

PERSONAL SAFETY SKILLS FOR CHILDREN WITH
SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND
BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES



PERSONAL SAFETY SKILLS FOR CHILDREN WITH SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES

As there is generally a wide range of intellectual ability among the children who attend such schools the teacher may find it useful to refer to the teaching suggestions offered with regard to the other categories of learning difficulties. It is envisaged that the following lessons would be used by the teacher, therapist or care worker when working with very small groups of children or when working on an individual basis with one child. A child should be free to take time out of any part of a lesson which he finds upsetting and go to a pre-arranged supervised room. This is particularly important when working with children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Sometimes these problems are the result of abuse, physical, emotional or sexual. Also keep in mind that children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties may be at greater risk of being exposed to domestic and marital violence.

It is important that the teacher knows the children well and has established a good trusting relationship with them before introducing the programme. It may be necessary to group the class according to age, gender and compatibility, and then to introduce the programme to each group separately.

It is recommended that lessons are taught early in the week. Children's ability to concentrate is usually better at the beginning of the week. If a child encounters a difficulty with any aspect of the lessons the professionals involved in implementing the programme have a better opportunity to overcome the problem before the weekend.

In general, younger children find it less threatening to use puppets for the role-play exercises. If you

decide not to use puppets let the children dress up so that is clear to everyone that they are playing a part and get the therapist or teacher to do the role-play exercise first. The involvement of all school staff and parents is crucial to the successful implementation of the programme.

Ground Rules

Note

The children should feel comfortable discussing with the teacher a wide variety of topics at a level appropriate to their age and ability. Topics chosen for such discussion should be based on the particular curriculum being followed and could include sport, cinema, T.V., music or travel.

Ensuring appropriate group boundaries and safety is essential before introducing the programme. Before commencing the lessons spend some time establishing the ground rules for the implementation of the programme. Such rules could include giving everyone an opportunity to speak, no interrupting, respect for one another and the adults in charge, confidentiality, support for one another and fair play.

In this introductory session the group rules can be written up on a poster. The group might also like to consider changing the seating arrangements for the duration of the lessons, e.g. children sitting in a circle.

Circle Time


From time to time during the implementation of the programme some teachers may like to do the Circle game with the children. This game reinforces that each child is special.


The children sit in a circle. The children state their names and one positive thing about themselves. The game finishes when every child has had a turn. You could have a different theme each time, e.g. I like/dislike..., I am good at ..., I help...


Note


Circle time is commonly used in schools in Norway to ensure that bullying and other inappropriate behaviour is dealt with.


NAME: _____ AGE: _____

EYE COLOUR: 

HAIR COLOUR: 



LIKES:  _____

DISLIKES:  _____

MY SIGNATURE: _____

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Children complete worksheet no. 4 before Topic 1 is introduced.

TOPIC 1: FEELING SAFE AND UNSAFE

Objectives

To give children the opportunity to discuss times when they felt safe and unsafe.

To help children to anticipate potentially dangerous situations.

To enable children to devise practical ways of dealing with unsafe situations.

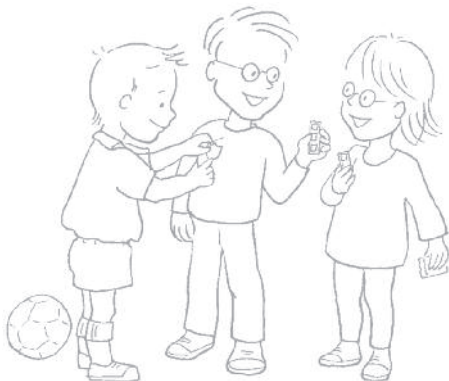
Teacher introduces the topic of safe and unsafe feelings by reminding the children that we all have feelings, e.g. sad, happy, angry, confident, frightened, safe and so forth. Give each child an opportunity to say how he is feeling. Alternatively children work in twos or threes describing times when they felt happy.

Note

Some children may find it difficult to express how they feel. If you encounter this problem use Poster No. 1 to promote discussion. Discuss how the children in the poster are feeling.

Story (use worksheet no. 6)

This is a story about a boy called Eamon. It's a story about a time when Eamon felt safe. Eamon was years old. He had to go to a new school in the city because his Dad had changed jobs. Eamon felt sad leaving his friends at the old school. But the teacher who met him at the new school smiled kindly and showed him to his classroom.



The teacher and the children in his class welcomed him. At break time Amy, the girl beside him, gave him some chocolate. At lunch time one of Eamon's new friends, Neil, showed him his soccer badges. Eamon felt safe in his new class with his new friends.

Did Eamon like his new class? Why?

