Teaching Children to Protect Themselves

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A resource for teachers and adults
who care for young children

Freda Briggs with Michael McVeity

Illustrations by Monica Love

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Freda Briggs is Professor of Child Development at the University of South Australia. She has a long professional history in the child protection field; first with the Metropolitan Police in London, second in residential social work, and third as an early childhood teacher in schools in disadvantaged areas. She pioneered education and research for child protection in Australia and established the first term-long, multi-professional tertiary course in 1980. In 1990, 1991 and 1995 she evaluated *Protective Behaviours* in Australia and the New Zealand school-based national safety curriculum, *Keeping Ourselves Safe*, with children of 5–8 and 10–12 years. Her research projects have involved children, parents, victims of sexual abuse and offenders.

This is Freda Briggs' tenth book on the topic of child protection. Others include: *The Early Years of School: Teaching and Learning* (1999 with Gillian Potter), *Child Protection: A Guide for Teachers and Childcare Professionals* (1997 with Russell Hawkins), *Developing Personal Safety Skills in Children with Disabilities* (1995), *Children and Families: Australian Perspectives* (ed. 1995), *From Victim to Offender: How Child Sexual Abuse Victims Become Offenders* (1995), *Why my Child?* (1993), *Keep Children Safe* (1988) and *Child Sexual Abuse: Confronting the Problem* (1986).

Since 1985, Freda has acted as consultant to the New Zealand Police and Ministry of Education on the national school-based child protection curriculum (Reception class (R) to Year 12) *Keeping Ourselves Safe*. She performed a similar function for the Department of Education and Training, New South Wales, writing *Child Protection Education* in 1997.

Freda received the inaugural Australian Humanitarian Award (Education) in 1998.

Michael McVeity is a qualified teacher with vast expertise in teaching personal safety skills to children. He became aware of the size of the child abuse problem during his fourteen years' experience as a primary school teacher in Adelaide.

Michael served as a Child Protection Adviser for two years before winning the position of State Child Protection Curriculum Officer with the Department of Education and Children's Services, South Australia. He held that post for seven years until it was phased out in 1999 and then returned to the primary school as a student counsellor.

During his employment as a curriculum specialist, Michael had responsibility for the production of a wide variety of child protection teaching materials (print and video) to use with children. His role included supporting teachers and schools in the implementation of the Wisconsin *Protective Behaviours* program.

Michael wrote and co-authored child protection articles for the Department's in-house paper, *X-press*, on topics such as touching children, secrecy, assisting abused children in the classroom and domestic violence. He was also closely involved in evaluations of child protection curriculum and related research conducted by the University of South Australia.

Monica Love is an early childhood teacher whose sensitive child protection illustrations have been tried and recommended by teachers using Freda Briggs' earlier books.

Part 1

Guidelines for teachers and care-givers

1

WHY ALL CHILDREN NEED A SAFETY PROGRAM

It used to be argued that we should not have to provide personal safety programs in schools because adults should take responsibility for children's safety. Few people would disagree. However, the sad reality is that adults, and families in particular, have an abysmal record in child protection. Evidence of the extent of their failure came to media attention in the early 1980s and led to the adoption of school-based child protection curriculum by education authorities throughout the English-speaking world.

Two extremes of parenting styles are evident in Western society. Some parents accept that the child's world is unsafe and they respond by over-protecting and over-supervising children. Then, when an emergency arises, the children lack the experience, knowledge and skills to stay safe. At the other extreme are the negligent parents. Some think that they can protect children's 'innocence' by depriving them of knowledge about their bodies and their rights. At the other extreme, some allow children to grow up in overly sexualised, unsafe—if not abusive—environments.

Children find themselves in many different kinds of potentially unsafe situations. Traditionally, schools have accepted responsibility for teaching safety skills. At pre-school, children are shown how to stay safe while using electrical equipment, heat, knives, scissors and woodwork tools. They are taught how to stay safe in traffic and near water. They learn safety and hygiene in cooking. It follows that school is the best place for teaching children how to stay safe with people.

