

# INTEGRITY NEUTRALIZERS

**Directions:** 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 to three, have students brainstorm strategies to resist the logic of “the neutralizer.” For example, some ideas to resist the neutralizer “Denial of moral issue” include:

*Definitions of cheating are published in the student handbook and on the school website; regularly described in other school media, including the student paper, in assemblies, in school forums, and by teachers in class; students recognize how cheating can harm both the school community and the cheater, and know how (and choose) to defend academic integrity in the face of peer pressure.*

After small groups are finished, summarize and discuss your ideas as a class.

Student Neutralizer	Ideas to Resist Neutralizer (for Students and Adults)
Denial of moral issue—“This isn’t really wrong or cheating.”	
Denial of victim—“No one is hurt.”	
Denial of responsibility—“This was beyond my control” (peer pressure, deadlines, too much work, parents demand I earn an A, etc.).	

(continued)

<b>Student Neutralizer</b>	<b>Ideas to Resist Neutralizer</b> (for Students and Adults)
Condemn the condemners— “This is a bad teacher” (unfair, not relevant, poor instruction, terrible test).	
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.”	
Other	