Why did Eamon feel safe?

When do you feel safe?

How did you feel on your first day in this school?

Teacher might also like to tell the children about her first day as a teacher in the school.

Music

Play some music from the "Safe" selection (see audio tape). Ask the children to say what they thought of the music. How did they feel when they were listening to it?

Think of a time when you felt absolutely safe.

Where were you?

Who were you with?

Why did you feel so safe?

How did your body feel?

Remind the children that we all have the right to be safe. Elicit from them their own ideas about feeling safe. Some children might like to role-play their ideas for the group.

Feeling Unsafe

Children with emotional and behavioural problems are more likely to have experienced conflict and possibly domestic violence. Therefore the school should have a support system in place for children who may want to talk about their experiences before introducing this topic. Some children may experience further distress while others may experience a real sense of relief.

Story (use worksheet no. 5)

This is a story about a time when Jack felt unsafe. Jack can't walk very well, so he has a wheelchair. His mother jokes to him about how fast he is in his wheelchair and how she can hardly keep up with

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him. Jack and his mother love coffee. Usually they have a cup when Jack gets in from school. One day Jack's Mum was about to make the coffee when she realised she had no sugar. She said she'd pop next door to borrow some. Jack's mum had just left when the doorbell rang. Jack got a fright, he didn't know what to do. While he was still thinking, the bell gave another loud ring. Jack whizzed into the living room and peeped out. It was a woman and she had books in her hands. She looked friendly and the books looked colourful and interesting. Jack was tempted to open the door, because he loved reading. Then he remembered the rule, never open the door to strangers. It seemed like an age before the lady left but eventually she turned away and walked back down the path.

About five minutes later Jack's mum came back. He told her what had happened. When his Mum had heard the full story she gave Jack a hug and told him how delighted she was that he'd remembered the safety rule.

What happened when Jack's mum went next door?

Did Jack feel safe or unsafe when the doorbell rang?

Did Jack make a safe choice?

Why was Jack's mum delighted when she came back?

What would you do if you were Jack?

Ask the children if there are places or times when they do not feel safe. Are there any people with whom they do not feel safe? They may want to talk about their unsafe feelings, and the things they fear. Explain that we all have fears, and that they are

nothing to be ashamed of. The best thing to do about fears is to bring them out into the open. Who could help?

Each child writes his name in the centre of a blank sheet of paper and draws a circle around it. He draws further circles and in each one he writes down the name of an adult who could help. Some children may need help identifying the trusted adults in their lives.

Note

If the professionals involved in implementing the programme with the children consider this approach too threatening they may wish to focus on the topic of feeling safe and unsafe in school only. The following is a suggested approach.

Ask the children to describe times when they felt safe in school. Did you ever feel unsafe in school? Remind the children that they have the right to be safe. Reinforce that we can always do something about unsafe feelings.

- What if the PE teacher wanted you to go to the top of the climbing rail in the gym and you were too scared?
- What if another child in the school threatened to beat you up?
- What if you were worried about failing your exam?
- What if you did not want to go swimming with your class because your friends could all swim in the deep end and you were afraid to?

Give the children an opportunity to discuss how they could overcome these unsafe feelings. Emphasise the importance of telling an adult they trust about any unsafe feelings they have.

Music

Play a piece of 'Unsafe' music (see audio tape). Did this music make you feel safe or unsafe? Give the children plenty of opportunities to describe how the music made them feel - scared, frightened, terrified worried. Explain that we all have fears. Stress that it is not their fault if they feel afraid.

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PE/Drama: The Safe Place

Find the place in the room which is safest for you. Make your body as comfortable as possible. Had you a safe place as a small child? Can you remember it? Did you have a den as a small child? Was it under the table where you could play undisturbed, or at the bottom of the garden? Now make a 'den' together as a group, using objects in the room.

When you're ready, play in the den, making yourselves into the 'gang' whose safe place this is. The gang meets together to tell stories of exploits at school and around the neighbourhood.

Get the children to talk about what it was like to be part of the pretend gang.

Alternatively teacher or therapist could use an appropriate relaxation or visualisation exercise such as the following.

Sit in a comfortable position and think about your breathing. Feel the breath as it moves in and out of your nostrils. As you breathe out your body gets more relaxed. As you become relaxed, imagine you are travelling to a place which is safe for you. It may be a place of great beauty, a hillside in the country or by the sea. It may be a room or a space but somewhere you feel safe. Feel the surface under your feet. Use your hands to explore your safe place. What can you smell? Have you anything to eat or drink? What makes you feel so safe there? Just enjoy feeling completely safe. Let the children experience their safe place for a while. When you think they are ready start to prepare them to leave their special place. Now imagine that you are leaving your safe place. See yourself walking away - closing the door if it is a room, or walking out of the forest, or up the footpath from the seashore. Bring the safe feeling with you.