Most American and Canadian schools have long had access to comprehensive personal safety programs. In New Zealand, a national developmentally appropriate program, *Keeping Ourselves Safe*, covers all aspects of safety for children from school entry to Year 12. Similarly, the Department of Education and Training for New South Wales has produced curriculum guidelines to be used with children from pre-school to Year 12 (*Child Protection Education*: 1997–98). The first edition included separate modules for use with children under five years, parents, communities and children with disabilities.

In South Australia, the Wisconsin program *Protective Behaviours* was adopted by State and Catholic schools as core curriculum in the mid-1980s. Catholic Education included aspects of *Protective Behaviours* and sexuality education in 'Family Life' curriculum. Unfortunately, several studies have shown that teachers use programs spasmodically and selectively, omitting the essential concepts relating to children's rights and the need to reject and report sexual misbehaviour.

Some child protection programs are vague, assuming that children will know instinctively what constitutes reportable sexual abuse. *Protective Behaviours* assumes that sexual misbehaviour will feel unsafe and, therefore, we only need to teach children to recognise unsafe feelings to keep them safe. By omission, *Protective Behaviours* gives the impression that 'if it feels OK, it is OK'. International research has subsequently shown that these assumptions are wrong and dangerous.

South Australian teachers argued that a major reason for their avoidance of essential information in *Protective Behaviours* was the shortage of 'developmentally appropriate' specific teaching materials for the sensitive parts of the program (Briggs 1991a, 1991b; Briggs and Hawkins 1994a, 1997; Johnson 1995).

This book has been written to fill that gap.

Given that there are many publications available relating to developing children's self-esteem, understanding and expressing feelings, practising road and other forms of safety, the authors have specifically focused on the protection of children from sexual abuse.

This book provides ideas for teachers and parents as well as counsellors and therapists working both with children at risk of abuse and children who have been abused. The authors have taken account of recent research findings and evaluations of programs by children and parents.

Unfortunately there is no quick and easy fix to the problem of child sexual abuse. Safety skills cannot be taught in a single session or a single day. Teaching has to be ongoing, with opportunities for regular practice and reinforcement. The safest children are those who possess sound safety knowledge. They have teachers and parents who model safe behaviours and are open and honest in their relationships with children.

ALL CHILDREN ARE VULNERABLE TO SEXUAL ABUSE

All children are at risk of sexual abuse regardless of their age, gender, social class, race, religion or ethnicity. Most child victims are abused by people they know and trust.

Children have certain attributes and beliefs that put them at risk.

Children are relatively powerless

All children depend on adults to meet their basic needs. Ultimately, they also depend on adults to protect them. Child sexual abuse is about the abuse of power. It involves the strong and well-informed using the powerless and uninformed for sexual pleasure and degradation. Offenders gain satisfaction from planning their conquests and manipulating trusting victims. Some manipulate victims' parents and some abuse children when parents are in the same tent, room or car. The greater the risk, the greater the excitement.

Children are especially powerless when they are deprived of an open and honest protection program which provides safety knowledge, opportunities to practise safety skills, information about their rights and what constitutes unacceptable, reportable behaviour. The younger and less well-informed the child, the greater the vulnerability to abuse.

Children trust adults to keep them safe

Five-year-olds are fearless. Without a child protection program, they implicitly trust adults to keep them safe. From five to eight years, they worry about violence, strangers and imaginary creatures, shadows, the dark and being at home alone. Nightmares are among the worst problems for children aged six and even the most negligent and abusive parents are trusted because they provide comfort and take frightened children into their beds in the middle of the night. From eight years upwards, fears tend to be more experience-related, focusing on bullying and adult violence. Adults are perceived as safe because they provide protection from bullies and violent children (Briggs and Hawkins 1993).

Young children are incapable of assessing adults' motives

Child molesters use coercion, tricks, bribes, threats, blackmail, secrecy and sophisticated seduction techniques to manipulate their victims (Briggs 1995a; Elliott, Browne and Kilcoyne 1995). Piaget's theory of moral development (1965) tells us that children under seven or eight years of age cannot assess adults' motives. *Children judge people as good or bad by their appearance, demeanour and the outcome of their actions.* As a consequence, paedophiles are often perceived by their victims as kind and loving because, in the seduction process, they are attentive and flattering, they make children feel important and provide treats. Victims often accept painful abuse as the price they have to pay for an emotionally or materially rewarding relationship. Children who lack an affectionate father figure are especially vulnerable because of their need for a male role model, male attention and male approval.

