

# Feeling Good Feeling Safe

**A whole school approach to  
keeping children safe**



**Information booklet for parents, families  
and carers**

[www.safetynetkids.org.uk](http://www.safetynetkids.org.uk)

[www.safety-net.org.uk](http://www.safety-net.org.uk)

# Introduction

## **The Protective Behaviours Programme in primary schools**

All parents and carers want to ensure that their children grow up happy, healthy and safe. Unfortunately, we will all be aware of upsetting reports in the media about children who have been abused and hurt, sometimes by strangers and more often by adults who are known to them.

We want to make sure that all children, wherever they live, have the best possible start in life and are equipped with tools to help them to feel and keep safe and get help when they need it. That is why we are introducing the Protective Behaviours programme into primary schools.

Protective Behaviours is a safety awareness and resilience building programme. It fits alongside the PSHE curriculum and helps children to recognise any situation where they feel worried or unsafe, such as feeling stressed, bullied or threatened and explores practical ways to keep safe. Protective Behaviours also looks at identifying support networks for times when we need someone to listen and help.

The Feeling Good, Feeling Safe programme will deliver lessons to children from Reception up to Year 6. As parents and carers you also have a really important role to play in making sure that the programme works. What we know from the research is that children get much better results from safety programmes when the ideas are also reinforced by adults at home. This booklet has been written to inform parents and carers about what children will be learning in school and provide ideas to support this learning at home.

## What's it about?

This booklet is based on the Protective Behaviours programme. This is a practical and down to earth approach to personal safety which can be used for anyone - no matter what their age! The booklet is focused on primary school children, but can be used for both pre-school and older young people.

**Protective Behaviours is based on two themes:**

*"We all have the right to feel safe all the time."*

*"We can talk with someone about anything, even if it feels awful or small."*

## Talking to children about safety

Parents and carers sometimes worry about frightening children by teaching them about safety issues. The reality is that children need to be taught skills to keep safe, just like they need to learn other life skills. Some of the safety messages that we give to children might also not be very accurate, for example 'Stranger Danger'. Sadly, it is a fact that children are more likely to be at risk from someone they know, rather than from 'a stranger' they don't know.

Parents and adults often use 'stranger danger' and other rules to scare children into feeling safe, but these can be confusing and frightening to children. What is needed is a consistent approach to safety, which allows children to have fun and take safe risks while learning skills to keep safe.

## How to get the most out of this booklet

- **Personal safety** is not just for children; it includes every one of us. Your child can benefit more if you let them know that you need to keep yourself safe as well.
- **Please read this booklet carefully before talking to your child.** You will find that it contains useful information and tips about how to start talking with your child about their safety.
- **Work through this booklet a bit at a time.** Don't try to talk about everything in one go. It is better to have several short chats so that your child doesn't lose interest and stop listening.
- **Choose a good time to talk when you won't be interrupted.** It is important there are as few distractions as possible.
- **When asking a question allow your child to say what they feel.** The 'right answers' may not always be the one you expect.
- **Feeling safe** is about making decisions and not necessarily following the expectations of others.

### Each page has three main sections:

- **One:** Protective Behaviours safety information
- **Two:** Useful conversations starters
- **Three:** Answers your child may give you or some further safety tips



# Feelings

## Safety Information

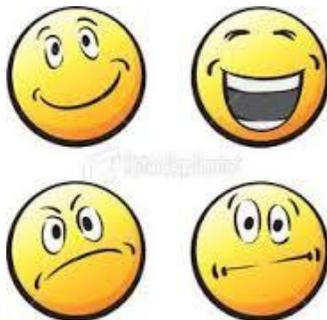
Naming, understanding and managing our feelings is the key to living a rich, full life. It can contribute to building healthy relationships and is essential for the ability to recognise when we feel safe or unsafe. Recognising and understanding our feelings helps us to manage them and not be overwhelmed by them. We can also learn that using our thinking can influence our feelings and behaviour.

It is important to discuss and be reassuring about feelings, everyone has them, they come and go throughout the day and are part of being human. We can have more than one feeling at a time and we can sometimes hide our feelings.

Feelings are simply feelings; they are neither right nor wrong. We can learn to accept our feelings, even the uncomfortable ones. It is what we do with our feelings that matters.

