

# Theme 3: Protective strategies

**A**ctivities to  
develop skills  
in responding to unsafe or  
potentially abusive situations  
and in seeking assistance  
effectively

STAGE 2

# Overview

*With knowledge about positive relationships and about child abuse, children can take appropriate actions if they are in threatening situations.*

*When learning about protective strategies, students are given the opportunity to analyse situations, to identify feelings, and to explore alternative courses of action and their consequences.*

*Focus areas include teaching and learning in the areas of safety strategies, assertiveness, and talking about concerns.*

## Focus Areas

- Safety Strategies: NO GO TELL
- Networks
- Feel-think-act
- NO GO - assertiveness
- No GO - other strategies
- Secrets
- Skills for telling
- Seeking help
- My strategies

## Things to look for

*Things to look for* suggest ways that students may demonstrate achievement of the outcomes at the relevant stage when learning about child protection. Teachers can use this section as a guide to making judgements about what their students know and can do.

### Stage 2

#### Safety strategies: NO GO TELL

- Can students:
- describe rules intended to protect people from harm and injury?
  - recognise behaviours and situations which may be threatening and identify safety strategies which could be taken? (NO GO TELL)

#### Networks

- Can students:
- identify five appropriate adults from whom they can seek advice and support?
  - record contact details about these people?
  - discuss how network members might change over time?

## Stage 2

### Feel-think-act

Can students:

- identify a situation in which a decision about safety is required?
- describe some steps involved in deciding whether a situation is safe or unsafe?
- make decisions as an individual or group member?

### NO GO - assertiveness

Can students:

- practise assertive ways to deal with unsafe situations?

### NO GO - other strategies

Can students:

- recognise situations where assertiveness may not be an appropriate action for safety?
- identify ways in which they can protect themselves from harm?
- practise some other strategies to deal with pressures, threats or bribes?

### Secrets

Can students:

- examine some reasons why positive or happy secrets are expected to be kept from others?
- recognise secrets which should not be kept?

### Skills for telling

Can students:

- recognise some difficulties about TELLING an adult about abuse?
- identify some friends from whom they could gain support to TELL an adult?

### Seeking help

Can students:

- identify appropriate times to seek help from an adult?
- discuss some strategies to overcome difficulties in talking about unsafe situations with a trusted adult?
- identify individuals and services in the community that help protect their well-being?

### My strategies

Can students:

- discuss ways they can recognise unsafe or potentially unsafe situations?
- demonstrate ways of protecting themselves and others from unsafe situations and practices?

**main idea**

*It is important to follow safety rules but I also need some strategies to use if I am unsafe. If I feel threatened or unsafe I should say NO if I can, GO if I can and TELL a trusted adult.*

**Safety strategies: NO GO TELL**

**field building**

- ❖ Revise classroom rules and identify the rules that promote safety in the classroom. Discuss why it is important to keep these rules.
- ❖ Students view the video *Getting Home Safe* or *Safe At Home*. Identify some of the safety rules discussed in the video.

On one side of a large chart list some safety rules from the video. On the other side record students' responses about some situations where the safety rule *might* help keep the child in the video safe.

- *Use conditional language such as "If..., ...might happen" to avoid raising unnecessary anxiety in students.*

Individually students choose a safety rule which could be personally useful to them and write about a situation where they might use it.

- ❖ Discuss and list some of the external signs which might indicate an unsafe situation eg walking home, being at home alone, answering the telephone or opening the door when alone, meeting a stranger, being threatened by someone, being expected to give a favour when receiving a gift, someone touching your private or sexual parts when it is not necessary. Pose the question: What safety rules apply to these situations?
- ❖ Revise body signals and feelings that students might experience if they were *safe* and *unsafe*. Role play some safe and unsafe situations eg bush walking with your Dad, exploring some bush undergrowth, demonstrating possible events and the feelings experienced.

**core learning**

- ❖ Discussion based on the following questions:
  - Why do we have rules? (To help protect our rights eg to be safe, to be treated fairly.) We have a responsibility to keep these rules so the rights of others are respected.
  - Why do we have safety rules? (To help keep people safe from harm or injury.)
  - Can rules by themselves keep you safe? (No. You can never be sure that other people will follow the rules or that they will always act in an OK way. However, having rules *can help everyone be safer*.)
  - If you follow safety rules will you always be safe? (You will be *safer* but something could happen which causes you to be unsafe.)

Inform students that even though it doesn't occur very often, accidents can happen which cause people to be unsafe or injured. If we are being careful and following safety rules accidents are less likely to happen.

Usually people realise when they are in an unsafe situation. Internal body signals and feelings or external signs can help people know when they might be unsafe. There are things we can do to keep ourselves safe in these situations. These are called *safety strategies*. Brainstorm some safety strategies.

- ❖ The teacher reads the following unfinished story:

*A large family was having a barbeque together in a park near a new sports centre. Troy needed to go to the toilet and told his parents where he was going. When Troy reached the toilet block he realised it was a long way from the barbeque area. He could hear strange noises coming from inside.*

*Troy decided to go back to the group and ask some of his cousins to come with him to make sure he was safe. As a result, three children went with him back to the toilet block. Although they all felt a little worried they made loud noises to make sure whoever was inside knew that there were a lot of children coming. The children went inside and saw two possums there. The possums ran away.*

Discussion based on the following questions:

- What were some safety rules that Troy followed? (Troy told his parents where he was going.)
- What were some of the external signs which helped Troy realise he might be unsafe? (He was alone, the toilet block was a long way away from his family, strange noises were coming from inside.)
- What were some safety strategies Troy used when he realised he might be unsafe? (Troy didn't go inside the toilet block alone. The children made loud noises so whoever (or whatever) was inside would know that Troy was not alone.)

The teacher continues the unfinished story:

*After the barbeque Troy needed to go to the toilet again. His cousins had gone home. He told his parents where he was going and they joked about the possums. Troy laughed too.*

*When Troy reached the toilet block it was quiet inside. Troy was still a little worried and thought about his safety strategies. He went inside and saw an older boy standing at the wash basin. The older boy at first talked in a friendly way to Troy, but then he tried to touch Troy's private parts.*

*Troy felt unsafe and he knew his parents were a long way away. He thought about his safety strategies and what he could do.*





Discussion based on the following questions:

- Was Troy unsafe? (Yes.) Why? (Troy was by himself. The older boy tried to do something that was not OK.)
  - Did Troy have a right to say NO to the older boy? (Yes. All children have a right to be safe and have their bodies and privacy respected by others.)
  - What the older boy did is not OK. What is this called? (Sexual abuse.)
  - What could Troy do? (Troy needs to say NO if he can, GO from the situation and TELL a trusted adult.)
- ❖ The teacher revises with students the child protection strategies of NO GO TELL.

Discuss each strategy and some suggested ways of using each strategy. Talk about ways of using the strategies for unsafe situations such as being bullied or teased, as well as situations of potential sexual abuse.

NO: If someone acts in a way that does not respect your right to be safe and have your body respected you can say “NO.” “Stop that.” “You shouldn’t do that.” “I don’t want you to do that.”

GO: If you can, you should GO from the situation or plan how you can GO. You should go to a place or to people where you feel safe.

TELL: If you have been harmed or still feel unsafe you should always TELL a trusted adult about the situation. Telling as soon as possible can make telling easier.

- ❖ As a whole class rehearse or chant the strategies repetitively to memorise them. Encourage students to use their thumbs, index and middle fingers as a trigger for each word.

- *The strategies of NO GO TELL are often not easy to carry out particularly when a child is in a situation of potential abuse or actual abuse. It is essential that these strategies are frequently practised or rehearsed so they can become ‘automatic’ responses in stressful situations.*

### conclusion

- ❖ Students form small groups and create a poster for each strategy (NO GO TELL). Display posters in the classroom or in other areas of the school.

### extension

- ❖ Students write an explanation for each of the safety strategies (NO GO TELL). Examples of these can be published in the school newsletter, school website, shared with students at Stage 1 or sent home to parents with a covering note about child protection education.

- ❖ Students create a *rap* for NO GO TELL eg “Let me hear you say NO, NO-OOO, GO when you can, GO man, GO and TELL. TELL, TELL someone you trust - an ADULT yeah...you must.”

## Networks

### field building

- ❖ The teacher has prepared a number of stimulus pictures from magazines of different aged people, including children, babies, teenagers, adults (younger and older). Pictures include people from a range of backgrounds relevant to the backgrounds of students in the class group.

Revise the term *adults* and ask students to sort or classify the pictures into two groups: *adults* and *not adults*.

Alternatively students could draw pictures, or bring photos to school of the people with whom they have relationships or are connected. Students identify those people who are adults and those who are not adults. Pictures or photos are displayed in these two groups.