Without a child protection program that tells children *explicitly* what is unacceptable and reportable behaviour, abuse victims are likely to believe offenders when they say things like:

> 'It's OK. It's fun. It's what guys do.'
>
> 'This is what people do when they love each other. Would I ask you to do something wrong when I love you? You're safe with me.'

Victims are very confused when offenders are relatives, authority figures or people trusted by their parents.

In general, children under eight years judge all adults to be kind and trustworthy if they look kind, seem kind and smile. They are only afraid of adults with disabilities, those who seem to be different to the norm or fit the stereotype of evil strangers (Briggs and Hawkins 1993).

Children are taught to obey adults

Directly and indirectly, adults teach children, from an early age, that good children do as they are told. When parents leave children with baby-sitters, they often say, 'Be good and do what s/he tells you to do'. Young children relate disobedience to the loss of approval and affection. As a result, unless schools and parents provide a comprehensive child protection program, *children believe that they have to obey adults, even when they know that what the adults are doing or demanding is wrong.* Those deprived of protection information will follow the instructions of adult abusers rather than risk being reprimanded for disobedience. They will keep abuse secret whether asked to do so or not (Briggs 1991a, 1991b, 1995a).

Children are afraid of getting into trouble

Children know from primary school age that sexual activity and sex talk 'get kids into trouble'. They know *from experience* that most teachers, parents and care-givers respond emotionally, punitively or disbelievingly to children's conversations relating to genitals or sexual misbehaviour. As a consequence, without an open and honest child protection program with parental involvement, few children have the confidence to disclose abuse, even when they know that what is happening is wrong. In other words, they will tolerate sexual misbehaviour rather than risk losing the approval and affection of the important adults in their lives.

Children believe (often rightly) that if they report sexual misbehaviour, trusted adults will 'go mad', 'go bananas', 'freak out', 'blow a fuse', etc. Why?

- To report sexual misbehaviour, they would have to talk about 'rude' and 'naughty' things and, from experience, they know that it would constitute a punishable offence.
- Children believe that they will be blamed because 'naughty' behaviour took place and 'naughty means that you are to blame . . . it's your fault . . . you'll get into trouble'.
- Children believe that adults will not only make a big fuss but also won't believe the children's version of what happened. Alternatively, if the adults believe them, they will blame the children for being there and thus enabling the abuse to happen.

When children aged from five to eight years were asked why adults get so cross about sexual misbehaviour, the children responded, 'It's because grown-ups like sex' (as witnessed on TV, in magazines and adult behaviour) 'but they want to keep it to themselves. They don't want kids to do it' (Briggs 1991a, 1991b, 1995a).

Children are taught to keep secrets

Child sexual abuse is made possible by the culture of secrecy. Most children are taught to keep secrets, especially adults' secrets and family secrets. They fear that they will be severely reprimanded if they 'tell'. Many a victim of sexual abuse has tentatively asked a trusted adult whether it's 'OK to tell a secret'. Unsuspecting parents and teachers usually assure them that secrets are nice and must be kept.

Without a child protection program, children believe that if they tell an adult's secret about sexual misbehaviour, they will be punished for several reasons:

- they told the adult's secret which they know to be a punishable offence;
- naughty behaviour occurred and there is guilt by association, even if they said 'No' and escaped; or
- they think that adults 'stick together' and 'don't believe kids'; children under eight years believe that their parents would tell the offender that they had told the secret, resulting in further punishment.

In other words, breaking an adult's secret is perceived as more serious than sexual misbehaviour.

Because they view the crime of breaking an adult's secret as having serious consequences, uninformed children will keep sexual abuse secret even when they know that it is wrong. This is because, in children's understanding, any sexual activity involving children is labelled as 'naughty' and adults get angry when children are naughty. They know that naughty means that:

- 'you're bad', unlovable and deserve to be punished;
- approval will be withdrawn; and
- it's 'your fault'.