## Conversation starters/activities

Help children to talk about their feelings.



Ask children – how do you feel today? How did you feel when...?  
How do you think the other person was feeling?

Have some feelings faces up on the wall and discuss how everyone at home felt today.

# Feeling Safe

## Safety Information:

Children will be learning the message that:

*'We all have the right to feel safe all the time.'*

The Right to Feel Safe is the central message of the Protective Behaviours process. It is important for children to know that they have rights but also responsibilities that go with them. Knowing that we have rights helps us to be assertive and stand up for them.

Feeling safe is something which most of us don't think about, in fact, we are more likely to notice when we *don't* feel safe. It is important to learn to notice in our bodies when we are feeling safe and relaxed. When we feel safe we can learn, try new things and manage our feelings better.



## Conversation Starters:

**Q: When and where** do you feel happy and safe?

**Q: How** do you feel when you're happy and safe?

**Q: What** happens in our body when we are feeling safe?

**Practice** ways to help your child to relax.

## What your child may say:

**A:** I feel happy when I am in my bedroom or in my den.

**A:** I feel warm, snug, cosy and relaxed etc.

# UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

All children have these rights, no matter who they are, where they live, what their parents do, what language they speak, what their religion is, whether they are a boy or girl, what their culture is, whether they have a disability, or whether they are rich or poor.

All adults should do what is best for you. When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children.

You have the right to give your opinion, and for adults to listen and take it seriously.

You have the right to get information that is important to your well-being. Adults should help you find and understand the information and make sure that it isn't harmful.

You have the right to food, clothing, a safe place to live and to have your basic needs met.

You have the right to live with a family who cares for you.

You have the right to play and rest. You have the right to choose your own friends.

You have the right to be safe and protected from being hurt and mistreated, in body or mind.

You have the right to help if you've been hurt, neglected or badly treated.

**Can you discuss these rights as a conversation starter with your child?**

## Lesson 2: Fun to Feel Scared

### Safety Information

There are times when it's exciting or ***fun to feel scared***. This can include doing something for the first time like taking part in a sporting event or going on a fair ground ride. For children this is a natural and important part of growing up because they get to test out being out of their comfort zone in a safe way. Lots of children's games are based on 'fun to feel scared' like hide and seek.

We still feel safe because it is something we ***choose*** to do, so we are in ***control***. We know that if we ***no longer want to do it***, we can stop it, ***or we know it's going to end***.

### Conversation Starters:

**Q: What** do you like doing that feels exciting and which may feel a bit scary too?

**Q: Why** do you like doing it?

**Q: If you didn't** like it any more, what could you do?



### What your child may say:

**A:** I like reading ghost stories, watching scary movies and going on a roller coaster ride.

**A:** I like doing it because it's fun and I like the feeling.

**A:** If I didn't like it I wouldn't do it again or I could tell someone.

# Early Warning Signs

## Safety Information

When we feel we are at risk, our bodies prepare us for action. This is a natural defence mechanism and our body's way of telling us that we need to stop and take notice as we may need to take action to stay safe. Protective Behaviours calls these feelings **Early Warning Signs**.

If we trust these feelings we can make choices to keep ourselves feeling safer. It may also be the signal to ask for help if we can't solve the problem for ourselves.

## Conversation Starters:

**Q: How** does our body tell us when we are feeling unsafe?

**Q: What** happens in our bodies when we are doing something scary?



## What your child may say:

**A:** I get butterflies in my tummy, my heart beats faster. I get goose bumps and sweaty palms.

**If we don't have *choice, control or time limit*, we may be unsafe and need to get help.**

# Risking on Purpose

## Safety Information

We will almost certainly get these feelings when we are about to do something that is adventurous or that we have never done before.

This could happen before we go to the dentist, start in a new class, or are learning a new skill. We can recognise that although these times might be stressful, the end result may be worth it and it is for our own good. It is still our *choice*, we have some *control* and we know that it's *going to end*.

## Conversation

### Starters:

**Q:** What could you do if you weren't happy about ....going into a new class or you were feeling a little scared about trying something new?

... or about going to the dentist?



## Safety Tips

Encourage your child to recognise the need for these events in our lives because they help us to develop and grow. Try to come up with things together that will help them through the situation. For example you may visit the new class to meet the teacher or reassure them that you will be with them at the dentist.

