him, she begins to see less and less of her friends. Soon they have been left behind altogether.

Knight I do like your parents, but why do we have to see them every Sunday? I'd like to spend more time with you alone. Anyway, they do not like me very much. All they do is criticise me. I'm not even allowed to relax on Sunday! They can't wait for us to break up. I wish you didn't want us to spend so much time with them.

Narrator Susie is worried about their relationship. She does not want to lose it so spends less time with her family. Now there is peace... Or is there?