The sense that 'if bad things happen to you, it's your own fault and you must have done something to deserve it' ensures that many victims never report what happened.

Without the confidence and knowledge that comes from a comprehensive child protection program, children will not risk telling their secrets to the most caring of parents because they fear a negative emotional response and the withdrawal of affection. Children know that their mothers will be upset, especially if the perpetrator is a trusted partner (Briggs 1991a, 1991b; Briggs and Hawkins 1994a, 1994b).

Children's anxieties are dismissed

With the best of intentions, parents discourage the expression of fears, reassuring children that there is nothing to be afraid of when they are terrified and 'it doesn't hurt, it's nothing' when they are in pain. Boys often feel that they have to deny their hurt to appear self-reliant and strong. A University of South Australia pilot study (Hallion 1996) comparing parents' perceptions with children's actual anxieties confirmed that parents substantially underestimate their children's fearfulness. Children should be encouraged by parents and teachers to talk about their fears and how they can be reduced.

Older children fear teasing by peers

An additional trap for older children is their fear of embarrassment. Children aged seven and older fear that they will be derided by peers and siblings if they 'tell'.

New Zealand research showed that, without a school-based child protection program, children over seven years believed that they could not disclose sexual misbehaviour to adults because peers and siblings would find out and taunt them for being 'stupid' (for allowing a 'yucky' thing to happen).

Boys (realistically) fear that if they reveal homosexual abuse, they will be referred to as 'poofter', 'weird' and other derogatory terms by insensitive peers (Briggs 1991a, 1991b).

Children are curious about their bodies

Children are vulnerable to sexual abuse because they are sexual beings. They don't experience sexual desire in the same way as adults, but they are curious about their bodies and they enjoy being touched and tickled in sensitive areas. Adults are often shocked when young children masturbate; however, it is normal and healthy for young children to explore their genitals in a pleasurable way providing that it is not obsessive. Masturbation is quite common from the age of three or four years. The typical adult response is to reprimand and that merely makes the child feel guilty and ashamed. The best way of handling this uncomfortable situation is to tell the child that what he or she is doing is 'OK' but 'we only do that in private in our bedrooms or bathrooms'.

Reprimands are especially confusing if children are replicating sexual abuse inflicted on them by trusted adults.

When young children show an obsession with masturbation, it is usually a sign that they are greatly troubled and need comfort. Some victims of sexual abuse masturbate excessively. They should be observed closely to identify the cause of the problem. If sexual abuse is suspected, this should be reported to the child protection service. Look in your telephone directory for a Child Abuse Helpline.

Boys are especially interested in their genitals because, unlike girls, they have no 'private parts'; their genitals are conspicuous and they handle and exhibit them in public toilets several times a day. They have the facility to compare size and shape, and at the age of six they love to see who can 'pee' the highest and farthest. Most boys have acquired a sexual vocabulary by this age. Boys are likely to be sexually aroused when others demonstrate erections and the capacity to ejaculate. Sexual interaction may then result.

Unfortunately, children's normal sexual curiosity can lead to the formation of potentially dangerous sexualised peer groups where the informed and experienced gain kudos from demonstrating their knowledge to uninformed and fascinated friends. Because of cultural taboos, sexualised boys' groups have the exciting qualities of exclusive, secret clubs (Briggs 1995a; Cook and Howells 1981). Although parents are taught that peer experimentation is harmless, there are some dangers attached to such groups:

- The leading members are often sexual abuse victims who gain acclamation for sharing

Cartoon reproduced with kind permission of Peter Nicholson. First published in *The Australian* 16.9.98

and demonstrating their knowledge of deviant adult sex.

- When sexual interest is obsessive, there is a danger that boys' groups will attract the notice of older and more violent adolescent and adult predators. *Clearly, there is a very narrow line between children's safe and unsafe sexual exploration.*

Children are uninformed

When 200 Australian male childhood victims of sexual abuse were asked what could have protected them from being abused, the uniform response was 'information about my body', otherwise referred to as sexuality education.