When you are finished open your eyes, talk to the boy or girl beside you about your safe place.

Let us decide on what would be the safe choice in the following situations.

- You got off at the wrong bus stop and you did not know how to get home.

- You become separated from your friends in a large shopping centre.
- You and your little sister are walking home from a match when a car pulls up beside you and a woman asks directions.
- While on a school tour you lose sight of your teacher and friends.
- You are walking home from the local shop when a stranger begins to follow you.
- While at home alone the phone rings and a voice you do not recognise asks to speak to your mother/father.

Elicit as many responses as possible and discuss viable solutions. The purpose of the lesson is to teach children to be cautious rather than to raise their anxieties. Help them to generate safe and sensible solutions for the different situations. Discuss and include any rules they may have been taught at home.

Role-play: Children create short dramas around the situations outlined above.

Follow-up activities

- Feeling sculpture: Choose a partner. One partner whispers a feeling word like angry, sad, scared or excited to the other who makes a sculpture of the feeling. They then see whether the other children can guess what the feeling is.
- Draw a picture of your safe place and write the feeling words that go with it underneath.



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- Draw feeling faces to represent positive and negative emotions.
- Write up a list of real fears and imaginary fears. Use Poster 1 as a visual aid.
- Listen to 'Safe' and 'Unsafe' music on the tape.
- Use relevant worksheets for this section.

Homework (If applicable): Talk to Mum, Dad or another adult about feeling safe and unsafe.

TOPIC 2: BULLYING

Objectives

To clarify for the children who strangers are.

To give children safety strategies for dealing appropriately with strangers.

To help children to feel less fear and anxiety about strangers.

Friendship

Use the following poem to introduce the topic.

Puppy Friend

When I talk he always listens
No matter what I say.
And if I want to have some fun
Puppy will always play.

And if I'm sitting quietly
When I like to be alone,
Puppy stays beside me
And chews a juicy bone.

Sometimes when I'm in trouble
And no one will understand,
Puppy nuzzles up beside me
And gently licks my hand.

No matter when he sees me
At day's start or day's end,
Puppy's bark is full of laughter
Telling me he is my friend.

Do you have a pet? Describe him.

Why is puppy a good friend?

Ask the children for their own ideas on how to be a good friend.

Who are your friends? Why are they your friends?

Friends have fun together, they look out for one another. Teacher emphasises how friends enrich our lives.

Why are friends important? How can you make friends? Discuss the importance of posture, manner and facial expressions.

How can you keep friends? By giving compliments, listening, helping out, being generous, concerned and so forth.

In what ways are you a good friend?

How do you know when someone is your friend?

Children discuss in pairs the qualities they look for in a friend.

What is Bullying?

Poem

This is a poem about a boy who was bullied.

My name is Paul,
I'm not so tall,
In fact I'm quite small.

Bullies took away my ball,
Caused me to fall,
Laughed at it all.

At first I felt mad,
I was hurting real bad,
I was a lonely lad.

Then I went to my dad,
I told him I was sad,
And now I feel so glad.

My name is Paul,
I look quite small,
But inside I feel tall.

Use the poem to generate discussion on what bullying is.

Were you ever in a situation like Paul where someone tried to take something belonging to you? At the end of the poem Paul feels 'tall' inside, why? Were you ever excluded from a group?

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Get the children to explore what they think bullying is. Were you ever physically bullied? Were you ever emotionally bullied? Which hurt the most? Give the children an opportunity to think about the kind of things you can be bullied over. Examples might include - being small, brainy, no good at football, having a disability, having a different accent or being big. Remind the children that it's not their fault if they were bullied. However, some children behave in ways that may make them more vulnerable to being bullied. Ask them why they think this might happen. Follow on by exploring how body language, eye contact, and how we respond to questions, can sometimes provoke bullying.

How would you describe the behaviour of bullies?
Selfish, bossy, nasty, cowardly, hurtful.

Victims often feel afraid and lonely - they feel unsafe. Bullies often feel left out on their own so they bully to get attention. Sometimes we go along with what the bully is doing because we are afraid he will turn on us next. Help the children explore alternatives to going along with the bullying. In the last lesson we learned that we have the right to be safe. Others have the same right. Reinforce that bullying is wrong. The rule is - Never make anyone else feel unsafe by bullying them.

Safety Rules

What can you do if you're bullied? Encourage the children to see that the best thing to do about bullying is to try to resist it and to tell. Introduce them to the Stay Safe rules - Say No, Get Away and Tell.

