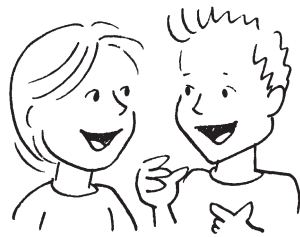


PERSONAL SAFETY SKILLS FOR CHILDREN WITH  
**GENERAL**  
LEARNING DIFFICULTIES





# PERSONAL SAFETY SKILLS FOR CHILDREN WITH GENERAL LEARNING DIFFICULTIES


A multi-disciplinary approach to teaching personal safety skills to children with general learning difficulties is essential and parental involvement is crucial to its success.


When teaching the programme to children with general learning difficulties it is important to use less complex and more direct language, to break down the key concepts covered in the programme into single units, to include supplementary teaching methods and ideas on each unit, and to give additional opportunities to role-play the use of personal safety skills.



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



NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ AGE: \_\_\_\_\_

EYE COLOUR:  

HAIR COLOUR: 



LIKES:  

DISLIKES:  

MY SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

## 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.

### Feeling Safe

Introduce the topic of safe and unsafe feelings by reminding the children that we all have feelings. Give each child an opportunity to say how he's feeling today or alternatively, get the children to

work in twos or threes describing times when they felt happy. Explain to the children that over the next few weeks they will be learning about safe and unsafe feelings.

Teacher uses a variety of illustrations to help the children understand the meaning of the word safe

- Sarah cycling her bicycle, Patch in his kennel. (Stay Safe Senior Infant's lesson 1)
- Children with their friends (Stay Safe 1st and 2nd class, lesson 4).

Use examples from everyday home and school situations to help the children recognise when they feel safe. Pictures, photographs, illustrations of children being safe crossing the road, on a school tour, playing with friends, working in the classroom, watching television with Mum and Dad may also help to illustrate the meaning of the word safe.



### 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?

### Follow-up activities

- Draw or paint a picture of when you feel safe. Think about the colours you would use for your 'Safe' picture.
- Drama/Mime: Close your eyes and imagine you are Eamon in the story. You're in your new class. Amy is sitting on your left and Liam on your right. You feel safe and happy. Imagine Liam and Amy helping you with your work.
- Use photographs, preferably of the children themselves on tours, outings or participating in various activities. Discuss with the children what they liked or disliked about the various excursions.
- Write your own story 'I feel safe when.....' or draw a picture of 'Where I feel Safe.' Teacher can help.
- Find a safe place in the PE Hall, or talk about safe places in the school, at home, in the park, in their neighbourhood.

### Feeling Unsafe

Start by revising feeling safe. Remember the story about Eamon. Did he feel safe in his new class? Tell me about a time when you felt safe. If you did not feel safe, what word could you use to describe that feeling? Encourage the children to use words like

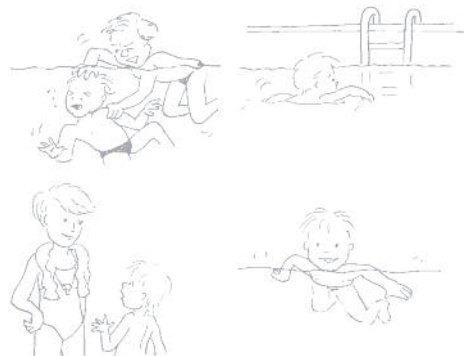
unsafe, frightened, afraid, sad, lonely, worried, or upset. Act out some of these feelings using drama or mime or draw faces to match the feelings. Show Poster no. 1. How do you think the children in the poster feel? If necessary point out that one child feels safe, while the other feels unsafe.

### Music

Play 'Unsafe' music from the audio tape. Did this music make you feel safe or unsafe? Discuss examples of feeling unsafe with the children. Give the children plenty of opportunities to describe how the music made them feel - scared, frightened, terrified.

Use a variety of illustrations to clearly explain unsafe situations to the children.

- Children being bullied. (see worksheet no. 13).
- Child bullying another child in the swimming pool (see worksheet no. 15).
- Child running out in front of a car (K.D.C.S. project, page 9).
- 'Getting lost' worksheet - Stay Safe, 1st & 2nd class, lesson 2.



### Story

Teacher dramatises/mimes a story about herself as a little girl getting lost. Teacher tells the children how frightened she felt, but she used her safety rules and in the end everything was okay again. Lets talk about these rules.