It is now widely accepted that, for maximum safety, children should be taught positive, developmentally appropriate sexuality education alongside child protection programs. Catholic Education in South Australia accepted this dual responsibility in their *Education for Family Life* curriculum. Some fathers protested to church authorities (and the writers) that girls 'don't need to know anything about sex until *after* they're married'. Some argued that parents, not the school, should be responsible for teaching sexuality education but, when questioned, they admitted that they had never discussed sexuality with their adolescent sons. When asked why this had been neglected, they replied:

> 'They aren't old enough.'
> 'They don't need to know anything about sexuality because they're Catholic.'

Children are misinformed

Adults like to think that children (and children with disabilities in particular) are asexual. They ignore the fact that children are sexually curious. They forget that children hear sexual language on a daily basis and acquire inaccurate information about rape and homosexuality from the media and peers. Rape threats, AIDS and 'poofter' taunts have become part of the primary school bullying scene. Children see explicit and simulated sex acts on TV. In 1998, bright preschoolers were asking parents and kindergarten teachers 'What is oral sex?' after hearing news reports relating to the impeachment of the President of the United States.

Few parents supervise or limit television viewing and many children watch adult programs in the privacy of their bedrooms. Some watch pornographic videos in their own and other people's homes. They see older brothers' porn magazines and yet, despite all of this, adults continue to behave as if children are blind, deaf and ignorant of sexual activity. Kate Legge, publishing in *The Australian* (1997), wrote, 'We have never been comfortable about mentioning children and sex in the same sentence. Sex is perceived as dirty, children as pure and the most enduring taboo in modern society keeps the two at a distance.'

Modern parents should be able to impart the basic facts of reproduction, given the number of books available to help them in schools, in public libraries and personal development bookshops. What they tend to omit is the role that sexual activity plays in human relationships. Children, both boys and girls, should be taught to take good care of their bodies. This is especially important given the risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

TEACHING PERSONAL SAFETY SKILLS

Although we have known since the early 1980s that most child sexual abuse is committed by people who are known and trusted by their victims, child protection efforts (at school and at home) tend to be restricted to the avoidance of being kidnapped by strangers.

Without involvement in child protection programs, neither parents nor teachers seem to know how to teach children to stay safe. They imagine, mistakenly, that this involves giving children frightening information about deviant sex. They do not know that protection programs can be fun and, furthermore, when children undertake them with parental support, family relationships become more open, children become more confident and less fearful given their awareness of parental support (Briggs 1991a, 1991b; Briggs and Hawkins 1995a).

Complacency and denial

Even though there has been a great deal of publicity confirming that most child sexual abuse involves trusted persons, parents and teachers remain complacent about the need for protective education for children. Parents are happy when the school takes responsibility for protective education but they avoid involvement, believing that their families are immune from this particular problem. They view child protection education as unnecessary because:

> 'We don't know anyone like that. There's no-one mentally ill in our family.'
> 'I trust all our neighbours and relatives implicitly.'
> 'We drive the children everywhere. We always know where they are.'

When they believe that strangers present the only danger to their families, parents think that all they have to do is act as taxi drivers to keep children safe. This is a comfortable escape from responsibility, given that none of us knows or socialises with strangers.

Parents gain comfort from the belief that all the people they trust are trustworthy and, even when faced with contrary evidence, they prefer to think that child victims are mistaken rather than admit that their trust could have been misplaced. Denial is a widespread problem. Alan Gill, researching for his book *Orphans of the Empire* (1997), found that countless disclosures of sexual abuse by children in religious boarding schools and state children's homes were dismissed and ignored by nuns, relatives, social workers and even a police commissioner.

The reality is that the justice system does not protect children from sexual abuse. Only about 10 per cent of offenders are prosecuted and only about 2 per cent are convicted. Juries may be warned that the word of a child is considered to be much less reliable than the word of an adult offender in a criminal court. Furthermore, cases are unlikely to be taken to court unless child victims/witnesses are sufficiently intelligent and sufficiently articulate to withstand hours or even days of questioning by a barrister whose sole aim is to confuse and discredit.