1. Say No.

How do you speak when you say 'No'? How do you hold your body? Acknowledge that it is hard to say 'No' to a bully especially if the bully is bigger and stronger than you are or if you are being bullied by a gang. In these situations they should get away as quickly as possible and always tell.

Ignoring the bully or turning away and choosing to become busy at something else is another option they have.

2. Get Away.

What else can we do if we are bullied? Get the children to see that if at all possible they can try to get away from the bully.

What if you were bullied in the school yard, where could you go to get away from the bully? What if you were bullied on the school bus, where could you go? What if you were bullied in the playground near your home? What if you were bullied in the swimming pool?

3. Tell.

Finally, the third rule about bullying is to tell. Never keep a secret about bullying, always tell. It is not telling tales, it is telling to keep safe. So who would you tell? When? Where? How? What if the person you tell does not listen? Try again or tell someone else. Keep telling until someone listens and helps.



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Remember the poem about Paul. What do you think would have happened if Paul had not told his Dad about the bullying? Explain that the bullying would most likely have continued until Paul finally had the courage to tell.

Highlight the benefits of getting the problem off your shoulders rather than suffering in silence. Remind the children that they do not have to tell everyone if they are bullied. Choose one adult you trust and tell that person what happened to you in private.

Children devise short dramas about bullying, using their safety strategies. Give each child an opportunity to act out the part of the bully and the victim using puppets.

Discuss how well the safety rules did or did not work. 'Victim' and 'bully' talk about how they felt. The other children say how they felt. Were their sympathies with the bully or the victim?

Discuss the dilemmas which bullying may bring up for children including:

- The fear of saying 'No' to a bully.
- Victim feeling it's his fault.
- Bully feeling isolated.
- Other children feeling powerless.
- Difficulty in telling about bullying because it's ratting.
- Adults not listening to children.
- Telling and being ignored.
- Telling and nothing happens.

A further topic which is important to explore is that of adults bullying children. This needs to be sensitively handled and explored in some depth with children who have been victimised by adults. Fairy tales like Cinderella, Hansel & Gretel, or excerpts from Dickens' 'Oliver Twist' may be useful. The rule is - If an adult makes you feel unsafe you can ask another adult to help you.

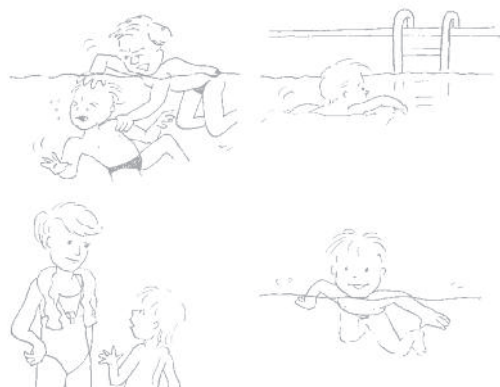
In the final discussion, reinforce respect for self and others and encourage the children to make their own promises about avoiding bullying.

Acknowledge that we can all be tempted to bully others and that bullies are ordinary children, but bullying is always wrong. We can't help how we feel but we can choose what we do about a feeling. For example, you can feel angry with someone and you may feel like hitting them. However, you don't have to hit them, you have a choice. Reinforce that it takes courage to tell about bullying. If you are bullied say 'No' if you can and always tell.

Follow-up activities

- Write out the qualities you look for in a friend.
- Each child writes out his list of promises about avoiding bullying.
- Role-play coping successfully with a bully.
- See Poster 2 and relevant worksheets for this section.

Homework (if applicable): Talk to Mum, Dad or another adult about your coping strategies for dealing with bullying.



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TOPIC 3: TOUCHES

Objectives

To encourage children to value and enjoy normal affection.

To teach children how to deal with an inappropriate touch.

To teach the rule - never keep secrets about touching.

Our Five Senses

Teacher revises 'our five senses' with the children.

Seeing

To help the children appreciate their sense of sight they can play an observation game in pairs. Child A observes what B is wearing, the way he's standing, etc. Then while A closes his eyes, B makes one change in his appearance. A then tries to guess what it is.

Hearing

To reinforce the children's sense of hearing they could choose various musical pieces which they like. The teacher may also like to include some pieces from the Irish Times Music in the Classroom series. See audio tape for various sound effects. The children have to guess what each sound is.

Smelling

Cookery class can give children direct experience of this sense. Growing flowers which have a strong scent like Hyacinths and Freesias in Nature class can also help children to appreciate this sense. Children will give you lots of examples of nasty smells. Such examples can give the teacher an opportunity to remind the children about personal hygiene.