- *Some students may need time and help to differentiate between older teenagers and young adults. In some families older teenagers take on roles (although not full responsibilities) for caring for younger children.*
- *It also may need to be taken into account that in some cultural groups young people are seen as reaching adulthood at earlier ages. For example in some Aboriginal and Jewish cultural groups children are considered to be adults after participating in specific cultural rituals.*

- ❖ Students create a resource list of all the adults they are close to, consider important or are friends.  
If appropriate, students refer to their relationship maps or circles diagrams (from ‘Relationships’ Theme 2) and highlight the names of people from their individual lists who are *adults*.
- ❖ Read a book that explores a positive, trusting relationship between an adult and a child such as *Pigs and Honey* by Jeanie Adams from the booklist.
- ❖ Revise the term *trust* and its meaning (*trust* is when you believe that another person will act in a fair and OK way). Students suggest some examples of the people they trust and give reasons why they trust these people.

### main idea

*My network is a group of adults that I know, see regularly and trust. I can go to these people for help and support. They can help to protect me from harm or abuse. The members of my network may change (over time).*



### core learning

- ❖ Discuss the concept of *networks of adults*.

The teacher might pose the following *statements* and ask the suggested questions to assist students to understand the concept of adult networks.

- *From the time you were born you had people around you to care for you and protect you. Babies' first networks are made up of the people who care for them and who are around them such as their mother, father or other family members who care for them.*
- Who are some adults that were part of *your* network when you were a baby?
- *As you grew older (and become a toddler) this network might have also included more people such as baby sitters, neighbours or special carers from day care or play groups.*
- Which other adults might have become part of your network when *you* were a toddler?
- *When you started school you met many more adults. You made many new relationships. More adults had a role in looking after you and keeping you safe.*
- When you started school who were some new people who looked after *you* and had a role in keeping you safe?
- *Now you are older there are more people around you who could be part of your network.*
- Which groups of adults could be part of *your* network? (Parents or carers, relatives, neighbours, parents of friends, teachers, elders, shop keepers, baby sitters, sports group leaders.)

We need to identify *five* adults who are our most important network people. If we feel unsafe we need to have people we feel really sure about, to go to for help. If we feel unsafe we might feel confused or upset at the same time. If we have only *five* network people it is easy to remember who they are. If we had lots of people on our network it is more difficult to remember the people we are really sure about and we could go to someone who might not be able to help.

- *Teachers may wish to share with students people from their own personal networks They remind students that although they have many close friends and relatives, they have only five people on their networks. The people on teachers' networks should include males and females from different locations within and outside their families.*

- How can we choose five network people we know will help us? Network people should be adults that you see or talk to *regularly*, you *trust* and who *listen* to you because they care about



you. Network adults also need to be people who will be able to help you.

- ❖ Create a shared meaning for *network adults*. ( Network adults are adults we see or talk to regularly, we trust and who listen to us because they care about us. They should also be in a position where they will be able to help us.)
- ❖ Individually students complete the *Adults I know...* worksheet (appendix 21). Students list the adults they know and rate them according to the qualities needed for a network adult. From this list ask students to identify five adults that they feel really sure about and wish to include on their network.

- *Encourage students to identify adults who rate highly and are from a variety of settings eg not all living in the same house or from the same family.*
- *Some students may have difficulty nominating five network adults. It will require sensitive support and liaison with parents or carers, the school counsellor and other members of the school community to ensure a suitable network can be put in place for the student.*
- *Some students may wish to include adults with whom they feel a very strong link but do not see regularly. These might include adults who live in another country, those family members living separately, or adults who have died. Young children need to be able to access their network adults independently. People who are difficult to contact or are not accessible would be inappropriate as network adults.*
- *It may be very upsetting for students not to include these people on their networks. In such situations the teacher should acknowledge students' close links with these people and suggest that they are important people for students' emotional networks. Such people may not be able to take action to protect the student from harm, however communicating with them can help keep their emotions and thoughts safe and well.*
- *The story 'Dan's Grandpa' by Sally Morgan deals with this issue and may be useful to read to the class group or to smaller groups of students.*

- ❖ Students research contact details about each of their network members and record these. Students can make a *Network Brick*, using copy of appendix 22 printed on coloured paper and an empty milk container (for each student). This activity requires students to ask adults to agree to be a network person and to sign a panel. Details about each network adult are recorded on the panels and glued to the side and bottom surfaces of the container. Containers may be filled with pebbles, sand, marbles, rice, dried beans or a mixture of dried substances. Network bricks may be displayed, used as paper weights or as markers for games and sports activities.





- Clarifying network details can also assist the teacher
- ensure appropriate choices for network adults have been
- made by students. It also provides an opportunity for
- network members to be informed about their role.
- 
- Where school staff are included it will be important to ensure
- that some method of contact is provided eg the staffroom -
- before school and at lunchtime.

❖ Students write in response to the questions:

- Why do we have network adults?
- What should network adults do?

Students responses may be published and displayed or copied and sent to students' network members.

- Communication needs to take place with the individual
- adults on each students' networks. This can take the form
- of a letter written by students with an accompanying note to
- explain the role of a network adult.
- 
- If schools encourage children to rely on trusted adults who are
- part of their networks, efforts also need to be made to ensure
- that parents and network members have an understanding of
- their role as a network person. When the reason for children
- having networks has been explained to parents at information
- meetings, schools report strong support for this strategy.

❖ Remind students that because relationships change, and our network is based on relationships, our network will sometimes change. Sometimes it might be important to take a person off your network and add a new person to take his or her place. Teachers may wish to provide an example of when a person on their network has moved house or their relationship has changed.

Discussion based on the following questions:

- When might we have to take people off our networks? (People might move, they might not have listened to us - or didn't believe us when we tried to tell them something or have let us down in some way. People might not have time for us because they are too busy. If a person on our network acts towards us in a way that is not OK or doesn't respect our rights then having that person on our network does not keep us safe.)
- How can we decide on new network adults to take their place? (Refer to the meaning of the term *network adult*.)

- It is important to allocate time to review networks twice a
- year. As well as ensuring that networks are effective
- because they consist of appropriate adults, this review also
- helps students to remember their networks and use them as
- a source of support.

- *Networks should be referred to whenever communication about problems, however small, is discussed. This might include individual or class situations.*

### conclusion

- ❖ Students respond to one of the following statements:

I think it is good to have a network because....

I could talk to someone on my network about....

A network adult can help protect me by....

### extension

- ❖ Inform students that sometimes it can be hard to approach an adult (even if he or she is on your network) about a problem or an experience which was unsafe or not OK.

In groups students record possible ways to approach an adult on their network about a problem. Students record possible things they could say eg “Uncle, can I ask you something?” “Mum, I think I have a problem.....” “Aunty, can you help me? I’m confused about...”

In the same groups, students take turns to role play with a partner some of the approaches they like.

Share responses as a whole class. Lists might be recorded for future reference when discussing TELL strategies.

## Feel - think - act

### field building

- ❖ The teacher records the heading *Warning signals and signs* on a large chart or board.

#### Body signals

Revise body signals that could be warnings about being unsafe eg sweaty hands, queasy tummy, shaking. Record some responses.

- *An extensive list of examples of warning signals is provided in field building activities in the Stage 2 focus area of ‘Feelings and warning signals’.*

- ❖ Changing and mixed feelings

Discuss how changing and mixed feelings can be warning signals by posing the following questions:

- What is it called when you are feeling good one minute and then suddenly feel worried and sad? (Changing feelings.)
- When you trust someone and suddenly that person does something that isn’t OK, what might happen to your feelings? (You feel let down and confused about the relationship. Your feelings change about that person. Your trust might be broken.)



### main idea

*Feel - think - act are steps which can help me decide if I am unsafe. If I think I might be unsafe I have to make a decision about my safety.*



The term *changing feelings* is also recorded. Changing feelings can be warning signals.

- Sometimes you can really like a person but there are things that they do sometimes that you really hate. When you have feelings of 'like' and 'hate' about the same person what is this called? (Mixed feelings.)
- What are two different feelings you might have at the same time? (Excited but nervous, lucky but worried, loving but jealous.) When you have two very different feelings at the same time this can be a warning signal - to take care. Add *mixed feelings* to the list of warning signals.

❖ External warning signs

Inform students that signs outside our body can warn us that something unusual is happening or that something is not OK.

Discuss:

- What are these kinds of warnings called? (*External warning signs.*)
- What are some external warning signs that indicate you might be unsafe? (Being alone, being away from your parents or friends, being with or near someone whose behaviour is out of control eg using drugs or extremely angry, being with someone who is not following safety rules or is doing something illegal, if someone breaks your trust, if someone touches you in an inappropriate or not OK way, if you are offered a bribe to keep a secret.)

**core learning**

❖ Discuss with students how, with everything we do each day, there is usually more than one way that we can do something. This is called *having choices*. When we have choices we have to make decisions.

