



DIGGING DEEP:

Understanding the Root Causes of Violence

With any challenge an individual or community faces, there is always more to the problem than what can be seen on the surface.

The Root Cause Analysis Approach is a tool used to understand the underlying cause of a specific problem in order to identify the best possible solution. Root Causes Analyses allow us to look upstream to the deeper issues that lead to certain outcomes or experiences, rather than focusing only on the causes that may be more apparent. If we don't look upstream at the deeper systems, cultures, beliefs, and institutions that uphold inequities and injustices, we will continue to create solutions that target only half of the real issue.

For example, we may think we could reduce cyberbullying of LGBTQ+ youth only by implementing social media campaigns in schools towards bullying, when the deeper issue is addressing a culture that focuses on "othering" individuals based on their sexual and/or gender identity.

To help us create meaningful approaches to violence prevention, we must first identify and target the deeper, systemic issues that contribute to high incidents of violence, stigma towards asking for health, social isolation, and more.

The **Root Causes of Violence Tree Activity** can be used to label the root causes (**tree roots**) that lead to the contributing factors (**tree trunk**) that lead to a specific experience or outcome (**tree branches**).

Ex: Gender Based Violence

Tree Branches: Domestic Violence, Stalking, Sexual Harrassment

Tree Trunk: Poverty, Isolation, Lack of Education

Tree Roots: Sexism, Gender Inequality, Power Inequity

Links: [Tree Activity Background](#) | [Tree Activity Sample & Blank Copy](#)

Suggested Further Reading

[A PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH TO THE VIOLENCE EPIDEMIC IN THE UNITED STATES - COHEN & SWIFT](#)

[CONNECTING THE DOTS AN OVERVIEW OF THE LINKS AMONG MULTIPLE FORMS OF VIOLENCE - CDC](#)

[HOW SOCIAL FACTORS SHAPE HEALTH VIOLENCE, SOCIAL DISADVANTAGE AND HEALTH - RWJ FOUNDATION](#)

[SOCIAL AND STRUCTURAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH AND YOUTH VIOLENCE SHIFTING THE PARADIGM OF YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION - APHA](#)

[VIOLENCE AND HEALTH EQUITY - PREVENTION INSTITUTE](#)