

ACTIVITY 49

"In" Groups and "Out" Groups

Purpose: Discuss the desire to belong, the tendency for students to divide into "in" and "out" groups at school, and how this desire impacts the choices they make in the face of exclusion or injustice.

ADVISOR NOTES:

1. Preparing for the Barometer Warm-Up Activity

Before the start of the activity, hang two signs at opposite ends of the classroom that say "Strongly Agree" and "Strongly Disagree." You might use the barometer as the opening routine for this meeting.

2. Present the "In" Group Reading in Two Parts

The reading **The "In" Group** is divided into two parts. It is important that advisees do not read ahead to see what happens so they can participate in the paired discussion about Shalen's choices. For this reason, we recommend that you read this story aloud as an advisory rather than in small groups. If you choose to show the video version of **The "In" Group** (available at facinghistory.org/avisory-media) rather than using the reading, pause at minute 02:10 for the discussion of Eve's choices.

3. Mini-Project: Creating Inclusive Spaces in Your School

The closing circle discussion invites your advisees to consider how they might collaborate to create more inclusive spaces in your school. If they are excited and motivated by the conversation, you can encourage them to choose a space that they would like to help make more inclusive, develop an action plan in upcoming advisory meetings, implement the plan, and reflect on how it went and how they worked as a group. Activity 65: The Bully Zones Project includes a video about a student-led project in which students in the school mapped areas where they witnessed or experienced disrespect or bullying. Your advisees could implement a similar type of mapping project in which they identify spaces in their school that feel unsafe or exclusive and then raise awareness through presentations, posters, social media, or announcements to start the process of making them more welcoming and inclusive. Additionally, the Advisory Community-Building Project portion of Section 6 has brainstorming strategies and a framework to support an advisory project.

APPROXIMATE TIME:
2 x 30 minutes

MATERIALS:



READING
The "In" Group



VIDEO
The "In" Group
(see facinghistory.org/avisory-media)



HANDOUT
The "In" Group
Discussion Questions
Chart paper and markers

PROCEDURE:

First Advisory Meeting

1. Warm Up by Taking a Stand

- In a quick activity based on the **Barometer** strategy, ask advisees to think about the following statement (visit facinghistory.org/advisory-media to learn about this teaching strategy):

It is natural for human beings to form groups that include some and exclude others.

- Then have them take a stand along the continuum between the “Strongly Agree” and “Strongly Disagree” signs. Provide an opportunity for advisees to explain their choices before they return to their seats.

2. Read Eve Shalen’s Story about Wanting to Belong

- Choose a **Read Aloud** strategy (visit facinghistory.org/advisory-media to learn about this teaching strategy), and pass out the first part of the reading **The “In” Group** (see Advisor Notes). Alternatively, prepare to show the video **The “In” Group**, which is available at facinghistory.org/advisory-media. Let your advisees know that in this story, Eve Shalen is a high school student reflecting on an incident that occurred when she was in eighth grade.
- Read aloud, stopping at “One of them read aloud from a small book, which I was told was the girl’s diary.” This moment occurs at minute 02:10 in the video version of the text.
- Use the **Think, Pair, Share** strategy to have advisees make a list of Shalen’s options in this moment and the possible outcomes for each one (visit facinghistory.org/advisory-media to learn about this teaching strategy). You may want to model one response with the group, or have them dive straight into their discussions.
- To debrief, record advisees’ ideas for options and outcomes, and then read aloud or show the ending of Eve Shalen’s story.

3. Discuss the “In” Group Reading in Small Groups

- Next, divide advisees into four groups and let them know that each group will be discussing its own set of questions about the reading (or video).
- Pass out the handout **The “In” Group Discussion Questions** and a piece of chart paper and markers to each group. Assign each group one set of questions, and tell advisees that they should record their answers on chart paper. They will share their posters with the advisory group in the next meeting.

Second Advisory Meeting

1. Share Responses to Reading Discussion Questions

- Start in the groups from the last meeting so advisees can review their posters and Eve Shalen's story as needed.
- Then invite each group to present its questions and the main ideas from its discussion. Invite advisees to respond with positive feedback, connections, or questions.