- What are some choices that you have had to make today? (What to wear, what to eat for breakfast, who to play with.)
- When you have *choices* about the things you can do, you have to make *decisions* about what is the best thing for you to do. How can you decide? (Think about the good and bad - positive and negative - consequences of each.)
- What would happen if you decided to have ice cream on your sandwiches? (You may feel sick. Other people might think you are very strange).
- What would happen if you decided not to wear a jumper today? (You may freeze).

These are called consequences. For each choice you have, there is a consequence.

❖ The teacher informs students that some decisions children have to make can be very important. When children are feeling worried or

unsafe they have to decide whether they really are unsafe. If they are unsafe they should decide on an action that will have the consequence of helping them to be safe.

Discuss with students some incidents where they have had to make a decision that they were unsafe and then decide what to do. Some stimulus questions might include:

- Has anyone come really close to a dangerous animal? What feelings did you experience? How did you decide if you were unsafe?
- Has anyone felt unsafe when they were swimming? Did you have any warning signals or signs? How did you decide you were unsafe? What did you decide to do?
- How were you feeling when you had to decide what to do? (Scared, upset, unsafe.)

Inform students that in a confusing, stressful or emergency situation choosing what to do can be difficult. To help you decide whether you are in danger or unsafe you can use a model to help you think more clearly.

- ❖ Display the *Feel - think - act* decision making steps (appendix 23). Explore the steps displayed using one or more of the incidents discussed by students in the previous activity.

**Feel** Listen to your feelings and body signals.

**think** Think about the external signs and risks. Think about the pluses (what is safe about the situation) and the minuses (what is unsafe about the situation).

**act** Decide on how you should act. Use your strategies (NO, GO and TELL) if you are in danger or unsafe.

- ❖ Students identify the three steps as they are used by Karly in the following unfinished story. The story may be read by the teacher. Alternatively copies may be provided for students to read and highlight key points, in small groups.

*Karly was walking home from school. It was windy and raining. She was thinking about tomorrow's excursion to the aquarium. The rain and wind did not bother her. She was busy thinking about the sharks and stingrays she would see face to face - from the safety of being behind a glass window!*

*Suddenly a loud BEEP from a car horn brought her back to reality. It was Roy driving along slowly next to Karly. Roy lived close to Karly's house. He sometimes watched Karly and her friends play softball at the park and he always waved when he drove past Karly.*





*Today he stopped and rolled down the car window. He told Karly to hop in and he would drive her home. Karly felt unsure. She looked around. There were other children walking home, some with their parents.*

*Karly thought that it might be good to get out of the rain and wind. She also thought that no one else in her family knew Roy very well, so he was really a stranger. She was not allowed to accept lifts from strangers.*

*Karly realised that she was alone and there was no one else in Roy's car. Karly also realised that there would be no one at home yet, so no one would know if anything happened to her.*

*Karly decided that although she was wet, she was safe right now. There were too many risks that could make her unsafe if she went with Roy. Karly said "NO Roy, I want to walk - but thanks anyway". Karly moved away from the car and kept on walking.*

- ❖ Students discuss the incident and map Karly's decision making process eg

**Feel** Karly felt unsure...  
Karly decided to

**think** about her safety...

Safe (pluses)  
*Roy lived in Karly's street.*

Unsafe/Risk (minuses)  
*Roy was still a stranger to her family.*

*Going in Roy's car would break the family rules.*

*It would be good to be out of the rain.*

*She would be alone with Roy in the car.*

*No one at home would know where she would be.*

**act** Karly decided to say "NO thanks" and GO.  
*If she walked home there were other people around to help keep her safe.*

- ❖ Rehearse or chant the key steps for decision making. Add visual or kinaesthetic cues to reinforce the steps eg say: *feel* - (students make a hug with their arms), *think* - (students touch their foreheads), *act* - (students pose their shoulders and fists as if they are ready to run a race).

## conclusion

- ❖ As a whole class students brainstorm some situations where they have had to decide whether they were safe or unsafe and act on their decision. The teacher may first provide an example, such as one of the incidents suggested by students in core learning.

Additional situations might include:

- at the movies I got separated from the group, the cinema was dark and I couldn't see anyone I knew
- I was lost in the shopping centre and a stranger offered to help me
- I was walking home (or on the school bus) and I saw someone who had been bullying my group coming towards me
- I got off the school bus and there was no one to meet me and walk home with me
- a relative gave me a present for no reason and asked me to visit him but keep it a secret
- a teenager threatened me.

Students form small groups. Each group is nominated a situation and receives a copy of appendix 24. Students discuss what they might do in the situation based on the decision model *Feel - think - act* eg

In the situation where...

I might *feel* ....

I would *think* about the pluses (safe signs)....and the minuses (unsafe or risk signs).... to decide about my safety -

I would *act* by....

Responses are shared or published.

## extension

What if?

- ❖ Reread the unfinished story from core learning and discuss the following *What if?* situations:
  - *What if Roy told Karly that her mum was very sick and she had asked Roy to come and pick her up from school?* (If Karly's mum was very sick, her mother, her father or another family friend or carer probably would have phoned the school to tell Karly. If Karly's mum was very sick she might have sent a close neighbour or relative to drive her home - not a stranger. Even if Karly's mum was very sick Karly would still be safer to walk home.)
  - *What if Roy tried to bribe Karly to get into the car by saying eg "If you get in, you'll be warm and dry" or "If you get in I'll buy you some nice hot chips and you can dry off at my place."* (Bribes are external warning signs. Karly might be unsafe if someone offers



**main idea**

*It can sometimes be difficult to say NO and GO. If I am assertive and use body language it can make my message stronger.*

her a gift and asks her to do something she doesn't want to do in return.)

- *What if Roy got angry and pressured or threatened Karly to get into the car?* (If Roy respected Karly's rights and was a caring, protective adult he would not make threats. Threats and pressure are external warning signs. Karly should say NO and GO quickly to the other students and adults in the street. She could ask to walk with them. Karly should TELL a trusted adult if she feels threatened by Roy's behaviour.)
- *What if Karly's family knew Roy and he was not a stranger?* (Karly would have been alone with Roy so she should think about whether she trusted Roy. If she has been with Roy many times and he had always acted in a fair and OK way then she might get into the car. If Roy later did or said anything to break Karly's trust or Karly experienced changing feelings or warning signals, she should GO if she can and TELL her family about her unsafe feelings.)

**NO GO - assertiveness**

- *When working with students with special needs, activities about assertiveness may need significant modification.*
- *Some skills required for this focus area - saying NO assertively and GOING from an unsafe situation could present difficulties for students with physical disabilities or communication disorders. It is important, instead, to focus on activities about networking and communicating concerns, modifying them according to the abilities and needs of students. Activities about body language may assist some students.*

**field building**

- ❖ Discuss how people can communicate without using any words. Ask students to demonstrate, individually, some gestures or body language which communicate a message, eg waving (goodbye or hello), shaking fists (anger), nodding (yes), shaking head (no), stamping foot (anger), crying (sadness), hugging (glad to see someone), frowning (not pleased). Discuss the message each gesture might communicate.
- ❖ View a segment of an appropriate video or television drama without any sound. Ask students to identify some examples of the gestures or body language used by the characters and the messages they thought were conveyed. View again with sound to confirm the accuracy of students' understandings.
- ❖ In pairs, students verbally communicate suggested messages. Each student has a turn to communicate the message without any body language, and with body language.



Suggested messages:

- I like you.
- I don't want you to do that.
- I'm going to Queensland for the next holidays.
- I forgot my lunch.
- What's that horrible smell?
- Yes, I'd like to play with you.
- I've lost my money.

Discuss how using body language affected the message.  
(Body language can strengthen the message and make the meaning clearer and easier to understand.)

### core learning

- ❖ Discuss or revise the term *assertiveness* and create a shared definition. (Assertiveness is saying what you mean in a strong and clear way.)
- ❖ In pairs students practise saying NO without body language and again using assertive body language.

Repeat the activity inviting students to add a phrase or sentence after saying NO. Each partner has a turn to repeat his or her partner's example eg "NO, I don't want you to do that." "NO, stop that." "NO, that's mine. Don't touch it." "NO, I have to go home."

- *Avoid generalising assertive behaviours. Cultural and individual differences should be taken into account eg in some cultures direct eye contact, particularly between a child and an adult, can be interpreted as being aggressive.*
- *Different ways in which children can show assertion can be clarified in consultation with parents and community to ensure their acceptability at home as well as at school.*

Discussion based on the following questions:

- What kinds of body language did you use to say NO assertively? (Standing straight, looking at the other person's face or eyes, not moving away at first, having a stern facial expression.)
- How did using body language affect the message? (It made the message stronger and clearer.)
- When we say what we mean in a strong, clear way what is this called? (Being assertive.)
- How is being assertive different to being aggressive? (Being aggressive is when you act in a forceful or fierce way. Being assertive is when you are strong and firm.)
- ❖ Discuss the differences between being passive, assertive and aggressive. Provide symbols of each behaviour - such as *kitten, cat, lion*, to help revise the concepts. Record examples of body language,





words, voice level, eye contact and actions that may accompany each behaviour.