Tasting

Lunch time, parties and cookery class can be a useful way of illustrating how we experience this sense.

Touching

Make up a treasure bag to stimulate the children's sense of touch. Include various objects with a variety of textures such as leather, textiles, paper and so forth. Art work with clay is another very effective way of helping children to appreciate their sense of touch.

Body Space - Personal Boundaries.

Body awareness can be developed in PE through movement work. Play can be based around activities such as rolling, stretching, jumping, skipping etc. Such play should reinforce the children's autonomy over their own bodies and develop general body awareness.

"Against" movements, as outlined below, can be introduced gradually to develop assertiveness skills. However, as some children may have been victims of child abuse, it is recommended that therapists, teachers and carers discuss the suitability of exercises 1, 2 and 3 below before doing the movements with the children.

- 1 **Back-to-Back:** The children sit back-to-back with their knees bent. Place your feet on the ground with a firm wide base in front and hands on the ground behind. Then push backwards against each other to see how strong your partner is. This can be a way of testing strength which is not a question of winning.



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- 2 Engine: Partners sit back-to-back. One of you is the engine which pushes the other around the room.
- 3 Partners talk back-to-back about a chosen topic.
- 4 Drama: 'You Started It.'
You are on your way to school and you start an argument.
A) "You think you're a big fellow."
B) "What are you on about?"
Continue the drama:
i) Using mime only
ii) Arguing in whispers
iii) Standing back-to-back.

Games such as these can also indicate to the teacher children who may have difficulty asserting their right to their own body space.

Touches We Like and Dislike

Using Poster 3 to discuss with the children touches they like and dislike.

Assert their right to bodily integrity and personal boundaries. To help the children assert these rights, puppet play can be introduced. If you do not have a selection of hand puppets the children could make their own. They will need a paper bag each, and items for decorating the bag. The children can then make up stories about asserting their right to body space.

- What if a bully keeps pushing you around?
- What if aunt/uncle tickles you too hard?
- What if Mum/Dad still insists on holding your hand going down the street?
- What if brother/sister keeps pinching you?

Use puppets to act out the above situations.

Explain the difference between a touch they do not like and being examined by a nurse, doctor or helper. Explain that sometimes these adults have to touch us in a way we do not like to keep us healthy and clean.

The teacher may wish to remind the children that they should not invade another person's body space.

Unsafe Touches

Ask the children for examples of touches that might make them feel unsafe. Use illustrations from Stay Safe worksheets on bullying as a visual aid if necessary.

- What if someone deliberately kicked you while you were playing in the school yard?
- What if Paul's older brother hits him when Mum and Dad are not there?
- What if the boy beside you in class keeps pinching you on the arm when the teacher is not looking, what could you do?

Inappropriate Touching

Note

Teachers, therapists or care workers may wish to do the section on inappropriate touching on a one-to-one basis rather than in a classroom setting. With regard to inappropriate touching use as neutral an approach as possible in order to protect children who have already been abused. Preparatory work should be completed with the children so that they have a clear understanding of Relationships and Sexuality Education. The material covered should take cognisance of the children's age and experience.

Reinforce that, unless children are ill or need help with bathing, people do not generally touch their private parts.

- What if your private parts are sore and the doctor needs to examine you, will he ask you to keep the examination a secret? Of course not.
- What if you need help from Dad, Mum or your carer with bathing, will they ask you to keep it a secret? Of course not.

No one should ever ask you to keep a touch a secret. Remember it is never your fault and you have the right to feel safe. The rule is - We never keep secrets about touching, and this rule applies everywhere, at home, in school, in the swimming pool, on the bus.

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Story

This is a story about a girl who was asked to keep a touch a secret. Let us see how she solved the problem.

Kate is years old. She lives in the country with her Mum and Dad and younger brother Michael. Their nearest neighbours are about half a mile away but Kate is rarely lonely. There is always something happening on the farm and Michael is her best friend. They both love horses and cannot wait to grow up and get a real job working with them. Tuesday is their favourite day as they go to horse riding lessons straight after school.

It was when a new instructor came to the school that Kate's problem started. His name was Keith. He was extra friendly towards Kate and promised her additional help with her jumping. Kate was thrilled with how she improved once Keith started helping her. Then one afternoon as Kate was brushing down her horse, Keith came into the stable. He started telling her how good she was with horses and how special she was to him. He came really close to her and kissed her on the lips and then tried to touch her private parts. Kate did not know what to do. She felt frightened and embarrassed. Keith said it would be their little secret. Kate just dropped the brush and ran.

