

Shouting at children can be as damaging as physical or sexual abuse, study says

Level 3: Advanced – Teacher's notes

Article summary: The article talks about new research about the effects of verbal abuse on children.

Time: 60 minutes

Skills: Reading, Speaking, Writing

Language focus: Comparisons with *as ... as*

Materials needed: One copy of the worksheet per student

1. Warmer

- a. The purpose of this activity is to get students to think about the power of words. You may ask students what the saying means and what it means to them. Do they agree or disagree with it? Based on the article's title, do they think it agrees or disagrees with the saying?

2. Key words

- a. Ask students to do the exercise individually and compare their answers in pairs or small groups. You may wish to mention that *perpetration* is frequently used in the verb form *perpetrate*.

Key:

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. <i>offspring</i> | 9. <i>insult</i> |
| 2. <i>self-harm</i> | 10. <i>persistent</i> |
| 3. <i>abuse</i> | 11. <i>distress</i> |
| 4. <i>perpetration</i> | 12. <i>intimidate</i> |
| 5. <i>verbal</i> | 13. <i>self-esteem</i> |
| 6. <i>characterised</i> | 14. <i>psychotic</i> |
| 7. <i>belittle</i> | 15. <i>prevention</i> |
| 8. <i>impact</i> | |

- b. Before reading the article carefully, students use some of the key words to fill the gaps in the sentences to ensure that they understand and know how the words are used in context.

Key:

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. <i>prevention</i> | 6. <i>distress</i> |
| 2. <i>self-esteem</i> | 7. <i>abuse</i> |
| 3. <i>intimidate</i> | 8. <i>insults</i> |
| 4. <i>characterised</i> | 9. <i>impacts</i> |
| 5. <i>verbal</i> | 10. <i>offspring</i> |

3. Comprehension check

- a. Students answer the questions based on the information in the article. They may do this in different ways, e.g., in item 1, they may say, 'Children are at a greater risk of self-harm, drug use, and going to jail' or similar.

Key (suggested answers):

1. *self-harm, drug use, going to jail*
2. *because of the enormous damage it does*
3. *by shouting, yelling, belittling the child, and verbal threats*
4. *It is as damaging as physical or sexual abuse.*
5. *40 per cent*
6. *Children who had been verbally abused were almost twice as likely (19.9 per cent) to use cannabis and at nearly double the risk of ending up in jail (4.4 per cent).*
7. *51 per cent said they experienced it weekly, and 1 in 10 said daily.*
8. *"you're useless", "you're stupid", "you can't do anything right", "I am proud of you", "you can do it", "I believe in you"*
9. *low self-esteem, increased nicotine, alcohol and substance use, increased risk of anxiety, depression, and even psychotic disorders*
10. *Because it is expected, but so few adults are aware that it is harmful.*

4. Key language

- a. Students could be asked to do this exercise individually and then compare their answers in pairs. Different answers with synonyms to suggested answers are possible.

Key (suggested answers):

1. *as damaging as*
2. *as bad as*
3. *as high as*
4. *as likely as*

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- b. Students could be asked to do this exercise individually and then compare their answers in pairs. Some variations in the sentences are possible.

Key:

1. *Children's mental health is as important as their physical safety.*
2. *Physical abuse can be as traumatic to children as verbal abuse.*
3. *Hearing adults say "I am proud of you" was as positive as hearing "you can do it".*

- c. Allow the class to think of structures and phrases to compare, and then have them share them with the class.

Key (possible answers):

as is ...
and ... is too
So is ...
Equally, ...
Similarly, ...
In the same way, ...
The same is true for ...
The same can be said for ...

5. Discussion

- a. Students discuss the statements related to the article and give their reasons and justifications for each answer, referring to their own experiences wherever possible.

6. In your own words

- a. Ask students to research positive communication techniques.
- b. Students could then present their reports to the class. Encourage students to share the information they've gathered and their opinions about the issue. Encourage students to use some of the given phrases in their presentations when stating facts and their opinions.