Students draw a picture of themselves saying NO in an assertive way. Students write to describe what they are doing in their pictures.

- ❖ Display NO and GO signs or cue cards. Pose the following question:
  - When might it be necessary to say NO to others or to GO from a situation? (If you feel threatened or unsafe, if you have mixed up or confused feelings, or experience body signals or external signs that tell you that you could be at risk of abuse. Examples of bullying might be included.)
  - Why is it helpful to say NO in an assertive way? (Saying NO assertively can make your message clearer. People are less likely to pressure or threaten you if you respond to them assertively.)
- ❖ Students in pairs, take turns to role play assertive or strong and clear NO GO responses to situations read by the teacher. Students are encouraged to reply, then 'GO' from their partners in a strong and assertive way. After one student has role played a response the other student gives feedback about how they 'looked' and 'sounded' and which gestures and words worked well\*.

Suggested situations:

- Your baby sitter wants you to come with her and play in the park. It is getting dark and you feel unsafe about going to the park.
- Someone wants you to keep a secret that you feel uncomfortable about.
- A friend is pressuring you to steal a game from a video shop.
- Your best friend wants to copy your homework and you think this is unfair.
- Your Uncle is insisting that you go outside and play with your cousin. Your cousin always teases you and plays roughly with you when you are alone.
- Your neighbour wants to take you for a ride on his motor bike. He always drives very fast and you are scared he might have an accident.

· \* Students may need to be reminded to give specific  
 · feedback - instead of "Good!" or "Well done." Comments  
 · such as, "You stood up straight and looked really strong"  
 · or "You spoke slowly. It made your voice sound very firm",  
 · should be encouraged. Some constructive suggestions,  
 · such as, "Try standing a bit closer next time", might be  
 ▼ encouraged if appropriate.

- *Attention and specific feedback are critical in reinforcing and maintaining new behaviours. Research indicates that assertiveness is best learnt when other people pay attention to and give feedback about new behaviours as they are practised. Ideally, feedback is positive and constructive.*
- *It is important not to promote only assertive behaviours that are overt and physically obvious. True assertiveness is an attitude which conveys a message that a person is 'set' in his or her response and will not be influenced. This attitude comes from strength from within - not necessarily from superficial dramatic responses. It may be apparent only in eye contact or posture. It is possible to be quiet yet strong.*

Discussion based on the following questions:

- What were some of the things you did, that helped you be assertive?  
The teacher explains to students that demonstrating assertive behaviour gives a very strong message that we are very firm and confident about what we are saying. *Often, inside, we don't really feel so firm and confident.* If we act assertively we can look more confident than we really feel.
- Did you find it easier or harder to be assertive than you expected?
- Has anyone ever given an assertive message to another person even though they felt nervous or scared inside? How did this work?
- When is it helpful to be assertive?
- Why is it good to be able to *act* assertively? (You can protect yourself even when you feel nervous or scared. The other person probably won't know how nervous or scared you are.)

### extension

- ❖ Read with students some excerpts from the *Pippi Longstocking* books by Astrid Lingren. Discuss some situations where Pippi has used assertive behaviour, why it was necessary and the responses other people had to Pippi's assertive behaviour. Record some appropriate examples as excerpts are read.



**main idea**

*It can be difficult to say NO. I can use other strategies to help me be safe.*



**NO GO - other strategies**

**field building**

- *This focus area extends upon understandings established in the previous focus area. Before participating in core learning activities, students need to have participated in some activities from the previous focus area of 'NO GO - assertiveness'.*

- ❖ Revise the rights that all children should have. (All children have the right to be safe, to have their bodies, thoughts and feelings respected and the right to be treated fairly.) Inform students that these are their rights and there is no 'question' or 'maybe' about them. Children should have these rights.
- ❖ Brainstorm these rights on the board or on a large chart. Responses which include the things that children should have concerning these rights (such as food, protection, love, care, friendship and equal chance) should also be recorded.

**core learning**

- ❖ The teacher reminds students that sometimes a person might act in a way that doesn't respect the rights of children. This is *not* OK. It is OK for children to be assertive and to say NO or GO from a situation where their rights are not being respected. However, sometimes it can be difficult to be assertive.

Each student receives a copy of the self evaluation sheet (appendix 25). The teacher reads each question. Students respond by colouring the option that best describes how they feel about their confidence to say NO assertively and to GO in an unsafe situation - with a friend, an older or more powerful child, an adult, a close and trusted adult. Students record some barriers that might make it difficult for them to say NO assertively.

- *This activity might be carried out again with students as a personal evaluation tool at the completion of a series of 'Protective strategies' activities.*

- ❖ Brainstorm students' responses to form a list of barriers for assertive behaviour. (Making the other person angry with you, seeming to be impolite or disrespectful, getting into trouble from your parents for behaving in this way.)

The teacher acknowledges that it can be very difficult to say NO especially if the other person is an adult with whom you or your family has a close relationship.

- ❖ The teacher reads the following unfinished story.

*"Mira, Mira," yells Mr Jackson from next door. Mira runs into the backyard.*

*"Yes, what do you want?"*

*"Do you want to help me work on the car engine today?" he asks.*

*"Yes, I sure do!" she replies, feeling very excited.*

*"I'll just go and tell Mum or Dad." Mira runs into the house and tells her mother that she is going to help rebuild the car engine. Mira loves cars. She wants to work in a garage as a mechanic when she grows up. So every Sunday she helps Mr Jackson work on his car engine. Mira's parents don't mind when she does this because Mr Jackson and her Dad are very good friends.*

*Mira runs into Mr Jackson's garage.*

*"Going to pass me whatever tools I need?"*

*"Sure!" she replies. Mira knows the name of every tool that will be needed. She has only made one mistake with the tools, but she always remembers how angry Mr Jackson became. That time he threw a spanner at the garage window and smashed it.*

*Later in the morning, Mr Jackson suggests that they have a break. He gives Mira a cold drink.*

*"Come and sit on my knee. I'll give you a big cuddle," says Mr Jackson.*

*Because Mira likes Mr Jackson she walks over and sits on his knee. She often sits on Mr Jackson's knee.*

*"Mira" says Mr Jackson. "It's time you started calling me Doug. We're more than just mates, aren't we? I want you to start being my girlfriend."*

*Mira is shocked. Mr Jackson is much too old to be her boyfriend. She wants to tell him this but she doesn't want to hurt his feelings or make him angry.*

*Mr Jackson pulls Mira closer to him. "Come on Mira. Where's that cuddle? You're my little lady now, aren't you?"*

*Mira wants to say NO but she doesn't feel comfortable about being assertive with Mr Jackson. Mira has been assertive with other adults before, but this time she is worried. She says nothing but starts to pull away from Mr Jackson. He looks very angry when Mira stands up. Mr Jackson is breathing strongly. Mira decides that saying NO assertively would not be the best action at this time.*





Discussion based on the following questions:

- Why doesn't Mira want to say NO to Mr Jackson? (Mira is embarrassed and worried about her safety if Mr Jackson becomes angry.)
- Does Mira have to say NO assertively to Mr Jackson? (No. Mira can decide on the way she will act. She should choose an action that will have the safest consequence for her.)

The teacher informs students that choosing to *not be assertive* is not being weak or passive. Mira could say NO assertively to Mr Jackson but has decided that this is not the best choice for her safety.

- What else could Mira do? (Mira should GO or plan to go.)

The teacher rereads the unfinished story with the following ending:

*Mira's heart was beating very quickly. She said in a small voice "I have to go home now." Mr Jackson frowned and took a step towards her. Mira felt very nervous. She said again "I have to go home now."*

*Mr Jackson said that helping him was OK with her parents and she had to stay.*

*Mira stepped away and said "I have to go home now." Mr Jackson moved closer. Mira was scared. She tried not to sound scared and said again "I have to go home now." Mr Jackson looked angry.*

*Mira walked to the door and said "I have to go home now."*

*Mira was shaking inside but she walked outside quickly and went straight home.*

The teacher informs students that it can be a safe decision to *choose not to be assertive* when the other person is older or more powerful like Mr Jackson. When you are being threatened or bullied it might not always be a safe strategy to say NO assertively. When you are being bullied it may be safest to ignore the person or pretend that you don't hear what they are saying and GO from the situation.

Discuss:

- Did Mira have the right to speak out and to leave? (Yes. What Mr Jackson suggested was not OK because he is an adult and Mira is a child. Mr Jackson was not using his power as an adult in a fair and OK way.)
- Would it be a good idea for Mira to just play along with Mr Jackson? (No. What Mr Jackson was suggesting is wrong. He is using his power in a way that is not OK.)