Safe ← → Unsafe

<p><b>Feeling Safe</b></p> 	<p><b>Fun to Feel Scared</b></p> 	<p><b>Risking on Purpose</b></p> 	<p><b>Feeling Unsafe</b></p> 
<p>Our bodies tell us when we are feeling <b>SAFE</b></p>	<p>Sometimes it's fun to feel a <b>LITTLE</b> bit scared</p>	<p>When it's scary and we do it anyway</p>	<p>Our bodies tell us when we are <b>NOT</b> feeling <b>SAFE</b></p>
<p>Some of these feelings could include feeling relaxed, warm and cosy.</p> <p><i>It can be useful to have a 'safe place' that we can go to in our minds, even when something unsafe is happening</i></p>	<p>It's an adventure if we are in control, we can stop it, or we know when it's going to end.</p> <p><i>For example, going on a roller-coaster, surfing, watching a scary video or skateboarding</i></p>	<p>We put up with the scary feelings and do it anyway because we want the outcome.</p> <p><i>For example, at the dentist... It's okay if we are in control, we can stop it, or we know it's going to end</i></p>	<p>Some of these <i>Early Warning Signs</i> may be your heart beating faster, butterflies in the tummy, or wobbly knees.</p> <p><i>It's unsafe if it's not our choice, we are not in control and don't have a time limit This could be a <b>personal emergency</b> for someone</i></p>

# Personal Emergencies

## Safety Information

In an emergency situation, children need to know that it's OK to get our attention right away, or do something to try and stop the problem.



When children feel really scared or uncomfortable they need to know that it's OK for them to break the rules so that they can get help or keep safe. For example; they may interrupt a conversation, say no, break a secret, shout, scream or get help from a stranger.

## Conversation starters

If you felt really unsafe what could you do to get out of the situation?

# Body Awareness

## Safety Information

It is an important safety skill for children to be able to name all of the parts of their body including their genitals. This is because if a child is a victim of sexual abuse or inappropriate touching they may not know the correct words to describe exactly what happened to them. This can mean that the incident is not taken seriously or followed up.

Part of this programme therefore includes teaching children the correct anatomical names and stressing that they are not rude or naughty. Otherwise children will get the message that it is not ok to talk about this.

Often, the embarrassment of talking about bodies is more of an issue for adults than for children. We can de-sensitise ourselves to this, by practising saying the 'difficult' words out loud until we feel comfortable. It's fine for children to have other names that they use at home, but they also need to know the correct biological terms.

To put this into perspective, we wouldn't expect schools to teach children that their nose was called a 'hooter'! We also need to remember that this is safety information not sex education, although it does of course link to the RSE curriculum.

Children need to know that their bodies are not only clever, but they belong to them and it is not ok for **anyone** to touch them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable or unsafe or is not their choice.



# A Word About Strangers

## Safety Information

Parents don't want their children to be put at risk by other people and children need to know it is not a good idea to go off with **anyone** unless they can answer the **3 Safety Questions**:

Someone who looks after them knows **who** they are with, **where** they are going and **when** they will be back.

It isn't generally a good idea to scare our children about strangers. It may be that when an emergency does arise, the only person that is available to help them is in fact a stranger.

Police and other statistics show that children are more at risk from people they **do** know than those they don't know.



## Safety Advice

- ✓ Have a code word that only you and your child know: anyone else picking them up should use the code.
- ✓ Teach children and young people to pay attention to their surroundings and listen to their instincts or *Early Warning Signs*.
- ✓ Let your children know to tell you if anyone makes them feel uncomfortable or scared, even if it's someone they know.

# Networks

## Safety Information

*“We can talk with someone about anything,  
even if it feels awful or small”*

We all need personal networks of support. If we are getting our *Early Warning Signs* and we can't do enough ourselves to make them go away, who can we turn to?

It is useful to have at least four people, other than those we live with, who we can go to for help. We can put these on our **Helping Hand**. As parents we can't be there all the time for our children and there may be occasions when someone else can offer better support.