SEXUAL ABUSE DAMAGES CHILDREN AND SOCIETY

Unfortunately, the early sexualisation of children can cause enormous damage to their development, irrespective of whether they like or dislike what happens. At school, most abused children exhibit learning problems (Oates 1985, 1990). Their overtly sexualised behaviour is recognised by potential abusers. Paedophiles and opportunists abuse children without conscience when they believe that they are sexually experienced.

They are then victimised repeatedly and victimisation becomes a way of life. When their emotions are sexualised, children look for sex in lieu of affection. Victims who have learned that sex pleases adults may behave sexually with their teachers or older children of the same gender as their abusers. Uninformed staff may label them as 'promiscuous' without considering how they learned the behaviour.

Sexual abuse victims also come to the notice of teachers and parents when they re-enact their abuse with other children, replicating the behaviour and seduction methods learned from experience. If there is no therapeutic intervention, they are likely to perpetuate the abuse cycle, creating another generation of victims and future offenders.

Victims who like their abusers or enjoy some aspect of an abusive relationship are likely to suffer from enormous guilt when they realise that what was happening was wrong. This can cause great psychological harm. Victims of both sexes tend to lose their capacity to trust and many have difficulties in creating and maintaining long-term relationships. Because of associated feelings of guilt, shame, anger and self-recrimination, victims are also likely to suffer from low self-esteem, unemployment, mental and physical ill health and suicidal and self-destructive tendencies including drug abuse and alcoholism.

The financial and social costs of child abuse to society are enormous.

Children in home- or school-based child protection programs, however, are the ones least likely to be targeted for victimisation.

DISCLOSING ABUSE

Fear of breaking rules

Unreasonably, most parents believe that their children will know *instinctively* that sexual abuse is wrong if they encounter it. Without giving children any information, parents expect them to risk anger, blame, reprimand and punishment by:

- breaking the rules of obedience and disobeying the offender;
- breaking the rules which forbid discussion of sexual matters and reporting to them immediately;
- breaking the rules and telling them an adult's secret.

Parents need to know that they cannot delay child protection education until children ask questions; children will never introduce the subject of sexual misbehaviour. They will never ask questions if parents do not introduce what is widely recognised as a taboo subject. *It is unreasonable to expect children to 'tell' if, by their very avoidance of the subject, the adults have given the impression that they cannot cope with disclosures of this kind.* Sexual misbehaviour is difficult to report and children will only disclose their concerns when they know for certain, *from past experience*, that the adults will be supportive. The first approach *must* come from parents when children are young.

Lack of reporting skills

Without child protection programs, child victims do not know how to report abuse.

Children need clear reporting skills to disclose abuse. Many victims are told by offenders that their mothers know what is happening. This is a deliberate ruse to increase the victims' sense of helplessness.

A complication is that, when uninformed victims try to make reports, they use the offenders' language and a child's perspective of what happened. For example:

> 'I don't like it when he wants me to play horsy.'
> 'He has a magic stick.'

Children subjected to oral sex may refer to an offender's genitals using his language, such as: 'I don't like the taste of his ice-cream (or milk).'

An additional complication is that children who are unsure of support will then test adults by giving them vague hints. If help is not immediately forthcoming, they are likely to accept a state of helplessness and hopelessness, especially if the offender warned that 'no-one will believe you if you tell'. This increases the psychological damage to the child.

Hints include low-impact statements such as:

> 'I don't like my grandpa/uncle/cousin coming to our house.'
> 'I don't like going to scouts/church/sport/music lessons.'
> 'I don't want to go to his or her house any more.'
> 'Is it alright if —— does funny things?'
> 'I've got a secret.'
> 'Is it alright to tell a secret?'
> 'Is —— coming today? I don't like the games he plays.'
> 'He wears funny underpants.'

'He made the dog lick me.'
'I don't like the way he tickles me.'
'I don't like ——. S/he's mean/gross.'

Unfortunately, uninformed adults tend to confirm victims' helplessness by responding with statements such as:

'Yes, we have to keep secrets.'
'Yes, we have to learn to put up with teasing/tickling.'
'He plays with you because he loves you.'
'Of course it's OK if he's funny and it makes you laugh.'
'S/he will be upset if you don't go today. You know how s/he looks forward to seeing you.'