- Why was it hard for Mira to say NO? (Mr Jackson was her friend and she often sat on his knee. She didn't want to hurt his feelings or make him angry.)
- Instead of saying NO, what did Mira say? (Mira said one thing, "I have to go home now," and she kept on saying it.) This strategy is called the *broken recording* strategy. The meaning of this term might be discussed.
- How did the *broken recording* strategy help Mira? (Mira was scared and couldn't say NO, but the *broken recording* strategy helped her to make an excuse to GO.)
- Do you think Mr Jackson knew how scared Mira was? (No.) Why? (Mira said something. Even though it was the same thing over and over it didn't matter. Mira acted confidently even though she was worried inside.)
- What should Mira do next? (Mira should TELL a trusted network adult.)

The teacher reminds students that sometimes, in a situation where they are unsafe and feeling nervous, they might not be able to say NO assertively. You have to use your own judgement on what would be the best action for you to take. For example: - If you can't say NO assertively, another good strategy is to make an excuse and to keep on saying it, like a broken recording, to give you an excuse to GO. It is important to *act* confident even if you feel nervous or scared.

- ❖ Using two puppets, one a more powerful creature or person (such as a lion, wolf or adult figure) and the other a less powerful creature or person (such as a mouse, rabbit, koala or child) role play some of the suggested situations.

The teacher, in role, acts persuasively (or aggressively) to encourage students, in role, to act confidently, to use the *broken recording* strategy if they wish and to GO from the situation. Ask students about where they planned to GO. If there is time, more than one student has a turn at role playing each scenario.

- *NB. Because these situations involve abuse of power*
- *it is necessary that the teacher always takes the role*
- *of the more powerful character. Refer to Role plays*
- *(Introduction p 7).*
- *It is important that these role plays are kept lighthearted and*
- *ended if they become intense or evoke personal responses*
- *from students. Derole players as they remove their puppet by*
- *stating that they are no longer the 'koala' and using their*
- *names. The teacher deroles in a similar way at the end and*
- *could make a closing comment such as "Wasn't that 'lion'*
- *bossy! I'm glad we encourage friendly behaviour in this*
- *classroom!"*





Suggested roles to be played by the teacher:

- I want you to catch that lizard. (Suggested further role play: “Catch that lizard for me!” “Are you listening? Quick! It’s running away” “Do it!” “Why won’t you? I told you to do it!”)
- Drink this special drink! Now!
- Come for a drive in my car.
- Let’s go and bully that new Kindergarten kid.
- I’ve got a present I’m going to give you. I want you to do something for me first.
- You have to keep this a secret. You have to promise that you will NEVER tell anyone - no matter what.
- Come and play on the new computer. It doesn’t matter if you’re not allowed. No one will ever find out.

- *The teacher provides positive feedback about how confidently each student played their role. Other class members are encouraged to provide feedback also.*
- *Attention and specific feedback are critical in reinforcing and maintaining new behaviours.*
- *When asking students where they would GO encourage them to consider safe places as well as network people. Discuss safety houses, shops where they know the employees, police, familiar places where there are families and friends.*

At the end of the activity the teacher should indicate that if they have been harmed or abused or if they still feel unsafe or threatened they should always TELL a network person or a trusted adult about the situation.

- ❖ The teacher retells the story or shows a picture book of *The Little Red Engine* and poses the following questions. If this book is unavailable, the book *Oh, The Places You’ll Go!* by Dr Seuss may be used instead.
  - Who remembers this story from when you were younger?
  - What was the story about? (If students cannot recall the story the teacher offers to read the story or to go through the pictures in the book and repeat the question.)
  - What were some things that the Little Red Engine did to overcome his feelings of being scared? (He said positive things to himself which helped him believe he could climb up the hill.)

The teacher informs students that this is positive *self-talk*.

You can use positive self-talk any time. You can say positive or encouraging things to yourself in your mind and nobody will know what you are saying or thinking. Positive self-talk can be very helpful. It can give you encouragement to do something that you think you may not be able to do.



The teacher may wish to provide an example from personal experience, such as: *When I was on a bush walk with a group of people I had to cross a narrow bridge. I got to the middle and looked down to the slimy creek water below and suddenly I thought I was going to fall. The person behind me started to laugh at me and jumped on the bridge, making it wobble. The only way I got to the other side without falling in was by saying to myself "GO ON. You can do it. That person is not acting fairly. I'm NOT going to give that person the satisfaction of watching ME fall in. I've done hard things before and I can do this, I can DO IT! Just look straight ahead and keep on walking." And I did.*

- Has anyone used positive self-talk to help them do something that they thought they were too nervous or scared to do? When was this time and what did you say to yourself?
- ❖ Reread the first part of Mira's story and pose the following question for discussion:
  - If Mira had felt really nervous about acting confidently and GOING from the situation with Mr Jackson, what are some things that she could have said to herself to help to overcome her nervous feelings? (I have a right to have my body respected. Mr Jackson is not acting in an OK way. I have a right to be safe. I can GO from this situation. I can keep on walking and go home.)
- ❖ Recall some of the unsafe situations suggested previously by the teacher and students where self-talk was used. Students draw a picture of themselves in a potentially unsafe situation and using 'speech bubbles' write some positive self-talk statements they could say to themselves to give them confidence to GO from the situation.

• *If other 'positive self-talk' strategies have been used with students, such as the 'turtle' or 'cloak' strategies, these should be revised. Additional strategies include imagining a favourite, strengthening colour flowing inside one's body or consciously nurturing an imaginary tree of self confidence growing within. The school counsellor may provide advice on these and other 'positive self-talk' strategies which can be used with students as additional strategies for safety and resilience building.*

### conclusion

- ❖ Play the card game *Bluff* (appendix 26). This game is best played in groups of five or six students. A pack of playing cards is needed for each group and additional adult helpers may be required to introduce the game. *Bluff* encourages students to act confidently and to think about the consequences of actions before they take them.



**main idea**

*I feel happy and excited when I keep some secrets. If I have a secret which causes me to feel unhappy or unsafe it should not be kept.*

**Secrets**

- *For learning to be most effective, parents need to be informed about the content of this focus area and the rationale on which it is based.*
- *Sexual abuse of children is rarely a 'one-off' occurrence but is likely to continue over months and often years. Child sexual abuse frequently follows a predictable pattern, increasing in intensity from sexual suggestion to fondling and, over time, to penetration. Abusers rely on ongoing secrecy for abuse to continue. Abusers of children do not want to be found out. Imposing secrecy on a child is often not a difficult task. The longer abuse is kept a secret, the greater is the potential harm to the child.*
- *Maintaining the secrecy of sexual abuse usually involves feelings of worry and concern in children. Child protection education involves teaching children to discriminate between 'happy' and 'unhappy' secrets and always to TELL about 'unhappy' secrets. When children are encouraged by their parents or carers to keep secrets without discrimination, their vulnerability is increased. It is good for families and friends to have positive secrets but these should be distinguished from secrets which involve coercion and disregard for children's rights to safety and respect.*
- *Many parents teach their children to keep secrets and to obey requests from adults. Research shows that parents simultaneously expect children to recognise and to reject demands for secrecy when sexual abuse occurs (Briggs 1993).*

**field building**

- ❖ Ask students to explain what a *happy secret* is. Brainstorm a list of happy secrets (a surprise party or gift, a new baby coming, special news, a surprise visitor, an unexpected cake or bunch of flowers). Keep the list for further work in core learning.
- ❖ Students draw or write about a happy secret they have kept and how a person has reacted when the secret was eventually revealed. Share with a partner.
- ❖ In small groups students revise *feelings*, *body signals* or *external signs* that may be experienced when a person is worried or unsafe. Students are given two minutes to record as many examples as they can, for each. Share as a whole class.
  - eg *feelings*: nervous, uncomfortable, uneasy, confused;
  - body signals*: lumpy stomach, jumpy heart, tense muscles, nausea;
  - external signs*: shut door, being alone, threats, bribes, not OK behaviour.

- ❖ Read a book about a happy secret such as *Sam's Duck* by Michael Morpurgo. Discuss why Sam's secret was a happy secret. (Sam was excited and happy about keeping the secret. He was planning a surprise for his Grandfather and he knew his Grandfather would be pleased when he found out about the secret.)

### core learning

- ❖ Discuss some happy secrets that have been planned within the class or the school. (Surprise birthday celebrations, unexpected awards and surprise assembly items.) Discuss some feelings that students experienced when they were keeping these secrets and the feelings of others when the secrets were found out.
- ❖ The teacher informs students that sometimes keeping secrets can cause unhappy or unsafe feelings. These secrets should not be kept and should be shared with a trusted adult.

Read the following unfinished story about an unhappy secret.

