

Victim's voices in schools

In 2017, AfVT launched a program entitled "And if we listened to the victims". The aim is to intervene in schools and invite victims to share their experiences. In 2019, we met 635 students, in 26 different classes in Paris, Nice, Grenoble and Toulouse and organized 13 meetings with victims.

Two teachers, Delphine and Chantal, are conducting the project for AfVT and are sharing their experience with you.

I. How the project was born?

In 2016, our association, AfVT, realized intervention with victims in prison. In this way, Chantal, a French teacher, member of the association and conductor of the project, decided to create another project included the testimony of victim but in other place: in school.

Chantal said more about the origin. *"I wrote this project because one the one hand I am teacher and I know that some students had a lot of disturbing and dangerous thought about terrorism, terrorist and attack. One the other hand I am particularly sensitive to this cause because my daughter was hurt in terrorist attack at the Caire in 2009. That's why I had the desire to create this project"*.

Chantal submit this project to minister of education in order to obtain her affectation at complete time to this activity and obtain it.

II. Before intervention: which organization

A. With the school welcoming the project

For Chantal the most important is to work with teachers manifesting a real desire to treating the subject of terrorism and its consequences, not also because they are afraid of it.

Chantal and Delphine meet the teachers, talk with them, about the class, school thematic studying by the class at the moment to find a link with their intervention and order to select the perfect victim to intervention.

How victims are selected by Chantal and Delphine? The victims are always two in intervention. These victims come from different attacks and are linked to the subject of the intervention. In add, Chantal and Delphine don't choose hangry victim, too vulnerable or who will be against right wing state.

B. With children

After that, it's time to prepare pupils at the intervention.

Before the intervention of victims, Chantal and Delphine, present the personality of victims, and the attentat from they suffered.

During this preparation time, Chantal and delphine, let children ask all their questions and none question is forbidden. It's time to push aside the voyeurism question. *"We explain them that none question is taboo but the victims have the freedom to don't answer. And said them that questions about injuries aren't necessary and can hurt the testifying"*.

Delphine added *"the finality is to familiarize them with victims, without talk about their story. We present just facts with an historian neutrality. By a fact presentation and a presentation of their personality we want that pupils be excited to meet them and the scare to meet them disappear.*

C. With victims

Just after to meet the pupils, it's time to prepare victims testifying. The victims choose by Chantal and Delphine, exchange together. Chantal and Delphine explain to victims, what kind of class is chosen, how the student are, and what is the thematic of the exchange.

III. During the intervention

The intervention of the victims is coming.

After a brief speech about the subject and the link between victims and the subject of the intervention, it's the time of victims' speech.

After this, pupils can react to the testify. Teachers can also interact with victims.

But at the end of reaction time, it's not the end, Delphine and Chantal, come back few times later in order to debrief this meeting. Often, this debrief takes form of writing experience.

IV. How do pupils react to an intervention?

If before the intervention, pupils are scared, with the intervention, they understand it's easy to talk with victim and understand better the attack and consequences on victims.

Often, the pupils expressed their gratitude to victims for coming to see them in their school.

After 5 years, many reactions have been recorded by Chantal and Delphine.

"For me, the most beautiful react is, Lucas's reactions, a student form south in France, saying with a lot of kindness and sweetness, but with simply words, his gratitude towards victims". **Delphine**

"Me, I remember of a little girl asked to victim a very beautiful question: if you see for the last time this member of the family, what you would tell him ? and this same young girl said another question to a victim : can you tell us the most beautiful moment have you got with your children died." **Chantal**

V. A benefic intervention for victims testifying

These interventions are so benefic for victims.

First, it's manner to diffuse their values to next generation. Actually, they feel that their testimony is kind of prevention against radicalization.

Second, it's a manner to diffuse their memories. But it's also to build a collective memory.

Third, it's essentially a therapy. It's a manner to going to the resilience and change their pain in something beautiful.

VI. Few strong sentences from victims

"The contact with the young people is so important, you are our future"

"Us, victims of terrorism aren't violent weapon but soft weapon"

"we send them back the evil they did to us with our join living"

"I am not totally valid, I lost my innocence but I gained a deep joy : live"

“fight, it’s to continue to be who we are: talk, write”

“Choose his path, build his destiny, it’s on your hands”

“try to have each day 2 minutes of joy . Today on intervention, we had 2 hours”

“awareness of the world and light that’s all we want to you”

If you would like more information, please find article (in French only) from AfVT’s Website:
<https://www.afvt.org/category/actions-educatives/>