For the next few Tuesdays Kate pretended that she was not well and Michael went to lessons on his own. Kate really missed the lessons and wondered if her horse, Sandy, would miss her too. She was sad and could not eat very much. Finally, Michael asked her what was wrong. At first Kate did not want to tell but eventually Michael persuaded her. When Michael heard Kate's story he immediately gave her a big hug and said, "We will tell Mum and Dad straight away and they will sort it out." That is exactly what happened. Michael and Kate told Mum and Dad and they got the owner of the horse riding school to sort the matter out. Kate and Michael are back enjoying their lessons again. They remember the rule - never keep secrets about touching.

Discuss story. Was it Katie's fault?

- What if someone touches you on your private parts and you feel unsafe?
- What if an older boy wants to touch your private parts and warns you not to tell anyone?
- What if a stranger offers you sweets if you touch his private parts?
- What if a woman you know and like wants to touch your private parts but warns you to keep it a secret?

The rules you can follow are:

- Say 'No'
- Get Away.
- Tell an adult.
- Keep telling until someone listens and helps.



Ask the children what they think of these rules. It is important not to make them feel they have failed if they can't be assertive and say 'No', because in reality children are small, and their abusers, large and powerful. The teacher can encourage the children to say 'No' in their heads however. This will reinforce the message that it's not their fault. Remember it's your body; no one has the right to touch you in a way that makes you feel unsafe or that worries you. Emphasise that it may be very difficult to say 'No' because of threats and bribes, and that sometimes it might even be dangerous to do so. Ask the class why it is important to tell an adult rather than another child.

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It may not be possible for you to get away, but you can always tell Mum, Dad or any adult you trust, even if you have promised to keep it a secret. In the story about Katie it was a person she did not know very well who made her feel confused. This could also happen with someone you know very well, but you can still use the same rules.

How many of you think that you might get into trouble for saying 'No' to an adult? There are times when it is right and good to say 'No' to an adult. Ask the children to give you a list of situations where it is appropriate to say 'No' to an adult. Include circumstances where an adult asks a child to do something which is dangerous, wrong or which Mum and Dad have forbidden.

Differentiate between saying 'No' to something that is dangerous, wrong or inappropriate and saying 'No' to going to bed, doing homework or household chores. Emphasise the importance of saying 'No' to keep safe.

Follow-up activities

- Make a list or draw some of the touches you like and do not like.
- Children use puppets to practice saying 'No' to an inappropriate touch.
- Discussion on other situations where it may be difficult to say 'No'. What if someone was forcing you to drink alcohol, to take drugs, to bully someone else or to steal? Discuss the dilemmas involved and try to come up with suitable solutions.
- Role-play - Ensure that each child is given plenty of opportunities to practice rejecting an inappropriate touch and telling about it.
- See Poster 3 and relevant worksheets for this section.

Homework (If applicable): Talk to Mum, Dad or another adult about your rules about touching.



TOPIC 4: TELLING SECRETS

Objectives

To help children to recognise the difference between a good secret and a bad secret.

To help children to identify the adults they could tell if they had a bad secret.

Good and Bad Secrets (worksheet no. 20)

The teacher reinforces the difference between good and bad secrets for the children.

Teacher has a surprise wrapped up in a parcel. The children have to guess what's in the parcel. Let the children decide if this is a good or bad secret. Emphasise that surprises are good secrets.

Did you ever have a surprise birthday party or Halloween party or a surprise picnic? All these are good secrets, or safe secrets. Explain that a good secret is something you feel good about, and that good secrets are not secrets for ever. Think of words to describe good secrets, e.g. fun, surprising, happy, safe, exciting. Now think of words to describe bad secrets, e.g. bad, nasty, dangerous, frightening, sad, worrying.

Examples of good secrets could include surprise presents, surprise party, surprise trip to somewhere special and so forth. Examples of bad secrets could include vandalism, being hurt, bullying, stealing, being forced to do something which is wrong, and being asked to keep a touch a secret.

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Story

Liam is years old. He has just changed schools and is now going to a special school. At first he liked his school a lot. But now some of the boys on his street are calling him thick and stupid. Liam has started to hate himself. He feels sad. Sometimes the boys hit him as well as calling him names. They warn him if he tells he will be in big trouble. This makes him feel very unsafe. A few weeks ago the teacher started to do the Stay Safe programme with the children. Now Liam has learned that he can say 'No' to the bullies.

Liam shouted 'No' at the bullies and ran away. Next day he told his teacher in private. His teacher helped him. Now Liam is happy again. He feels safe and there is no more name calling or hitting.

What kind of secret did Liam have? Safe or unsafe?

Who did he tell?

What happened after he told?

What if another girl or boy in school keeps hitting you and calling you names, and warns you not to tell? Is this a good or a bad secret? Is it a safe or an unsafe secret?

