



Personal Safety Awareness

Activity Sheet

Adolescence is a very complex time. Teens are dealing with a variety of changes. They are searching for their identity, are highly sensitive, and will avoid embarrassment at all costs. Their brain is processing all information emotionally. Adolescence is a time of emotional liability (their mood is quick to change).

Moreover, adolescence is a time demanding more independence from adult supervision as they begin babysitting, working at various jobs, and dating. It is a time when intimacy plays a vital role. They feel the need for intimate relationships from both genders. Many adolescents view themselves as invincible and underestimate the possible dangers of situations. This combination can be very dangerous.

The risk of victimization increases during this precarious phase. Adolescents are the most at risk population for exploitation and harm. Girls between the ages of 11-19 are the population most targeted by adult predators. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children in Washington, D.C. explains that teens with self-confidence who are grounded in safety competence are less vulnerable targets for victimization.

Teens need to feel confident to use personal safety strategies and to stand up for their dignity and self-worth. In his novel *The Secure Child*, Dr. Stanley Greenspan indicates that an assertive attitude can be fostered through practice. Giving adolescents the opportunity to anticipate challenging situations and the corresponding feelings provides perspective. This, in turn, builds feelings of control thereby enhancing self-esteem.

Although we must remember that it is never a child's fault, nor does a child ever exhibit any behaviour that warrants victimization, it has been noted that there are identifiable traits that do increase vulnerability towards victimization. These include:

- REBELLIOUS
- SEXUALLY IGNORANT
- REJECTION BY FAMILY
- UNHAPPY or PROBLEMS AT HOME
- INTROVERTED and LONELY
- APATHETIC and LISTLESS
- CURIOUS and IMPULSIVE
- CONFUSED ABOUT SEXUAL ORIENTATION
- NAÏVE – Easily tricked by others
- MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS (Neurological Disorders)
- DRUG or ALCOHOL ABUSE
- SEEKING ATTENTION and AFFECTION
- SEXUALLY, PHYSICALLY, and/or EMOTIONALLY ABUSED

High Risk Behaviours:

Experimentation at this age is common as teens are searching for their identity. Some will engage in high-risk behaviours that put themselves in danger. Their impulsiveness or high need for peer acceptance impairs their consideration for consequences. Talk to your teen openly about the real issues that they are dealing with in their lives. Support the healthy decisions that they make and be there to help them deal with the unhealthy choices that they make. They are learning many skills that will be built upon and refined into adulthood.

All teens have needs and it is about how they go about meeting their needs that increases or reduces their safety. Helping kids think and identify the reasons behind why they are doing these things can help them understand their behaviour. They can then discuss ways of meeting their needs by replacing the unhealthy response with a healthier one that still meets their needs.

Learning to meet needs in a constructive safe manner is introduced in grade seven by examining the reasons why we behave the way we do. They begin examining and identifying different needs that they have and have opportunities to practice these skills. In S1-S4, teens continue to need to examine the reason behind behaviour and to apply previously learned skills to new situations. This continues to be an area to practice and refine in hopes that they will use it in real-life situations.

Example: A child is skipping school.

Need: To have fun, or to avoid embarrassment.

Healthy response: To make more opportunities for free time.

To make sure he/she gets help to understand the assignments in the class.

Teenagers need to be reminded of the seven safety strategies that are introduced in earlier years. They are still valuable tools that can be adapted to situations with which they are now dealing.

1. If asked to go and your parents don't know - say NO!
2. SHOUT NO - RUN - TELL SOMEONE
3. Trust your instincts
4. Buddy system
5. Speak vs. keep secrets
6. Dignity and respect
7. If you're asked to share, and your parents aren't aware – say No!

Teens need to be reminded of the common lures that are introduced in previous years.

- Assistance
- Bribery - Gifts
- Affection
- Authority
- Threats & Weapons
- Name Recognition
- Ego/Fame
- Emergency
- Playmate
- Jobs

During the teenage years it is especially important to revisit the following lures:

The job lure

Those who victimize children entice adolescents with promises of high paying and interesting jobs.

The ego lure

Those who victimize children will make promises of careers in modeling, acting, as a professional athlete, etc..

To ensure the opportunity is authentic, obtain a business card from the scout and request an interview held with child and parent.

Be aware of the location of the job interview and accompany the child if the location is remote or private.

As individuals become more proficient at using these safety skills, they will feel more in control building their self-confidence. Healthy, secure adolescents grow into functioning, contributing members of society.