# PERSONAL SAFETY SKILLS FOR CHILDREN WITH GENERAL LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

## Rules If You Get Lost

Teacher discusses with the children times when they got lost. When did it happen? Where were you? How did you feel - safe or unsafe? What did you do? Alternatively, teacher discusses with the children, what if you got lost:

- in a supermarket
- in a shopping centre
- in a sports centre
- in a strange town
- at a football stadium

What if you missed your bus stop and didn't know where you were, what would you do?

Teacher gives simple direct rules to the children taking into account their everyday experience. Children role-play what they would do and practice the words they would use. Children also practice making a telephone call.

### Note

*In order to avoid confusion between role-play and reality, children wear a scarf, an arm band or a wrist band as a sign that they are pretending. When the role-play is over they take off the particular object and then they are back to themselves again.*

Liaison with parents and care staff in relation to these safety strategies is important. Apart from increasing the child's self-confidence, it will ensure consistency between home and school.

Before moving on to follow-up activities give the children an opportunity to recap on the concept of safe and unsafe. Ask them to give their meaning of safe and unsafe. Make sure they understand the terms in relation to being **physically** safe and unsafe, and **feeling** safe and unsafe. Encourage the children to tell an adult they trust whenever they feel unsafe.

### Follow-up activities

- Draw or paint a picture of when you felt unsafe. Think about the colours you will use.

- Make a Safe/Unsafe collage, using photos, pictures and various colours.
- Make 'Safe and Unsafe' face masks or do 'Safe and Unsafe' face-painting.
- Role-play what you would do if you got lost in a shopping centre.



- Revise with the children the signs they would encounter while out and about, e.g. exit signs, toilets, telephone, wet surface and so forth.
- Listen to musical pieces again.
- Use Poster no. 1 and relevant worksheets for this section.

*Homework: Talk to Mum, Dad or a special adult about times you felt safe and unsafe.*

## TOPIC 2: BULLYING

### Objectives

To teach children to value friendship.

To give children safety strategies for dealing with bullying.

To teach children that it is not acceptable to bully others.

Recap briefly on what was discussed in the previous lesson. Children work in groups of two or three to act out feeling safe and unsafe. Play the musical pieces again as a prompt.

### Friendship

Niamh is ..... years old. She has one brother called Donal, and has no sisters. She lives in the middle of

Dublin. There are lots of other children living around them. Niamh and Donal and their friends love the school summer holidays best of all. They can play all day long. The children feel safe when they're playing with their friends. Their favourite game is Shop. When the children know the holidays are coming, they start saving up the empty packets for their shop. Some children bring lots of empty cartons for the shop. Others bring a cash register, bags and toy money. All the children like being the shopkeeper best of all. They take turns at being shopkeeper and they share out the toy money evenly, so that each child has the same amount to spend.

Last frame in the story is blank. Teacher suggests that the children in the class continue the story themselves with her help.

Niamh and Donal feel safe when they are playing with their friends. How do you feel when you play with your friends?

*In this story Shop is the children's favourite game. What is your favourite game?*

*What if Donal was the only child who could be shopkeeper, would that be fair?*

Children make a school shop and practice playing in it. Children make up rules for playing Shop or another appropriate game with teacher's help.

- Toy money, empty packs and cash register are shared.
- Each child gets a chance to be the shopkeeper.
- Children ask politely for the goods they want to buy.
- Have clear penalties for bad behaviour.

When the teacher feels that the children have grasped the rules for playing Shop together they move on to making rules for other games in the classroom, school hall, school yard, playing pitch, and so forth. In each instance the teacher stresses the importance of fair play.

Encouraging children to play together enables them to develop social skills and it can help them to value

friendship. It can also prevent bullying. Bullies don't bully groups.

### What is Bullying?

The teacher introduces the topic of bullying with the following poem.

#### Poem

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.

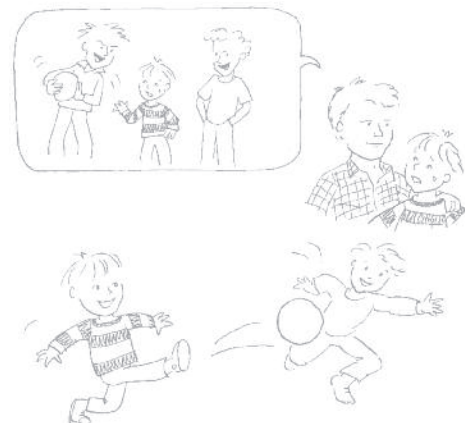
My name is Paul,  
I look quite small,  
But inside I feel tall.