Say whether each of the following secrets are good or bad.

- Mum bought a present for Granny's birthday. She asked the children to keep it a secret.
- Ciaran has a stammer. Two of the other children on the street are always teasing him about it.
- An older boy touched Jason's private parts. He gave him sweets and told him that he had to keep it a secret.
- A woman Siobhan knows and likes, touched her private parts and warned her to keep it a secret.
- Bernadette won the sports person of the year award in the school but the teacher told the other children to keep it a secret until prize-giving night.

But what can you always do with a bad secret? Tell and keep telling until someone listens and helps. Teacher emphasises that there is a time and place to

tell, and the importance of telling an adult in private.

Telling

Who to tell

Helping some children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties to identify trusted adults in their lives is a task which requires great sensitivity. Close liaison with therapists, carers and parents, where possible, is essential. Encourage each child to name at least one adult they could turn to for help.

When to tell (worksheet no. 24)

Clarifying with the children when they would tell is also important. What if I am just about to teach a new maths lesson to the class, would that be a good time to tell? What if Mum is trying to get the grass cut before it starts raining, would that be a good time to tell? What if Dad is just about to go off to a football match with his friend, would that be a good time to tell? The teacher highlights for the children the benefits of telling in private. Make sure the children are clear about who they would tell, when they would tell, where they would tell and how they would tell. What words would they use?



PERSONAL SAFETY SKILLS FOR CHILDREN WITH SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES

What if the adult doesn't listen

The children also need to look at what they would do if the adult they chose just would not listen. One story which illustrates this is *Not Now, Bernard* by David McKee, which tells the story of a small boy called Bernard who cannot attract the attention of his parents who are busy with household tasks. Even when Bernard goes into the garden and is eaten by a monster and the monster returns and takes Bernard's place, his parents still ignore the Monster/Bernard. The book ends with the Monster in bed, saying, 'But I'm a monster.' 'Not now, Bernard', said Bernard's mother. Ask the children to think of a solution to Bernard's problem.

Remember the rule is - Keep telling until someone listens and helps.

We are getting more and more independent and confident in ourselves, but we can't solve all our problems on our own. It is okay to ask for help if you have a problem. Which of these situations do you think would be important to tell about?

- Since you started 6th class you are being called 'fat' all the time by the other pupils in your class.
- A stranger offered you a lift home and became aggressive when you refused.
- A woman you know asked you to keep a touch a secret. You said 'No' and she threatened you.
- Another pupil accidentally bumped into you when you were going into your classroom.
- You were in a public toilet and the person next to you tried to touch your private parts.
- Your mother's friend asked you to do something wrong and you did because you were scared to say no.
- Your best friend wants you to steal money for him.

Difficulties with telling

Ask the children why it might be difficult for them to tell. Answers should include shame, guilt, embarrassment, threats, bribes, fear of being blamed, fear of not being believed, fear of telling if you had broken a rule yourself. It is important that children

understand that if they have a problem it is never too late to tell, and that it is not their fault if they have not told yet.

Using drama/puppetry children devise various scenarios around the following:

- Some adults don't listen.
- Threats/Bribes.
- You'll get into trouble or you won't be believed because you've 'a bad name'.
- Dramatise two scenarios -
 - (i) victim of bullying did not tell,
 - (ii) victim told.
- It's telling tales/betrayal: Teacher-directed discussion on, 'Is it snitching or is it okay to tell?'

Children role-play telling an adult they trust about a bad secret. The rule is - Keep telling until someone helps.

Follow-up activities

- **Drama/Visualisation:** Teacher plays a piece of calm instrumental music (see audio tape). Get the children to close their eyes. Imagine you've a problem and you need help. You tell your special adult. Now you feel safe again. Just imagine yourself there with your special adult who helps you.
- Draw, paint or make a 3D model of a special adult in your life.
- Design a poster about asking for help.
- Children draw up a list of good and bad secrets with teachers help.
- Children role-play telling an adult they trust about an inappropriate touch.
- Get the children to think about a good and a bad secret. Then have a 'listening time'. The teacher is doing the listening.
- See Poster 4 and relevant worksheets for this section.

Homework (If applicable): Talk to Mum, Dad or another adult about telling.

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TOPIC 5: STRANGERS

Objectives

To clarify for the children who strangers are.

To give children safety strategies for dealing appropriately with strangers.

To help children to feel less fear and anxiety about strangers.

Note

Before introducing this topic the school should review its practice concerning visitors to the school.

Teacher introduces this topic in the context of the children being out and about with their friends or occasionally on their own. How can you judge whether a person you've never met before is dangerous or not? You can't, so you need safety rules.

