

Education and the Challenger Program

Challenging youth to the change:

An ongoing contribution and intervention program designed to empower youth to be active agents of change who, through their example, begin to create a school culture of compassion, acceptance and respect. (more) [Link naar L](#)

Day One: Challenge Day. The spark that ignites love and acceptance on campus; a vision of what's possible.

Supported by 25 volunteer Adult Sponsors and 25 committed Teen Team leaders who are identified by the school and coached immediately prior to the workshop, 100 diverse and powerful peer group leaders will:

- Witness the consequences of bullying, teasing and other forms of physical and emotional violence.

- Understand the hurt created by social isolation and experience the power of peer support.
- Understand the concept of social oppression and its impact on individuals, communities and schools.

- Have the opportunity to make amends and heal post hurts.

- Learn a powerful tool for conflict reduction and healthy and safe emotional release.

? Create connection with other participants and recognise that they can turn to people around them for support.

? Be challenged to open their minds and hearts to the possibility of creating a peaceful and more loving school community.

? Be given the option to return the following day for Challenger Training, and embark on the path of Being the Change.

Day Two: Challenger Training

Gives Challengers the tools and shows them the path to create CHANGE.

Those youth committed to being powerful Challengers return with their Teen Team leaders and Adult Sponsors for the Challenger Training where they will:

? Be challenged to notice and explore the various forms of social oppression, violence and separation that occur on campus, and their consequences.

Learn and practise safe and effective intervention and contribution skills.

? Learn and practice the Challenge Day Communication, Rumour Elimination and Intervention Models. Understand the importance of Integrity and Accountability in their role as a Challenger.

Understand the importance of being an ally.

? Learn about confidentiality and reporting laws as they relate to their role as a Challenger.

Be empowered to create a Challenger Support Team and ongoing accountability system.

Learn the record-keeping and document- Tatiana system for tracking their "Acts of Change."

Sign the Challenger Commitment Contract.

Ongoing. Being the Change

Ongoing 'Acts of Change' and adult- facilitated meetings inspired transformation

Ongoing change is supported and inspired through:

- Public recognition of Challengers' "Acts of Change" locally and nationally.
- Regular follow-up meetings facilitated by on-campus adult Challenger Co-ordinator to celebrate accomplishments, "empty balloons," problem-solve and continue practising skills.

- Reproofing Challengers' "Acts of Change" to Challenge Day headquarters for wider dissemination. Additional Challenge Days and Challenger Training's to expand the base of Challengers.

- Unlimited phone consultation with Challenge Day headquarters.

Do the math !

100 Challengers providing just one Act of Change per day complete 700 positive acts each week... That's 3,500 positive contributions or interventions each month!

In one school year, they will have intervened in hurtful interactions or contributed to Something-positive happening 42,000 times. Now imagine every student at every school committed to this powerful change!

What if youth everywhere began doing their part to change the culture of their schools? What if every student knew that she could truly "Be The Change"?

Imagine... Students are inspired to proclaim they will no longer participate in the mistreatment of others.

Then they...

- Take a stand together as leaders
- Receive powerful action-oriented leadership training
- Commit to making and documenting at least one positive contribution or intervention every day!

By this they...

Become "Challengers," working to create a school where everyone is safe, loved and celebrated.

'We all want this. And we believe that anything we all want, we can make happen '

For more information contact: Challenging Day 925 957 0234. www.challengeday.org

Yvonne St. John-Dutra, Co-founder

5. Challenge Day, a Case Story

The following story appeared in the New York Times Best Selling Book 'Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul', 1997. We believe this young man's experience with the Challenge Day program is one that is shared by many as told to Andrew Tertes.

Shared joy is double joy.

Shared sorrow is half sorrow. Swedish Proverb

My name is Tony. I always looked out for myself because I thought no one else would, and I thought it would always be that way. I go to school because it seems like I have to. That changed the day I got out of class for something called Challenge Day

The people running it had big hopes of helping us join together and making us leaders. I just wanted to get out of class. I figured that after signing in I would sneak out.

In the school gym, I found myself sitting in a big circle, face to face with a hundred students that no one could have paid me to spend the day with. I was keeping up my front, my cool, but I was kind of nervous. I'm used to either sitting hidden in the back of a classroom waiting for a break, or skipping school and hang-ing with the guys. I wasn't used to not knowing what was going to happen.