*What happened to Paul?*

*At first how did Paul feel?*

*What made Paul feel glad?*

*Why did Paul feel tall inside?*



## PERSONAL SAFETY SKILLS FOR CHILDREN WITH GENERAL LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

Encourage the children to explain what they think bullying is. Teacher emphasises that it is not their fault if they are bullied. However, some children behave in ways that make them more vulnerable to being bullied. Elicit from the children their ideas as to why this might happen. Follow on by discussing the ways in which our voices, posture and our responses to questions can sometimes provoke bullying.

- What if you were playing shop and another boy kicked you and took your toy money from you? That's bullying. Have you ever been bullied? How did you feel? Safe or unsafe? Was it your fault? Emphasise that it's not their fault if they were bullied.
- What if you were playing football in the playground and a boy came along and started pushing you around? That is bullying.
- What if one of the girls in your class is always calling you 'fatso'? That's bullying?
- What if an older girl in the school is always taking some of your lunch? That is bullying?

### Safety Rules

We have the right to be safe, so what can we do if we are bullied? We can follow some rules which will help to make us feel safe again. The rules are: Say No, Get Away and Tell.

#### 1. Say No.

How can we say no? In a big loud voice. Our bodies can also help us to say 'No' confidently (show poster 2).

Now, when you say 'No' use your whole body. Notice the way you stand, sit, use your arms, hold your face, use your eyes. Teacher needs to acknowledge that sometimes it may be too frightening for a child to say 'No' out loud, but that they can still say 'No' in their heads. Other responses to the bullying could be shrugging, or ignoring the bully.

Children practice the following responses to bullying: saying 'No', ignoring the bully, or shrugging. Get them to practice shrugging in the following way:

- Shrug your shoulders.

- Twist your hands around so that your palms are facing upwards.
- Tilt your head to one side.
- Lower the corners of your mouth.
- Raise your eyebrows.

The children role-play these strategies until they feel confident about using them.

#### 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.

If you were bullied in the school yard, where could you go to get away from the bully? 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.

Let the children practice using each of the three rules separately. When the teacher feels confident that the children understand the rules clearly, combine them. Now the children can role-play using the three rules consecutively.

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. Use examples from play and recreation time to encourage good behaviour and to reinforce that it is wrong to bully others.

### Follow-up activities

- Using modelling material, make a model of yourself saying 'No' to a bully.

- The children role-play using their safety rules about bullying - saying no, moving away, and telling. Ensure that each child is given plenty of opportunity to role-play rejecting bullying and then telling about it.
- Game: Children sit in a circle. Children take turns to move into the middle. The child in the middle says his or her full name and makes a sound or gesture of his or her choice. Then each child in the circle copies what the child in the middle did. The other children watch. The game finishes when all the children have had a turn to be in the middle of the circle.
- Use Poster 2 and relevant worksheets for this section.

*Homework: Show Mum, Dad or a special adult the work you've done on bullying. Talk to them about your safety rules.*

### 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

Give each child a turn at playing games such as Changes and Blind Man's Buff. Changes: Children play in pairs. Child A observes what B is wearing. Then while A closes his eyes, B makes three changes in his appearance. A then tries to guess the changes.

Encourage the children to be more observant by getting them to notice their surroundings. What colour is the school door? What colour track suit was teacher wearing at PE yesterday? What is the colour and make of teacher's car? Describe what you see on

your journey into school. Are there any flowers blooming in the school garden yet?

Slides from The Irish Times Art in the Classroom series can bring the beauty of art into the classroom and can further help children to appreciate their sense of sight.

#### Hearing

Teacher has a tape with various sounds on it (see audio tape). The children have to guess what each sound is. Encourage the children to talk about the sounds they hear at home, in school, in church and so on. The children may like to talk about the sounds they like and dislike. The Irish Times Music in the Classroom series could be used to ensure children have the opportunity to experience different musical sounds.