Story (worksheet no. 27)

If teacher considers this story to be inappropriate for the age group she is working please see Ciara's story, page 15, Lessons for Children with a Visual Impairment.

Paul and Steve were in town one Saturday. They had coffee in Burger King and then went to look at some C.D's. The latest release had just been delivered. Next thing this man came up to them. He was about 25 years old and was very tall and quite broad. He had jeans on, and a brilliant leather jacket, as well as an engraved leather belt with a big silver buckle. He really looked the business. He had seen Paul and Steve gazing longingly at the C.D. He said, "It's a good C.D., isn't it?", nodding towards the record. Paul and Steve agreed that it was. "Why don't you buy it, then?", asked the man. Paul said, "We'd like to, only".... and Steve said, "We don't have any money except our bus fares home." "That's no problem", said the man, "Sure I'll get it for you."

Now Paul and Steve knew very well that they shouldn't take presents from strangers, but this was different; this was the best C.D. in the world. And your man looked like he had plenty of money. Paul said, "Oh, no, we couldn't expect you to...." in that

tone of voice we all use when we really mean, "Oh yes please." "Ah go on", said the man, "It's no problem to me." "Well, if you're sure", they said, looking at each other in delight.

So he bought a C.D. for each of them. They were delighted and they thanked him over and over. "It's no problem", he said, and they chatted a bit more about the band. Then the man said "Oh, I've just remembered, I have a party to go to now, would you like to come."

Paul and Steve started feeling unsafe at this stage. Your man sounded very serious when he said this, as though it was very important to him that they came with him. They said, "No, thanks", in the tone of voice that meant it. He started getting annoyed. "Look, I'm after buying you a C.D, the least you can do is come to this party with me."

Paul and Steve were very scared now, but they said again, "No, we won't go with you." So the man said, "Well, then, you can just give me the C.D's back, I'm not buying presents for people who are so ungrateful they will not even go to a party with me."

The lads looked at each other, and realised that it might be better if they did give the C.D's back. So they threw the bag at the man, and ran out of the shop and hid themselves in the Saturday crowds. They felt very sad about the loss of the C.D's, but felt very relieved at getting away from the man.

What would you do if you were Paul and Steve?



PERSONAL SAFETY SKILLS FOR CHILDREN WITH SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES



Safety Rules

Discuss the rules the children have been given about going places, e.g. to the shops, library or swimming pool. What could you do if a stranger made you feel unsafe when you were out and about? You could say 'No', get away and tell someone.

Each child writes up their own safety rules with teachers help. The children then devise short dramas using these rules. Teacher encourages the children to use various examples of strangers, e.g. an older child, couple, woman, man, teenage boy or girl.

Ask the children to give examples of when they made safe choices. Now think about what would be the safe choice if

- You were offered a lift from someone you do not know.
- You were on the wrong train or bus.
- Your uncle takes you to a football match/concert and you get separated from him.
- An older boy that you do not know says he will give you a video game if you will go home with him.

Telephones: If appropriate teach children how to use public telephones, coin and card operated, as a further safety measure.

Reinforce

- Never go anywhere with a stranger.
- Never take anything from a stranger.

Does this mean that strangers are bad? No, it just means you do not know them. You do not go with, or take anything from someone you do not know. This

rule applies when you are on your own or with your friends.

What if its someone you know who offers you something or asks you to go somewhere with them?

Get the children to name some adults they know.

- What if your next door neighbour asked you to come in for a drink of coke?
- What if an older girl asked if you would like to see her new puppy?
- What if your friend's father asked if you would like to go swimming with him?
- What if a woman from the stables down the road asked if you would like to see the ponies?
- What if a man on your road asked you into his house to watch a football video?

In all the above dilemmas explain to the children that the safe choice is to check with Dad, Mum or the adults in charge first.

Children role-play their response.

Follow-up activities

- Children (with help if necessary) make a class poster of 'Strangers/People we know', using photographs and pictures.
- Write out the rules. Never take anything from a stranger. Never go anywhere with a stranger.
- Children use puppets or dolls to practice saying 'No' to a stranger who offers them something.
- Children role-play saying 'No' to a stranger who wants them to go somewhere with him/her.
- Use the film Oliver to explore the topic of strangers further. Oliver met Dodger - he was a stranger. So was Fagin. Fagin offered Oliver a place to stay when he arrived in London on his own with no money. In return Oliver had to steal for him. What would you have done if you were Oliver?
- See Poster 5 and relevant worksheets for this section.

Homework (If applicable): Talk to Mum, Dad, or another adult about your stranger safety rules.