2. Draw Connections between Shalen's Story and Your School Community

Move into a circle discussion that draws from the following questions. See the Advisory Notes section for ideas about how your group might create a mini-project based on their discussion.

- Where in your school do you see evidence of isolation and separation between different individuals or groups of people?
- Where in your school do you see evidence of cooperation between different individuals or groups of people?
- Where in your school do you see evidence of individuals or groups trying to create a sense of belonging and inclusion in places where there is isolation and tension?
- What are some ways that you can work together as an advisory group to create more inclusive spaces in your school?



The “In” Group

Part One:

My eighth grade consisted of 28 students, most of whom knew each other from the age of five or six. The class was close-knit and we knew each other so well that most of us could distinguish each other’s handwriting at a glance. Although we grew up together, we still had class outcasts. From second grade on, a small elite group spent a large portion of their time harassing two or three of the others. I was one of those two or three, though I don’t know why. In most cases when children get picked on, they aren’t good at sports or they read too much or they wear the wrong clothes or they are of a different race. But in my class, we all read too much and didn’t know how to play sports. We had also been brought up to carefully respect each other’s races. This is what was so strange about my situation. Usually, people are made outcasts because they are in some way different from the larger group. But in my class, large differences did not exist. It was as if the outcasts were invented by the group out of a need for them. Differences between us did not cause hatred; hatred caused differences between us.

The harassment was subtle. It came in the form of muffled giggles when I talked, and rolled eyes when I turned around. If I was out in the playground and approached a group of people, they often fell silent. Sometimes someone would not see me coming and I would catch the tail end of a joke at my expense.

I also have a memory of a different kind. There was another girl in our class who was perhaps even more rejected than I. She also tried harder than I did for acceptance, providing the group with ample material for jokes. One day during lunch I was sitting outside watching a basketball game. One of the popular girls in the class came up to me to show me something she said I wouldn’t want to miss. We walked to a corner of the playground where a group of three or four sat. One of them read aloud from a small book, which I was told was the girl’s diary.¹

¹ Eve Shalen, in *A Discussion with Elie Wiesel: Facing History Students Confront Hatred and Violence* (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves, 1993).

Part Two:

I sat down and, laughing till my sides hurt, heard my voice finally blend with the others. Looking back, I wonder how I could have participated in mocking this girl when I knew perfectly well what it felt like to be mocked myself. I would like to say that if I were in that situation today I would react differently, but I can't honestly be sure. Often being accepted by others is more satisfying than being accepted by oneself, even though the satisfaction does not last. Too often our actions are determined by the moment.²

² Eve Shalen, in *A Discussion with Elie Wiesel: Facing History Students Confront Hatred and Violence* (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves, 1993).



The “In” Group

Discussion Questions

Group 1: Make a list of individuals who chose the following roles in the story. Remember that these are roles and not permanent identities, so an individual might take on more than one role. If there is a role that you don’t think anyone chose, discuss what it might have looked like had someone chosen it.

1. Perpetrator(s):
2. Target(s):
3. Bystander(s):
4. Upstander(s):

Group 2: How do you understand Shalen’s statement at the end of the first paragraph of her story: “It was as if the outcasts were invented by the group out of a need for them. Differences between us did not cause hatred; hatred caused differences between us”?

1. What is the difference between *difference causing hatred* and *hatred causing difference*?
2. Why might a group feel the need to invent outcasts?
3. Why do humans so often divide themselves into “we” and “they,” or “in” groups and “out” groups? Is this division always negative? When does it become a problem?
4. What are strategies for confronting the problem of “in” and “out” groups?

Group 3:

1. What factors contribute to Eve Shalen’s choice in the story?
2. How does our need to be part of a group impact the choices we make? Why is it so difficult for a person to go against a group?
 - a. How can Eve Shalen help you answer these questions?
 - b. How can your own experiences help you answer these questions?
3. How is the situation in this story similar to or different from the one in “The Bystander Effect,” the video that you discussed in a previous advisory meeting?

Group 4:

1. Where do you think our desire to belong to a group or a community comes from?
2. When can it be useful to conform in order to belong to a group? When can conformity be harmful?
3. Why do you think people do nothing even when they know something happening around them is wrong?
4. How can Eve Shalen's story help you answer these questions?
5. How can the video "The Bystander Effect" help you answer these questions?