#### 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

Game: Each child is blind-folded in turn and has to guess what various objects are by touching them. Discussion follows on things each child likes and dislikes to touch. Include various textures here if possible, such as sandpaper, fur, woven wool, silk, wood, tin, and so forth. Children put samples of



## PERSONAL SAFETY SKILLS FOR CHILDREN WITH GENERAL LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

materials they like and dislike to touch into their work book.

Children can then think about animals they would like and dislike to touch.

### Touches We Like/Dislike

The children think about touches they like. If this is too abstract, refer to worksheets on everyday normal affection from the mainstream Stay Safe Programme.

Everyone has the right to say 'No' to body touch. If someone touches you in a way you don't like you can say, 'No, I don't like that, don't do that please.'

As we get older we do not need as much help. Here's a story about how Aisling explained to her parents how she didn't need help showering any more.

### Story

Aisling is ..... years old. As she gets older she wants to do more and more things for herself. Her 'I can' list is much longer now than her 'I can't' list. The latest thing Aisling can do is to have her shower or bath without any help. Aisling learned how to shower herself while she was on holidays in her Auntie's. When she went home Mum and Dad still thought she'd need help.

Aisling said 'No' in a polite way to Mum's offer of help. Her Mum and Dad were delighted to hear that Aisling had a new 'I can.' Aisling has added 'I can bath and shower myself' to her 'I can' list.

*Aisling has two lists, her 'I can' list and her 'I cannot' list. Which list is the longest?*

*What did Aisling learn when she was on holidays in her Auntie's?*

*What did Aisling say to Mum's offer of help?*

*Name some of the things you can do for yourself?*

Children use puppets to practice saying 'No' to a touch they don't like. Include a wide variety of situations, e.g.

- Some of the other children are pushing John in the line.
- Ann's uncle tickles her too hard.

- Jason's mother is holding his hand while he's shopping with her and it makes him feel like a baby.
- Ciara's friend holds her hand too tightly when they're in the line at school.
- The boy who sits behind Maura in school is always pulling her hair.

Incorporate examples from the children's own experiences also. Reinforce the idea of body space by doing various games in PE class. Remind the children that everyone has the right to body space and that they should not touch anyone else in a way they don't like.

### Unsafe Touches

Discussion follows on touches which might make children feel unsafe. Ask them for examples of unsafe touches, or use examples like the following to explain what you mean.

- 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?

Children role-play using the Stay Safe rules, Say 'No', Get Away and Tell, to deal effectively with such situations.

Distinguish between a touch they do not like and being examined by the nurse, doctor or helper.





Explain to the children that sometimes these adults have to touch us in a way we do not like to keep us healthy.

### **Inappropriate Touching**

Suggested approach for revising body parts, including private parts, with the children.

- Who am I?
- My home.
- My family, friends.
- I am special - shoe size, height, age, finger print.
- I am a girl/boy.
- Using photographs of women and men from magazines, get the children to identify the sex of each person.
- Proceed to teach the children about body parts.

**Clothed first** arms, legs, ankles etc.

**In the bath** skin, hair, nails.

**Private parts** Girl, teenage girl, woman  
Boy, teenage boy, man

'The Body Book' by Claire Rayner is easily understood by children and has very clear illustrations in it.

Remind the children that some parts of our bodies get touched a lot. People may shake your hand or pat your head. Other parts of our bodies are private and do not get touched so much.

Are there times when an adult might have to touch your private parts? Yes, if you were sick, hurt or needed help bathing. But you won't be asked to keep these touches a secret.

- 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 helper 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. The rule is - We never keep secrets about touching.

This rule applies everywhere, at home, in school, in the swimming pool, on the bus and so forth.

### **Safety Rules**

If anyone ever touches your private parts and asks you to keep it a secret, what can you do? Firstly, remember it's not your fault. No one should ever ask you to keep a touch a secret. Remember your Stay Safe Rules. You can use them.

- Say No
- Get Away
- Tell.

Firstly, break down the safety rules for the children and then give them an opportunity to practice each rule in turn. Finally combine the three rules.

How would you Say 'No'. What if you were too afraid to Say 'No' out loud? Say it in your head anyway and get away and tell.

No one has the right to ask you to keep a touch a secret. You can tell. It is never your fault and you have the right to feel safe.

### **Note**

*These rules may need to be modified for some children as outlined in Topic 2 on bullying.*

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:

- 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?