*The house next door to Billy's place was old and empty. No one had lived there for years and the windows were boarded up and the doors locked. Billy and his friends had found a way to get into the house through the laundry. They met there after school and had made a secret meeting place in one of the rooms where they kept some comics, games and other things. They had a secret stash of cans of soft drinks, lollies and snack foods. It was fun to meet there with his friends.*

*Billy thought that if his parents found out they wouldn't be too upset or angry about the secret because the things they did there were OK. They looked after the house because it was their special place. Still, Billy and his friends didn't want to tell anyone about their meeting place because it was more fun to keep it a secret.*

*One day an older boy joined their group. It was great to have a new member of the group and he had interesting things to talk about. They all liked him a lot. One day the older boy brought them a CD player and a set of CD's. Everyone was really pleased.*

*The next day he brought another CD player and a laptop computer. He put these in another room. He said that they were not to use them. He just wanted to keep them there for a while. A few days later the older boy brought in a television set and a video player to keep in the other room.*

*That night Billy heard his parents talk about some house break-ins that had happened in their neighbourhood. They said that a television set and a video player had been stolen from the people across the road and that everyone was very upset about it.*

*Billy started to feel worried. The next day he told the older boy about the break-ins and asked him where the television set and*





*the video player had come from. The older boy told Billy and his friends that this had to be kept a secret. If they told anyone they would all be in very serious trouble for being in the empty house.*

*Billy was really worried. He knew that being in someone else's house without permission was a problem but he and his friends hadn't been doing anything that was unsafe or would upset other people.*

*When Billy's older friend saw how worried Billy was, he threatened he would hurt Billy if he ever told his parents about the television set and video player. The secret about the meeting place had been fun before but now Billy felt unsure about keeping this secret and also too scared to tell.*

Discuss the following:

- How might Billy have felt about keeping the secret at the beginning? (Happy, excited, safe, OK.)
  - How might Billy have felt about keeping the secret after he heard about the house break-ins? (Changing feelings, worried, threatened, unsafe, scared.)
  - How did the secret change? (The secret became an unhappy and unsafe secret.)
  - Why was it difficult for Billy to TELL about the secret? (He was scared of being hurt. He may have believed that he would be in serious trouble if he told. He might be worried that he was also telling his friends' secret.)
  - What should Billy do? (Billy should TELL a trusted adult.)
  - How might Billy feel then? (Relieved, safe, happy, may be a bit disappointed that his meeting place won't be secret any more.)
- ❖ Create a shared definition for the term *secret*. (A secret is something that is hidden or concealed from others so they do not know about it. Some secrets are *fun* to keep. Other secrets can cause you to feel worried or unsafe and you might be forced or pressured to keep these secrets. These secrets should not be kept.)
- ❖ Discuss the following questions and record students' responses in two columns (*Secrets which are fun / Secrets which should not be kept*). If possible, record similarities and differences alongside each other.
- How can a secret which is fun to keep be *similar* to a secret which should not be kept? (They are similar because they both involve hiding or concealing something from others.)
  - What are some secrets that are fun to keep?
  - How is a secret which is fun to keep *different* from a secret which should not be kept? (A fun secret is something pleasant and will usually make people happy when they find out.)

Often there is a special time when people are supposed to find out about the secret. A secret which should not be kept can cause you to feel unhappy or unsafe. You might be pressured or threatened not to tell the secret and to keep it hidden for a long time. Usually, a fun secret is shared by a number of people.

Sometimes an unhappy secret is kept only between two people.)

- How might someone feel when they are keeping a fun secret? (Excited, happy, want to be part of the secret, pleased that another person might be happy at the end.)
- How might someone feel about keeping an unhappy or unsafe secret? (Unhappy, nervous, scared, pressured to be part of the secret, worried that people will be angry or upset if they find out about the secret.)
- ❖ Students form groups of four. Each group receives a set of *Secrets cards* appendix 27. Students take turns to read a card and sort it into either a *should keep* or *shouldn't keep* pile. The teacher writes the correct responses on the board for groups to check their decisions. (*Should keep* - 1, 2, 4, 5,6 ; *shouldn't keep* - 3, 7, 8.) Groups discuss why each secret should or should not be kept and report back to the whole class for discussion.

Points to highlight during the discussion:

- Card 1: Everyone will find out about the baby *soon*. They will probably be happy and surprised when they know.
- Card 2: *A lot of people* know about the party. The teacher will probably be surprised and happy when he finds out.
- Card 3: This is sexual abuse. You have been told *never to tell anyone*. You should TELL a trusted adult about it.
- Card 4: The lady next door is not making anyone unhappy or hurting anyone. Your *whole family* know about it. Your friends might think it was a bit unusual but they would not be upset if they found out.
- Card 5: Your friend will receive the card soon and be surprised and happy.
- Card 6: Your Grandad's favourite drink is not hurting anyone or making anyone unhappy. Your *whole family* know about it. Other people might think it was funny, but they would not be angry or upset if they knew.
- Card 7: This is physical abuse. You have been *threatened not to tell*. You should TELL a trusted adult about it so the abuse can stop.
- Card 8: This is sexual abuse. You and your friends have been *threatened not to tell*. Even though a number of children are involved in this secret it is still not OK. Someone should TELL a trusted adult.





- *When discussing card 8 the teacher should inform students that sometimes, secrets about abuse may involve a number of children. In this kind of situation it might be more difficult to TELL because you are telling for other children as well.*
- *The other children might not understand about abuse and their right to be safe. If a secret involves abuse it should always be told.*

- ❖ The teacher informs students that feelings, body warning signals and external warning signs can help you recognise a secret that should not be kept.

Ask students to think of signs that might help them recognise a secret that should not be kept. List these to form a chart eg:

*You can recognise a secret which should not be kept if:*

- *you have mixed feelings or changing feelings*
- *you feel unhappy, worried, guilty, scared or unsafe*
- *you have to keep the secret forever*
- *your body gives you warning signals like feeling sick or yukky, shaking, racing heart, lumpy stomach*
- *you are the only one who knows about the secret*
- *the secret hurts your thinking and goes over and over in your head*
- *you really want to tell a trusted adult about it but it seems too hard*
- *someone bribes or threatens you to keep it*
- *you have to tell lies to keep it*
- *it is about something unsafe*
- *it is about something not OK*
- *it is about abuse.*

- ❖ Students form small groups. Small groups are nominated as either a)s or b)s. Each group considers and records responses to one of the following questions:

- a) Why might a person ask you to keep a happy secret from others?
- b) Why might a person ask you to keep a secret which shouldn't be kept?

Share responses as a whole class.

- *Ensure that responses to b) include the fact that secrets are often asked to be kept because they involve behaviour that the person knows is not OK, is unsafe or is abuse. Secrets about abuse are often made to be kept so that the abuse can continue and because it won't be found out. These secrets should not be kept.*

### conclusion

- ❖ Read the story *Keeping Secrets* by Jenny Koralek and Steve Cox. Discuss the following questions:
- What were some of the secrets that Rosie and her cousins had?
  - Were they secrets that should not be kept? (No.) Why? (Rosie, Josh and Harry were happy and excited about the secrets. They were not being hurt or feeling unhappy by keeping the secrets. No one would be upset or angry if the secrets were found out. Rosie was not threatened about telling.)
  - *What if* Josh and Harry had hidden some stolen things in the attic?
  - *What if* climbing up to the tree house was very dangerous and Rosie felt scared and unsafe about going there?
  - *What if* Josh and Harry had told Rosie that they would break her doll if she told about the secrets?
  - If Rosie had a secret that should be told what could she do?

### Skills for Telling

- *Before taking part in activities from this focus area students need to have an understanding about abuse, of NO GO*
- *TELL strategies and have established a network of five trusted adults. These may have been established in Stage 1.*

### field building

- ❖ Revise NO GO TELL strategies by discussing actions that can be taken for each strategy.
- ❖ Play a communication awareness game such as *Are you listening?*
  - *The game 'Are you listening?' reinforces the importance of eye contact, proximity and engagement to communicate a message. It also raises awareness about the barriers that can make communication more difficult. For students with limited verbal communication skills an alternative activity should be substituted.*
  - ***Are you listening?***
  - *Students form pairs. Each pair decides who will be the 'listener' and who will be the 'talker'. 'Talkers' from each pair meet privately with the teacher who nominates a specific topic for discussion, eg a favourite holiday, a favourite television show, a favourite restaurant. 'Talkers' prepare to speak to their partners on this topic for a given time period (1 - 2 minutes). Preparation might include individually listing some things they will talk about during the time period.*

### main idea

*TELLING a trusted adult about abuse can be difficult. Having support from a friend and using good communication skills can help you to TELL.*



- While 'talkers' are preparing their topic the 'listeners' meet privately with the teacher who instructs them that while their partner is talking to them, they must not use any listening skills. They discuss some non-listening behaviours such as avoiding eye contact, fidgeting, singing, whistling or turning away.
- Pairs rejoin to carry out their task of communicating.