I made fun of how a bunch of kids were dressed and of a girl who was fat. Some of the girls had worn pyja-mas and brought stuffed animals. Pretty stupid, I thought.

The day started with each of us standing up and saying our names into a microphone 'loud and proud". A bunch of kids were really shy, but since I rap sometimes, I acted really cool when it was my turn. No one knew there was a lump in my throat. You see, I'm from a tough neighbourhood, and showing your weakness only makes you a target. I was a target when I was real young, both for my brothers and for the people who called themselves my friends.

We sure didn't know how to be friends though. Fighting and putting each other down were a normal way of life.

Anyway, we started playing these games I thought were really childish. I hung back a little with my buddies, acting cool and not playing like a little kid. After a couple of games, though, it didn't seem like anyone else was hanging back, and they were all having a good time. In thought 'Why not me'. I have to admit, I was playing a little rough, but it beat sitting on the edge.

What happened next was almost unbelievable. Carl, one of the only guys who is more feared and respected than me at school, was helping one of the leaders demonstrate how to give hugs.

Everyone was laughing at first, but it was getting harder and harder to put anyone down that day. The leaders kept teaching us to open our hearts and minds, to share our true feelings and to give put-ups instead of put-downs. It wasn't what I was used to.

Then we did an exercise called "the power shuffle." Before the game started, the leaders talked about oppression. "Yeah," I thought, "like they really know what it is like to be oppressed. Here I am, a young Latino growing up in a white society. I get harassed and pushed around every day by store owners, teachers and all these adults who think I'm a gangster just because of the colour of my skin. Yeah, I act hard, but what am I supposed to do when I have to watch my friends drop from drive-by's?"

The leaders said we had to be silent, to make it safe for everyone. They called out broad categories and asked us to cross over the line if we fit into the category. I was still snickering in my buddy's ear as the first few were called out.

But the leaders meant it about being quiet. One of the adults softly put his hand on me and said: 'You' all want them to respect you; please respect them.'

Category after category was called out. In silence, group after group, people crossed the line. Then a topic was called that I fit into, and I figured I would be the only one who experienced this kind of pain. 'Cross the line if you've ever been hit, beaten or abused, in any way'. I walked heavy in my shoes. Looking straight down as I walked, I turned around, having a hard time not laughing to cover what was going on for me.

But as I looked up, half the group was walking with me. We stood in silence, looked into each other's eyes, and for the first time in my life, I felt like I wasn't alone.

One by one, we dropped our masks. I saw that these people, whom I had judged before, were in reality very much like me. Like me, they, too, knew how it felt to be hurt.

I walked back across the line. My friend tried to joke with me but it didn't seem right anymore. Another topic was called, one where all the women and girls crossed. I had never seen before how much men and boys disrespect and hurt women. I became more uncomfortable as I noticed tears appearing in many of my friends' eyes.

We crossed the line next for having lost someone close to us in gang violence. So many of us crossed that line. It just wasn't right! I started feeling really angry inside, and tears were coming to my eyes. The leaders kept saying, 'When the tears are on the outside, the inside is healing,' and 'It takes a strong man to cry.'

I had to make the choice of whether or not to have the courage to show my tears. I was still scared of being called names, but the tears came out. I cried, and with my tears I proved that I was a strong man.

Before we left that day, each of us stood and shared our experiences. I stood up, again not sure if I should fight the tears or not. The leader encouraged me to look out at the group and ask if it was okay for a man to cry. So I did.

Then each person stood up in front of their chairs to show they respected me for showing my tears. Amazed, I started talking.. I said I was sorry to a few of those people I had judged and pushed around in the halls be-cause I thought they had it so much better then e. With the tears in their eyes, they came up to me, one by one, and gave me a hug. Now I know what it is really like to share love with someone. I hope I can do this with my dad some day. Here was a day I thought I was cutting from school, but instead I found myself telling the people I hurt that I was sorry, and people were saying the same thing to me. It was like we were all one family and we never knew it until that day. It wasn't magic-we just looked at each other in a different light.

Now it is up to us. Do we look through these eyes for just one day, or do we have the courage to remember that most people are just like us, and help others learn that it is safe to be themselves? 3237 Alhambra Ave., Suite 2, Martinez CA 94553 - Phone/925-957-0234 Fax/925-957-9425 - office@challengeday.org (a non-profit organisation)