COURAGEOUS25

STAND UP TO UNSAFE WORK

Discussion Questions

This resource is designed to help teachers facilitate thoughtful, real-world discussions about the themes in Courageous 2025. Unsafe work doesn't just affect workers at a job site - it ripples outward into families, schools, and communities. These questions will help students understand their rights, recognize warning signs, and feel empowered to look out for themselves and each other.

1. Why does workplace safety matter to everyone, even if your job doesn't seem dangerous?

- Workplace safety is universal - every job has risks, including emotional or psychological harm.
- Young and new workers are statistically among the most likely to be injured or killed.
- Unsafe work never stays at work. Injuries and stress follow people home and impact families.
- Learning about safety early prepares you to recognize risks before something happens.

2. How does a workplace injury or death ripple outward beyond the person who was hurt?

- Injuries affect families financially, emotionally, and psychologically.
- A single incident can impact friends, teammates, co-workers, and entire communities.
- Think about Day Davis: his story changed the lives of his sister, his family, and hundreds of people who knew him.
- Even "close calls" can have a traumatic impact on workers.

3. What are some bad employer red flags mentioned in the video? Why do young workers often miss them?

"Bad Boss" examples:

- Safety isn't mentioned at orientation.
- No real training - "figure it out" or "just watch someone else."
- Pressure to hurry or cut corners.
- A boss who acts annoyed when you ask questions.
- People doing unsafe tasks without PPE.
- Intimidation disguised as "toughness."
- Threats of job loss for speaking up.

Why young workers often miss the red flags:

- They don't want to seem "difficult."
- They want to impress their boss.
- They assume this is "just how work is."
- They don't know what's normal or legal.

4. What does a good employer look like? What signs tell you you're in a healthy workplace?

- Real orientation and training before you start the job.
- Supervisors check in and encourage questions.
- They make it clear you should stop if something feels unsafe.
- They fix problems when you report them.
- They care about people more than productivity.
- You feel respected - not intimidated.

5. What is the right to refuse unsafe work? How do you exercise this right?

- The right to refuse unsafe work is protected by law.
- You cannot be punished for refusing unsafe work.
- You should first report the hazard to a supervisor.
- The employer must investigate immediately.
- If you still believe the work is unsafe, you can continue to refuse and contact the Ministry of Labour.
- This applies to physical hazards and situations where you weren't trained to do the task.

6. What is a workplace reprisal and why is it illegal?

- A reprisal is punishment for raising safety concerns or refusing unsafe work.
- Examples: firing, demotion, intimidation, cutting hours, blaming or shaming the worker.
- Reprisals are illegal because they silence people who need to speak up.
- Safety requires trust - if workers are afraid to talk, hazards stay hidden.

7. What are the different forms of workplace harassment and bullying?

Harassment and bullying can happen in any workplace, even those that don't seem "dangerous." It's important to recognize the signs so you can protect yourself and others.

- **Verbal Harassment** - Insults, slurs, offensive jokes, yelling, name-calling, or mocking someone's race, gender, sexual orientation, appearance, disability, or background.
- **Physical Harassment** - Any unwanted physical contact—touching, grabbing, blocking someone's path, throwing objects, threatening gestures, or actual physical assault.
- **Emotional Harassment** - Behaviours meant to intimidate, manipulate, or isolate someone. Examples include constant criticism, spreading rumours, silent treatment, sabotaging someone's work, or creating a hostile environment.
- **Sexual Harassment** - Unwelcome sexual comments, sexual jokes, staring, touching, requests for sexual favours, or sharing sexual images or content at work. This includes behaviour from co-workers, customers, or supervisors.
- **Discrimination** - Treating someone unfairly or targeting them because of protected characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, disability, or age. This includes comments, threats, scheduling decisions, or job assignments based on prejudice.
- **Power-Based Harassment** - When someone in authority uses their position to intimidate or control workers - such as threatening shifts, giving unfair workloads, or punishing people for speaking up.

8. **If you or a co-worker are being harassed or bullied at work, what should you do?**
    - **Document What Happened** - Write down dates, times, what was said or done, screenshots if appropriate, and anyone who witnessed it. Documentation makes it easier to prove a pattern.
    - **Report the Behaviour** - Tell a supervisor, manager, HR, union rep, or health and safety representative. Use your workplace's reporting process if one exists. You have the right to be taken seriously.
    - **Seek Support** - Talk to someone you trust - a friend, co-worker, union rep, counsellor, or mental health professional. You don't have to handle it alone.
    - **Know Your Rights** - Harassment and bullying violate workplace health and safety laws. Every worker has the right to a safe environment, free from intimidation or discrimination.
    - **Escalate if Necessary** - If your workplace doesn't address the issue, you can go to the Ministry of Labour, a human rights commission, or higher management. You are legally protected from reprisal.
    - **Consider Legal Advic**e - If the behaviour continues, or you face retaliation for reporting it, you may want to speak with an employment lawyer to understand your options.

Take the Pledge With Your Students!

Go to: mysafework.com/pledge

Make a commitment to oppose unsafe work.