### Conversation Starters:

**Q: Who** could you talk to if you weren't feeling safe?

**Q: What** if I wasn't around, who else could you go to?

**Q: Who** could you talk to at school if you weren't feeling safe?

**Q: How** would you know they were a good person to talk to?

**What your child may say:** I could talk to my grandparents, friend's parents, teacher, classroom assistant or club leader

# Network Review

## Safety Information

From time to time, it's a good idea to encourage your child to review their networks. People come and go from our lives and it's important to make sure that there are always people around that we can turn to for help.



## Safe and unsafe secrets

**Safe Secrets** - are when we may get 'fun to feel scared' *Early Warning Signs*, they are usually kept for a short time e.g. a surprise party and people will be happy when they find out about it.

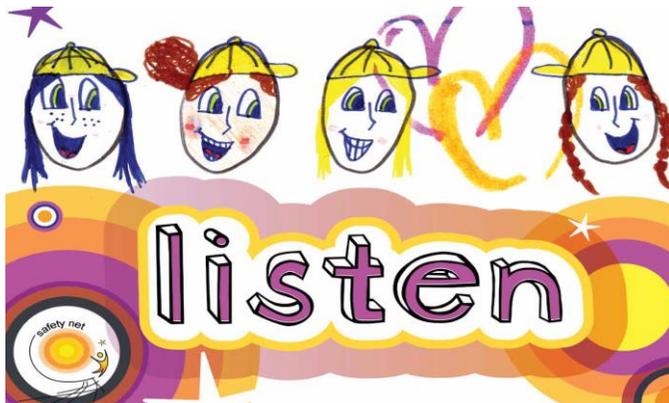
**Unsafe secrets**- are when we get our *Early Warning Signs*, we are usually asked to keep it for a long time or never tell anyone. It is a good idea to tell someone on your network if you are asked to keep an unsafe secret.

# Persistence

## Safety Information

It's important that we teach children to persist in seeking help until they find someone who listens, understands, believes them and helps them to feel safe again.

If the first person we ask doesn't help, we can try someone else. We will know our problem has been solved when our *Early Warning Signs* have gone away and we are feeling safe again.



## Conversation Starters:

**Q:** If we ask someone to help and for some reason they don't, or they aren't available, what can we do?

**Q:** What if the person doesn't do enough or the problem happens again?

## What your child may say:

**A:** I could keep asking different people until I get help.

**A:** I could ask other people who can do more.

# One Step Removed

## Safety Information

One step removed is a way of talking about tricky situations in a safer way. We can use stories, films and puppet shows to talk to children about how a character might be feeling in a difficult situation and what they could do to help themselves feel safe.

It's useful to think of lots of different ideas about what we could do in a situation; then choose the safest or best option for us. Not all ideas will work in every situation because no two situations are the same. It is important that children learn to make their own decisions to feel safe.

## Conversation Starters:

**Q: How could *someone keep themselves feeling safer* even if...?**

*(Start with a fun example)...*

- They had to brush crocodile's teeth?

*(Then you can move onto more serious examples)...*

- They heard a strange noise at night?
- They got lost in a shop?
- They were late being picked up from school?
- They were being bullied on the way home?

It is a good idea to practice problem solving before situations occur. Remember, the more ideas your child has the more options they have to choose from if they find themselves in similar situations. In an emergency we can break the rules to help ourselves feel safe again.



## Also Remember to...

- Talk to children about their feelings.
- Take time to talk and listen every day, even if it's only for 5 minutes.
- From time to time remind your child that they have *the right to feel safe*. The more they hear this message from the people who are important in their lives, the more they will believe it.
- Remind them that other people have the right to feel safe with us. Keep talking about the importance of respecting other people's feelings and their right to feel safe too.
- Let your child know that we all have worries sometimes, the important thing to do is to talk about them to someone you trust.

**Listen to your body and trust  
your feelings**

**“We can talk with someone  
about anything, even if it feels  
awful or small”**

# safety rocks



**Safety Net is a local registered children’s charity. We work to promote safety and well-being for children, young people and families at home, school and in their communities**

**Please visit our kids’ website for more ideas:**

**[www.safetynetkids.org.uk](http://www.safetynetkids.org.uk)**

**For more information contact us on 01273 411613**

Or visit our web-site **[www.safety-net.org.uk](http://www.safety-net.org.uk)**

**(Booklet based on ‘The Right to feel Safe’ by Alan Dawson)**

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