By comparison, a well-informed, safety-conscious adult would ask:

'Where do you see him in funny underpants?'
'Show me where he tickles you.'
'How do you play that game?'
'What will happen if you tell the secret?'
'Who said so?'
'Who else knows about it?'
'Why don't you want to see —— any more?'
'What is a magic stick?'
'Where does the milk (or ice-cream) come from?'

These simple questions enable caring adults to assess the seriousness of the problem and discuss strategies for stopping inappropriate behaviour.

Unfortunately, children who have not been taught how to make accurate reports believe that they are disclosing abuse when they make these vague statements. Classes of 5–8-year-olds were asked what children should do if a new childminder asked them to play a new secret game in which they were told to remove their clothes. All of the children knew that the game was 'rude', wrong, or 'not allowed'. However, some children said that 'kids would have to obey a baby-sitter because baby-sitters are older and they get mad if you disobey'. A few said that the 'kids should say they're tired and go to bed'. One boy said that he would 'go round to the neighbour's' and another suggested crossing off that baby-sitter's name from mum's address book in the sideboard. Others made statements such as:

'I would say to Mum that the baby-sitter was mean.'
'I would tell Mum that the baby-sitter told me to get undressed.'
'I would say, "Mum, I don't want that baby-sitter to come any more".'

While the children believed that they were making reports of sexually inappropriate behaviour, it is very unlikely that any parent would realise that something was seriously wrong.

One boy said that he could telephone his mum from a telephone extension in his bedroom 'because mum always tells me where she's going to be'. However, only one boy gave a clear and comprehensible report and, coincidentally, he was the only child in his class whose mother had read child protection books and talked about personal safety and children's rights with him. He believed that his mother would pat him on the head and say, 'Good boy. We won't have that baby-sitter again.'

Few children will persist if there is no response to their first attempt at reporting. Few children will tell anyone else if their mother does not respond supportively.

There is more information about dealing with the disclosure of child sexual abuse in Chapter 3.

Reading the signs

Without education for child protection, parents and teachers often confuse the signs of child sexual abuse with normal sexual curiosity. The offender then gets the benefit of the doubt and continues to offend.

Children's normal curiosity involves an equal partnership on the lines of 'you show me yours and I'll show you mine'. It is exploratory play designed to confirm whether other children's bodies are the same as their own. Because children are interested in the construction of their bodies, curiosity increases when they become aware of gender differences.

It is a sign that a child may have been sexually abused when he or she engages in sexual activity and there is a difference in the power, size, age and knowledge of the instigator(s) and other participants; for example when:

- an intellectually disabled or younger child is targeted;
- a child tells others to do sexual things to another;
- force is used;
- the instigator uses tricks, bribes, coercion, threats or blackmail;
- the instigator instructs others to abuse a child;
- there is no equality or mutual sharing.

Table 1.1 Normal curiosity compared with the behaviour of children who have been molested

Behaviour typical of normal curiosity	Behaviour typical of children who have been abused
Scope: A limited number of sexual behaviours such as looking, peeking, touching.	A range of sexual behaviours, including penetration (by penis, fingers or objects), sex talk, often very disturbed toilet functions. May use adult offender's behaviour and language if the child offender is also a victim of sexual abuse.
Frequency: spasmodic, not focused. The participants are easily distracted into other activities.	High frequency. Obsessive. Activities often focus on sex and aggression.
Duration: Intermittent interest. Spate of interest at 4–6 years and again at 8 years.	Aggressive *and* sexual behaviour evident over several days or weeks.
Involvement of other children: Experimentation; usually with friends.	Siblings, cousins or other relatives as well as children at school.
Age difference of participants: Often none. Similar age, size and development.	No age difference or molests younger children.
Coercion: Not involved.	Coercion involved, sometimes using physical force, threats, secrecy, bribes, blackmail. They often choose vulnerable victims.
Affect: Silly, giggling, fairly spontaneous.	Angry, vindictive, threatening, punishing; or lonely, sad, anxious. Sadness and loneliness often pair with aggressive sex.
Motivation: Exploratory and sensual: they want to know how others are constructed.	Sex for anxiety reduction or sharing knowledge with others for kudos.
After discovery: Embarrassed. Fearful of punishment.	Denial. Abusive, angry or withdrawn.
Family environment: Any family.	Often chaotic families with histories of sexual abuse, drug abuse, absent and non-functional or violent father-figures, resulting in a lack of understanding by child about boundaries.