After the activity, debrief students by asking the 'talkers' to describe how they felt when their partner was not listening.

If there is time, students change roles and replay the activity using a different topic for discussion.

- ❖ Revise assertiveness. Students suggest some ways that they can be (or act) assertively (standing up straight, looking at the person, using a strong, clear voice). Remind students about the effectiveness of 'acting' assertively or confidently, even when you don't feel like this inside.
- ❖ Revise the names for parts of the body including private and sexual parts. Reinforce the use of anatomically correct names for these body parts. Discuss why it is important and OK to use these correct anatomical terms.

### core learning

- ❖ Read the book *Something Happened to Me* by Phyllis E Sweet. Inform students, prior to reading, that the children in the story have experienced either physical or sexual abuse.

- This is an emotive but positive portrayal of children who have told about their experiences of abuse. Reference to abuse is not explicit and the book is appropriate for general classroom use. However, careful observation of students' responses to the story may be necessary. If individual students have strong responses to the story, debriefing is required and referral to the school counsellor is appropriate.

Revisit the first seven illustrations of the children in the story.

In pairs, students discuss some of the feelings the children may have had before they told an adult about their situation. Share responses as a class. The illustrations provide good ideas for making two overhead transparencies for display to trigger discussion.

- ❖ The teacher poses the following questions for discussion:
  - Why might it be difficult to TELL a trusted adult if you have been sexually abused? (It is often difficult to talk about sexual things to adults. They may be shocked or think that it is not OK to talk about these things. They may not *want* to believe you.)





- Why might you be worried about TELLING? (You may have been threatened. You may have accepted gifts or special things from this person when you shouldn't have. You may have said yes and liked cuddles and other ways of touching before you realised what would happen. You might still like this person for other reasons. Because of these things you might feel that you are part of the problem.)
  - Is it OK for other people to touch your private or sexual parts when there is no reason for them to do so? (NO. Children have a right to have their bodies respected. This includes saying NO to sexual touching at any time. They can say NO the first time, or they can say NO later, because it is their right.)
  - Would it also be difficult to TELL a trusted adult about physical abuse? (Yes.) Why? (Children might have been told to keep their injuries a secret. They might have a close relationship with the person who hurts them. Children may think that they caused the person to be angry with them and to hurt them. They may be worried that people will be upset or make a fuss if the abuse is found out.)
  - Why should children TELL about physical abuse? (They have a right to be safe and have their bodies respected. If physical abuse continues children can be harmed more.)
- ❖ Create a shared explanation about the purpose of TELLING a trusted network adult about abuse. (The purpose of TELLING is to receive protection and help to stop the unsafe or abusive behaviour.)
- Revise some important attributes network people should have eg they are adults, you see them regularly, you trust them, they listen to you, they care about you, they can take action to keep you safe.
- ❖ Students individually list the names of their five network adults and share their lists with a partner.
- ❖ View the segment *Stevie's story* from the video *Tell a Friend – It's Never Too Late*. Immediately after viewing students quietly form pairs and discuss how they felt about Stevie's situation.
- Class discussion based on the following questions:
- How did you feel about Stevie's situation?
  - Why was it difficult for Stevie to TELL his Mum about Uncle Alan touching the private parts of Stevie's body? (Stevie liked Uncle Alan, but not his behaviour. Stevie had accepted bribes from him. Stevie's Mum trusted Uncle Alan. Uncle Alan was her brother. She might find it hard to believe what Stevie said.)
  - Which adult did Stevie choose to TELL about his situation? (Stevie told his teacher.) Do you think his teacher might have been a member of Stevie's network?
  - Why was it a good idea to TELL a trusted adult? (An adult can help to provide protection and help to stop the abuse.)



- What made it easier for Stevie to TELL a trusted adult about his situation? (Stevie talked to his friend Marc first. Although Marc was confused at first he encouraged Stevie to TELL his teacher.)

The teacher informs students that because it can be difficult to talk about sexual or physical abuse it can be helpful to talk to a friend first to get support and encouragement. Talking to a friend can help you to be more confident about TELLING a trusted adult.

- If Marc had still been confused and had not given support, should Stevie have given up? (NO. Stevie has a right to be safe.)
- What could Stevie have done? (Stevie could have talked to another friend or gone to TELL his teacher by himself.)
- ❖ Individually students trace around their hands and write the names of their five network adults on the fingers and thumb of the hand outline. The teacher then asks students to think of some friends they could talk to if they were in a situation of abuse. Students write the names of these friends in the palm of their hand outlines. Display or insert into homework or journal books as appropriate.
- ❖ The teacher informs students that it is often easier to talk to a friend. Talking to an adult and having them listen to you can be more difficult. Using good communication skills can help.

If appropriate, refer to the listening skills game (field building) and brainstorm some skills that can help make communication more effective eg using eye contact, being (or acting) assertive, standing in good proximity (not too far away), planning what you want to say, using a clear, strong voice.

Pose the question:

- How can communication be more effective if you need to talk about the private (or sexual) parts of your body? (It is important to use the correct terminology when referring to the sexual parts of the body. It is OK and not impolite, or rude, to use these terms when you need to.)

### conclusion

- ❖ Students create two labelled drawings of themselves TELLING an adult from their network something important. Drawings include:
  1. How they would prepare to TELL (eg talking to a friend, planning what to say).
  2. How they would look using good communication skills to TELL.
    - *Teachers should pay particular attention to students' work which involves talking about abuse or about a secret.*
    - *The teacher might ask the student "Is this situation similar to one you, or someone you know, has experienced?" If the student's response is yes, further questions may be asked such as "Does anyone else know about this situation?"*

- *“Have you, or the person you know, told anyone about this situation?” “Why is it difficult to talk about it?”*
- *NB. If concerns are held about a student’s safety it is not the teacher’s role to find out detailed information but to report the situation to the principal or to personally notify the Department of Community Services. It might also be appropriate to discuss the matter with the school counsellor or to seek advice by telephoning the local community services centre. Identifying details need not be given when seeking advice from the Centre.*

## Seeking help

### field building

- ❖ Read a story about persistence from the booklist such as *Keep On Chomping* by N Gray and P Duspasquier.  
Create a shared definition for the term *persistence* (trying again and again until you have success).
- ❖ Brainstorm some of the things that might be achieved with persistence. (Being able to play a song on a musical instrument, building or making something, playing a higher level computer game, craft skills such as threading a needle, sport skills such as shooting a goal.)
- ❖ Revise the TELL strategy (from NO GO TELL) and discuss some skills that can make communication, or TELLING, more effective.

### core learning

- ❖ Create a shared explanation about why it is important to TELL a trusted adult about abuse. (The purpose of TELLING is to get help and protection so that the unsafe or abusive behaviour might stop.)

Record and display responses for reference.

- ❖ The teacher informs students that:
  - The most important factor in TELLING is to TELL. The sooner we TELL the better. Although it is difficult, the sooner we TELL the easier it can be.
  - When children keep a secret for a long time they might start to think that they are part of the secret and they are somehow to blame. This is not true. The person who started the secret is to blame. It is never too late to TELL a secret which should not be kept.

### main idea

*It is important to seek help when you feel unsafe or have been hurt or abused. It is important that you TELL and that you keep on TELLING until you are protected.*



The teacher reads the following unfinished story:

*Jared used to feel very lonely. He didn't see much of his Mum because she was very busy. He didn't see much of his Dad because he lived a long way away.*

*Jared made a new friend who was very important to him. He didn't tell his Mum much about his new friend because he thought she wouldn't really understand about their relationship. His friend was like a dad to him but he was also his best friend. They really liked each other a lot. Jared felt safe when he was with his friend.*

*One time, his friend touched the private parts of Jared's body. Jared didn't like it, but because the relationship was so important, it didn't seem to matter so much. Jared's friend bought him special things and they went to special places together. Jared started to lie to his Mum about where these special things came from and the places he was going to. Jared took more gifts from his friend.*

*Jared started to think that his Mum didn't believe the lies he told her, but she only said that he was always a problem and he was probably up to no good. Jared believed that he was basically good. He didn't know how to make his mother understand this. She always seemed too busy to listen when he wanted to talk.*

*Jared really liked his friend. The next time Jared saw his friend was not a happy time. His friend sexually abused Jared. Jared didn't tell anyone about this and kept going to special places with his friend.*

*After a while Jared decided that he wanted the friendship to stop. He wanted to talk to someone about what was happening but he was worried about the lies he had told. Jared felt guilty because he thought he must have done something to make the abuse happen. He wondered if he really was no good. Jared began to think that it was too late to TELL.*

- ❖ The teacher repeats the information provided before the story. Using markers or labels the teacher sets up two points of reference inside or outside the classroom. One point represents *strongly agree* (or Yes) and the other represents *disagree* (or No). A line may be drawn between the points.

Ask students to think about the following questions and place themselves next to a reference point or between the points to indicate their opinion about the following suggested questions. Discuss some responses to each question according to where students have placed themselves on the continuum.

