

# Leave Out Violence

[www.leaveoutviolence.com](http://www.leaveoutviolence.com)

## National

### **WHO THEY ARE:**

Leave Out Violence (LOVE) is a program that prevents youth violence by training youth to lead a movement against it. It was started in 1993 by a woman named Twinkle, whose husband was murdered by a 14 year-old boy. After dealing with her feelings of anger and sadness, she learned that the boy who killed her husband was also a victim of violence. In order to break the cycle of violence, Twinkle decided to spend her life helping youth learn to help themselves, and eventually how to help other youth as well.

LOVE aims to engage young people by encouraging them to express themselves in a variety of ways. They have successfully created an environment where youth can easily and comfortably share their stories. They provide a voice for youth to talk about what's going on in youth culture, particularly with the aim of preventing violence between and toward youth. They facilitate youth in identifying the issues that are most important to them and then identify steps they need to take to make things better for themselves.

### **HOW DO THEY ALLOW YOUTH TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES?**

LOVE gives youth the opportunity to learn about photojournalism and broadcast journalism. Youth learn how to express and document their thoughts and feelings about what violence means to them and how it affects their lives. LOVE also provides youth leadership training where LOVE youth learn the skills to become active leaders against youth violence. Once they have received training and are confident enough, they go on to lead presentations in schools and in the community on the real-life causes, consequences and strategies for prevention of youth violence.

### **HOW DO THEY ENGAGE YOUTH?**

LOVE trains youth leaders who then often go on to become mentors and spokespersons who go into schools and provide information and encouragement to youth.

**“It’s always youth talking to youth and not adults talking to youth. If it’s not youth to youth it doesn’t work”**

- Anuradha Dugal, Executive Director - Quebec

LOVE places a lot of importance on the effect of having youth engage other youth. They know that it means so much more to a young person when they’re approached and talked to by someone who is young and near their own age bracket. Youth are often better able to relate to people their age and feel more comfortable in their presence.

Simply put, engaging youth is about being youth-oriented. When LOVE approaches young people about a new initiative, they won’t simply come in and tell them that to be a part of LOVE they’re going to have to do a project that has been pre-designed by somebody else. LOVE takes a more friendly approach, and shows youth that they will be a partner and a resource. They provide opportunities to use photography, journalism and creativity to put together something young people will be motivated

to continue doing. Furthermore, they allow them to create, sustain and achieve results from their own ideas.

Another critical aspect of youth engagement is about having a fun and memorable experience. LOVE has a national camp, where youth go for a five-day retreat. They participate in all sorts of activities from leadership workshops, arts and crafts, and outdoor activities, and are able to meet others their age. After the five days, they come out of the experience with great memories, and are much more likely to return to get involved with LOVE. It's all about leaving a lasting impression.

## **WHAT ADVICE DO THEY GIVE?**

**“Transparency, and being direct about why and what you want youth to do is very important. It’s imperative that you clearly specify what level of involvement you’re willing to give them. “Youth driven, youth focused and youth led”: those three things are very different. Those trying to engage youth need to know which one it is that they are ready and willing to do. Be clear on whether youth will be targeted for only their opinions or whether they will be in charge of making decisions. If they are in charge of the latter, inform them of the importance of their position and all the dependent factors of the organization that will rely on those decisions.”**

- Anuradha Dugal, Executive Director – Quebec

## **WHAT THE YOUTH FRIENDLY GUIDE SAYS**

The Youth Friendly Guide stresses the importance of clarity in its Five Principles for Intergenerational Partnerships. It lays out five simple but useful guidelines for clarifying duties:

- 1) Have realistic expectations: don't overburden participants.
- 2) Be realistic about time and resources available.
- 3) Allow proper lead-time for projects, space for reflection, and time for trial and error.
- 4) Set out a timeline with tasks including who is committed to what and for when.
- 5) Accept that levels of experience will change over time.

## **LOVE HIGHLIGHT**

A highlight of LOVE Halifax's Leadership program this year was the creation of an award-winning anti-racism public service announcement (PSA). Their PSA was aired on both the Aboriginal People's Television Network as well as the CBC. LOVE Halifax's leadership team came together to write, direct and produce this PSA. Three of the most active leaders were flown to Ottawa along with the Director of Programming, Dennis Adams, to receive national recognition from the Honourable Raymond Chan, Minister of State (Multiculturalism). The youth participated in a two-day conference focused on the elimination of racial discrimination. It was a fantastic learning opportunity.