

# NEUTRALIZER WORKSHEET

Academic Integrity Committee Activity: Neutralizers are arguments or excuses people create to rationalize their cheating behavior. A helpful strategy to promote academic integrity is to expose the typical excuses and help students take responsibility for their own behaviors. Working in groups of two or three, brainstorm strategies for the AIC to resist the logic of “the neutralizers” and then identify who should implement the idea and when. Review the example for “Denial of moral issue.”

<b>Student Neutralizer</b>	<b>Ideas to Resist Neutralizer</b>	<b>Who Should Implement</b>
Denial of moral issue: “This isn’t really cheating.”	<p>Examples: Cheating behaviors are defined in the student handbook, regularly described in other school media such as the student paper, assemblies, school forums, and by teachers in class</p> <p>Some cheating is equivalent to theft. Is that not a moral issue?</p> <p>Some cheating acts violate trust</p>	<p>The Academic Integrity Committee (AIC) helps create definitions that are published in the student handbook; school administration and AIC disseminate definitions through a variety of media and forums</p> <p>Attempt to revise the handbook before the next printing (May), add definitions to the school website (January), include AIC interview in the school paper (February), include introduction to AI during first-year orientation (June)</p>
Denial of victimization: “No one is hurt.”	<p>Questions to ask:</p> <p>Is anyone hurt by someone cheating to gain advanced class rank, GPA, or scholarship qualification?</p> <p>Is anyone hurt by cheaters not mastering their subject and then becoming certified to work in their field?</p> <p>Is anyone hurt when cheating behaviors expand beyond homework and extend into taxes, relationships, etc.?</p>	

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<b>Student Neutralizer</b>	<b>Ideas to Resist Neutralizer</b>	<b>Who Should Implement</b>
Denial of responsibility: “This was beyond my control.” (Peer pressure, deadlines, too much work, parents demand I earn an A, etc.)	Questions to ask:  Who is ultimately responsible for your behavior choices? To whom are you giving that power?  What other choices contributed to the pressure? What are your priorities?  What other options did you have? (When?)	
Condemning the condemners: “This is a bad teacher.” (Unfair, not relevant, poor instruction, terrible test)	Questions to ask:  Does your finding fault with others really justify your choice to compromise a moral position?  What other options did you have (and when) to help you avoid cheating?	
Higher loyalties: “I needed an A to help me get into college or earn a scholarship,” or “I can’t ignore my friend’s request for help.”	Questions to ask:  Should our ethical standards be put aside for important goals?  Does a real friend help or ask someone to violate an ethical rule?  What are the consequences if you are caught?	
Other		