## PERSONAL SAFETY SKILLS FOR CHILDREN WITH GENERAL LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

- 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?

### Follow-up activities

- Draw, paint or make a model of someone or something or someplace that you especially like to see.
- Draw or make a list of some of the touches you like.
- Draw or make a list of some of the touches you don't like.
- Ensure that each child gets plenty of opportunity to role-play telling about an inappropriate touch.
- Use Poster 3 and relevant worksheets for this section.

*Homework: Show your work to Mum, Dad or a special adult, and talk to them about touches.*

## TOPIC 4: TELLING AND SECRETS

### Objectives

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

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

To give the children the opportunity to practice telling an adult about a bad secret.

Recap on rules about touching.

### Good Secrets and Bad Secrets

Teacher brings in a parcel and asks the children to guess what's in it. Let the children decide if this is a good or bad secret. Ask them for other examples of good secrets, e.g. Mum is having a baby; I'm saving to buy Dad a birthday present, it's a surprise; we are having a surprise party for Grandad; I set the table for dinner to surprise Mum.

### 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. 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 Mammy and his teacher in private. His Mammy and the teacher helped him. Now Liam is happy again. He feels safe and there's 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 this a safe or an unsafe secret?

The children decide whether 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.
- Ger's Mum is going to have a new baby.
- Bernadette won the sports person of the year award in the school but the teacher told the other children to keep it a secret.
- An older boy touched Jason's private parts. He gave him sweets and told him that he had to keep it a secret.

The rule is - Never keep a bad secret, tell an adult.



## Telling

### 1. Who to tell

Teacher asks for examples of unsafe secrets, e.g. bullying or inappropriate touching. Teacher takes each example in turn and gets the children to draw who they would tell.

Some children may need help to choose the adult they would tell. They should include people outside the family as well as parents. Explain that it is important to tell an adult rather than another child.

### 2. When to tell

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? Emphasise the benefits of telling in private and give each child an opportunity to role-play telling, making sure that they know the words they would use.

### 3. What if the adult doesn't listen

Encourage the children to think about what they would do if the adult they chose just would not listen. What if you tried to tell your Mum about bullying on the street? She was not busy at the times you tried to tell her, but she still did not listen. What could you do then?

Encourage the children to look at the possibility of telling another adult if the first one does not listen. The rule is - Keep telling until someone listens and helps.

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.

Role-play: Each child role-plays telling the teacher about an unsafe secret, but the teacher does not listen. The child then has to choose another adult, such as another teacher, caretaker or principal. Children practice until they get the message that they keep telling until someone listens and helps.

## Touches and Secrecy

We have learned what to do about bad secrets. Who remembers the rules?

- Say No
- Get Away
- Tell
- Keep Telling until Someone Listens and Helps.

Revise touches they like and don't like. Are touches ever kept secret? No.

If anyone ever asks you to keep a touch a secret, what can you do? Firstly, remember it is not your fault. You tell even if you've promised not to. You should tell even if you have been warned not to. If a touch makes you feel unsafe, what can you do? Tell.



## PERSONAL SAFETY SKILLS FOR CHILDREN WITH GENERAL LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

The children will need plenty of opportunities to role-play these safety rules in a variety of situations.

Teacher devises various scenarios.

- What if someone you know touched your private parts and you felt unsafe?
- What if someone you know touched your private parts but asked you not to tell as it was your special secret?
- What if a stranger offered you money if you let him touch your private parts?
- What if someone you know touched your private parts and warned you not to tell or you would get into trouble?

Who would you tell? Children decide, with teacher's help, who they would tell. When would you tell and how would you tell? The children practice the words they would use.

### Follow-up activities

- Draw Liam's face before he told and after he told.
- Make a list of good and bad secrets
- Have a 'listening time.' The teacher is doing the listening
- Use Poster 4 and relevant worksheets for this section.

*Homework: Explain to Mum, Dad or a special adult about safe and unsafe secrets. Talk to them about who you would tell if you had an unsafe secret.*



## 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.*

Who can remember the differences between a good and a bad secret?

What can we do about bad secrets?

So far we have learned about keeping ourselves safe. We have learned about safe and unsafe feelings, and we have learned the safety rules, say 'No', get away and tell someone. Today we are going to talk about using these rules if a stranger ever makes you feel unsafe.

### Definition

As children may have some difficulty understanding who strangers are, the teacher may wish to do some preparatory work first.