- i) Jared did nothing wrong.
- ii) Jared's friend was a good friend.

- iii) Jared should have said NO and GONE from the situation.
- iv) Jared's Mum won't believe him if he tells her about the abuse.
- v) Jared helped make the problem he has - because he told lies.
- vi) It is Jared's fault that he was abused.

· *A range of responses to these statements is to be expected and should be accepted. However, important concepts should be reinforced - Jared was not to blame for the abuse and it is OK that he couldn't say NO and GO from his situation. Abusers sometimes encourage children to tell lies about small things so that when they TELL about abuse they might not be believed. Even if Jared has told lies before, it is never too late to TELL a trusted adult about abuse. Jared, and all children, have a right to be safe and not to be abused.*

- ❖ Students form small groups and on one side of a sheet of paper record four things that Jared could choose to do. Students discuss the reasons why each choice might be difficult for Jared. They record these reasons alongside each choice. Students form an agreement about what would be the best choice for Jared to take. Groups report back to the class.
- ❖ The teacher confirms that Jared's best choice is to TELL a trusted adult about his situation. The teacher also acknowledges that talking to an adult about sexual abuse, physical abuse, bullying or being threatened can be very difficult. Using good communication skills can help. However to have a chance to use good communication skills depends on choosing a good *time* to talk. It is important to choose a time when adults are alone, when they will not be interrupted and when they are in a listening mood. In groups students discuss and record when it might be *good* and *bad* times to talk to the following adults:
  - mums
  - dads
  - relatives
  - neighbours
  - teachers.

Share as a class.

· *It is important to acknowledge differences in group and individual responses. Some adults may not like to be interrupted when they are relaxing. When other adults are relaxing, busy cooking or mowing a lawn it can be a good time to approach them.*





- ❖ The teacher continues the unfinished story by telling students that Jared talked to his Mum. He chose a good time (just after dinner) and told her quite clearly about what had happened. She didn't believe him. She said that Jared always told lies and was just making excuses for getting a bad report card.

Inform students that sometimes, even when children TELL an adult something very important, the adult might not hear the message, might not believe what is said or might not take action to help the child. Pose the question:

- What might you do if you TELL a trusted adult about feeling unsafe or about abuse and nothing happens? (You have to be *persistent*.)
- What does it mean to be persistent? (You should try and try again until you feel safe and are protected. You might try the same person again. You might try another trusted adult. You have five people on your network.)

- ❖ Role play: persistence

- *It is recommended that the teacher model this role play, as the adult figure with a student, two or three times before students repeat it independently. Suggested scripted responses are recorded on the board for role players to use. Students do not make up their dialogue.*

Role play persistent behaviour in response to one of the following situations:

- Tell a trusted adult about a school bully who keeps taking your money.
- Tell a trusted adult about a man who follows you on your way home from school sometimes.
- Tell a trusted adult about an older student who says things to you about touching the sexual parts of your body.

Students playing the adult must not actively respond until their partner has had three or four attempts at telling.

***At first...***

Oh dear, oh really,  
don't worry.

Just be brave.

I'm too busy now.

I don't believe you.

***Finally...***

I know it was hard for you to  
tell me this.

You did the right thing.

I will talk to somebody who  
can do something about this.

After the teacher has demonstrated the role play students form pairs of their own choice to carry out the role plays. One student takes the role of the adult and the other the role of the child trying to TELL about one of the situations. Role players are labelled with

the role being played (ie *adult, child*). Labels are pinned to the players so they are easily transferred when roles are swapped. De-roling, by removing labels, also assists in debriefing.

Remind students that the first trusted adult they talk to may not listen or may not help. This is why we have *five* trusted adults on our network. We may need to be persistent by going to other network adults and trying to TELL again.

### conclusion

- ❖ Students write a note to their network members explaining what they would like them to do if they ever told them about an unsafe, harmful or abuse situation.

Alternatively, students write or draw to complete the sentence: *You can make TELLING easier by...* (eg planning what to say, choosing a good time to talk, speaking clearly and looking at the other person, being persistent, believing that you have a right to be safe).

### extension

- ❖ In small groups students create posters advertising some *Tips for TELLING*. Each poster also refers to the NO GO TELL strategy. Display posters in the school.
- ❖ Arrange a visit from an appropriate child protection worker from an agency that works closely with the Department of School Education. These include the Department of Community Services, NSW Health, NSW Police Service and non-government organisations. Local Child Protection Council Area Committees can help school staff identify appropriate workers to visit and speak to students.

The visitor speaks briefly about the services which are available in the community to help children who have been abused. The visitor should inform students about how these services can help and how they can be contacted.

If appropriate, students may be informed about *Kids Helpline* which is a phone-in counselling service for children and young people. The free call number is *1800-55-1800*.

*National Child Protection Week* (early in September each year) and *Operation Paradox* phone-in (held during Child Protection Week) can also be mentioned. The National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN) can provide information about *National Child Protection Week*.



**main idea**

*I can use a range of strategies to help protect myself if I feel unsafe or have been harmed or abused.*



**My strategies**

**field building**

- ❖ Revise some of the information, understandings, and skills developed in child protection education by examining students' work and some resources developed by the class. Display some of these and some books and stories that have been read.  
Discuss some favourite or memorable activities.  
Encourage students to share the learning they value or remember most in child protection education.
- ❖ Revise the NO, GO, TELL safety strategy and relate to other strategies such as:
  - Feel - think - act (decision making)
  - knowing the correct names for body parts
  - knowing about rights and responsibilities in relationships
  - recognising and responding to internal feelings and warning signals
  - recognising and responding to external warning signs
  - being assertive (or acting assertively) in unsafe situations
  - establishing and using a network of trusted adults.

**core learning**

- ❖ Create a grid with space for some or each of the focus areas covered as part of the lessons on child protection education. Individually or in small groups students list some ideas and concepts that arose from learning activities in the focus area. A grid may be used to help organise ideas (see appendix 28). Groups may be assigned individual focus areas or themes.
- ❖ Revise the concept of protection (eg protection is being safe from harm or danger) and the different ways that children may be hurt (physically, emotionally and mentally - their thinking may be hurt).  
In groups students record their responses to the following:  
*I can help keep myself safe from harm or danger by...*
- ❖ Remind students that adults have a responsibility to protect children from harm. However, because trusted adults may not always be around, there are many things that children can do to help protect themselves or to seek help from adults.  
Students individually write some strategies they could use in the following *What if?* situations. Students are encouraged to choose strategies that suit them personally and they believe they can carry out.





### What if?

- *What if* you were with a group of friends who were planning to do something that you didn't want to do because it was unsafe?
  - *What if* every time you walked to school a group of older students would follow you, call you names and threaten to throw your school bag in the river (down the drain)?
  - *What if* an adult you lived with hit you really hard and told you that you were stupid, hopeless and that no one loved you, and did this every day?
  - *What if* somebody regularly made you look at pictures that showed sexual behaviour and they told you that you had to keep it a secret, always?
  - *What if* someone did something that was not OK and then said it was all your fault and you would be in trouble if you told?
  - *What if* a person whom you knew gave you gifts but then asked for favours (that were not OK) because you took the gifts?
  - *What if* you told a trusted adult about abuse but they didn't believe you and didn't take action to protect you?
    - *Students may suggest aggressive options such as, "I'd bash him". It is important to explore the consequences of these and other unsafe options when they are suggested.*
    - *Students' responses may be used by the teacher to help in assessing their understandings about child protection education.*
- ❖ As a class group students retell or rewrite a popular story where a character is in a number of unsafe situations such as *Jack and the Beanstalk*. Incorporate child protection strategies used by the character. The teacher scribes the story writing those strategies in a different colour from the remainder of the text.

### conclusion

- ❖ Students complete a survey or evaluation form (see appendix 29) and share responses.
- *Individual responses may be sent home for parents to sign and add comments. Alternatively a summary of the responses could be communicated to parents in a note or newsletter. Covering notes remind parents of the value of their awareness about child protection education in enhancing the effectiveness of protective strategies.*



### extension

- ❖ Students create a puppet play or performance that demonstrates some child protection concepts and strategies. Use an existing story or folk tale about a character in an unsafe or harmful situation, such as *Jack and the Beanstalk*.

- *It may be helpful to focus on just one component of child protection strategies such as TELLING eg Jack telling his mother about the giant and his threats. The performance should be preceded by an introductory talk about child protection strategies eg Jack had learnt about child protection at school. He had learnt some skills that would help him TELL. He knew to choose a good time, to talk in a clear strong voice and to use eye contact.*

Students perform for an audience. Parents and caregivers could be invited.

The performance might also be presented to the Principal and school staff at a staff meeting.

- *Sharing of the outcomes of students' work in child protection is an effective way of increasing understandings about, and support for child protection education within the school community.*