Asking children who strangers are can produce some peculiar answers, e.g. strangers wear dark glasses, strangers are always men, strangers have big cars, strangers have beards. If a teacher receives such answers she may like to ask the children's parents to point out who strangers are when they are out shopping or travelling with their children.

In class teacher can give out a selection of pictures from magazines, depicting a variety of people - faces or full-length figures, well dressed or shabbily dressed, young or old, pleasant or unpleasant looking, with or without beards, glasses, sunglasses.

Ask the children whether these people are strangers or not. Of course they are all strangers, but some children may say that they are not strangers because

they are smartly dressed or friendly-looking or young or a woman. The teacher can clarify any misconceptions the children may have.



### Story

Ciara loved to go shopping with her Mum. She had to be extra careful about keeping up with her Mum and not getting lost. Once she did get lost but she remembered what her Mum had told her, "Ask someone to show you to the information desk in the shopping centre and wait for me there." Ciara did just that. She saw a woman beside her and turned and asked for help. The woman said straight away, "I'd love to help you." Ciara knew the shopping centre well and was very alert as to where the woman guided her. After a while she said, "I think we're going towards Burger King and not the information desk." The woman replied that she thought that Ciara might like a Coke or maybe a milk-shake first. Ciara was tempted because she loved milk-shakes especially chocolate flavoured ones. But there was something about the woman's voice that made Ciara feel unsafe. She said, "No, thank you." The woman got angry then, and said, "I was only trying to be nice to you."

Ciara didn't care if the woman was angry or not. She felt unsafe with her so she walked into the next shop and asked for help. The shop assistant brought her to the information desk straight away where her Mum threw her arms around her and gave her a big hug.

*Discuss the story. Focus on what made Ciara feel uneasy about the woman.*

### Safety Rules

Discuss the rules the children have been given about going places, e.g. to the shops, library, swimming pool or travelling by bus or train. What have they been told to do if they become separated from their Mum, Dad or a friend? What would you do if you were Ciara?

The children then devise short dramas. Encourage them to use various examples of who strangers, e.g. an older child, couple, woman, man, teenage boy, teenage girl.

In the drama session the teacher can encourage all the appropriate responses. Get the children to think about who would be the safest person to ask if they were lost while shopping. Who did Ciara choose first? Was it a safe choice? What about Ciara's second choice? Was it a safe one? Explain to the children that if they ever need help while out shopping it is safer to choose someone who is working in the shops. If you were Ciara would you have gone off with the woman for a milk shake? What is the rule if you are offered a gift from someone you do not know? Would you do what Ciara did - Say 'No', Get Away and Tell Someone.

Children then act out Ciara's story incorporating the safety rules into it.

Ask the children what they would do if a stranger called them by name and offered them a lift home. See what solutions the children will have. Explain that just because someone uses your name it does not mean the person knows you. How else could they know your name? Encourage the children to see that the safe choice is to ignore the person, get away and tell. This is not rude - it is simply keeping yourself safe.

Ask the children to give you examples of when they made safe choices. Now decide what would be the safe choice in the following situations.

- You were offered a lift from someone you do not know.
- You were on the wrong train or bus.

## PERSONAL SAFETY SKILLS FOR CHILDREN WITH GENERAL LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

- A woman you do not know asked if you would help look for her dog.
- An older boy 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.

So does this mean that strangers are bad? No, it just means you do not know them. You don't go with or take anything from someone you do not know and this applies when you are on your own or with your friends.

Finally discuss what choice you should make if someone you know 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 them?
- What if a woman from the stables down the road asked if you would like to see the ponies?

In all these situations 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. The teacher devises various situations.
  - A stranger offered Paul a lift. She was very persuasive. "You will be soaked, and I am going your way." Paul said 'No' firmly.
  - Debbie was travelling on the train alone. She was going to her granny's in Cork. A strange man who was sitting opposite her started chatting. The stranger insisted that he knew Debbie's granny well and that he could drop her off at her granny's house. Debbie said, "No thank you", and she turned on her Walkman.
- What if you get lost in a shopping centre, who would be a 'safe' stranger to ask for help? When the children have identified who they could ask for help, they can role-play what they would say.
- Use Poster 5 and relevant worksheets for this section.

*Homework: Talk to Mum, Dad or a special adult about your rules about strangers.*