Adapted from Child Protection Council, Canberra, *Child Protection Newsletter*, no. 10, 1993.

In addition, it is likely to be a sign that the instigator has been abused when:

- there is a demand for secrecy;
- there is a demand for oral sex;
- there is sexual activity of a kind referred to in adult pornography, e.g. references to 'golden showers' (urinating over a child) or inserting objects into vaginal or anal openings;
- victims are asked whether they 'like it' or they are assured that it feels great.

When children simulate sexual intercourse or oral sex in doll play or show an obsession with sex with dolls, their drawings and conversations, there is a strong possibility that they have been sexualised prematurely. Such children should be carefully observed and observations should be recorded and reported. Even if the child protection authorities do not investigate the suspicions, it is helpful to have a record in case other people report suspicions.

The drawings of young sexual abuse victims often include:

- outsize genitals;
- an erect penis on drawings of the offender, akin to a third arm;
- exaggerated mouths and sharp teeth on portraits of offenders (oral sex);
- phallic symbols, often incorporating the shape of an erect penis;
- armless self-portraits, although they draw arms on other figures (depicting helplessness);
- faceless self-portraits, although they draw faces on other people (showing loss of identity and/or fear of revealing a terrible secret);

- immature body shapes in self-portraits, although drawings of other people's bodies are well developed;
- frequent use of black, purple and red (angry colours) when there is a free choice (Briggs and Hawkins 1997c).

Older victims may draw attention to their plight in bizarre writing, sexually explicit drawings or behaviour.

Don't dismiss evidence

Teachers often try to excuse or explain children's sexually obsessive behaviour by suggesting that they may have seen sex videos or parents' sexual activity at home. Such assumptions are unacceptable; there is no evidence that videos strongly influence young children's behaviour. Because they are impersonal, they are less emotionally disturbing than real-life experience. Videos *do* affect children's behaviour when they are made to act out what they see. Children are more likely to be influenced by what happens *to them*. If there is evidence that children are watching pornography, this should be reported given the widespread use of pornographic materials to desensitise children in preparation for sexual abuse.

OFFENDERS' TECHNIQUES

Studies of sexual offenders confirm that they choose uninformed, powerless children and avoid confident, knowledgeable ones whenever possible (Briggs, Hawkins and Williams 1994; Briggs and Hawkins 1995a; Elliott *et al.* 1995). In selecting victims, 'pretty' children were targeted by 42 per cent of offenders in Elliott's study of 99 male subjects. However, although physical characteristics were important, they were less important than the way that children behaved. In general, offenders tend to target the lonely, trusting, curious, young and small. One in eight male offenders focused on 'innocent' and 'trusting' children and 49 per cent said that they were attracted to those who lacked confidence and self-esteem. As one man commented, 'You can spot the child who is unsure of himself and target him with a compliment and positive attention' (p. 584).

Almost half (46 per cent) developed a 'special relationship' with the victim as part of the seduction strategy.

When looking for victims outside the family, 35 per cent of offenders frequented places where children congregate, such as schools, campsites, Sunday Schools, amusement arcades, playgrounds and sports facilities. They targeted the unaccompanied losers in sports events.

One-third of offenders deliberately gained access to victims' parents and were made welcome in their homes. Besides increasing their access to the child, this is a safety measure: parents are less likely to believe a child who reports sexual misbehaviour by someone the adults know and trust.

Almost half (48 per cent) of offenders isolated their victims by acting as baby-sitters. They introduced sex while offering to bath or undress the child, misrepresenting the abuse as educational or a sign of affection.

It is important to note that 53 per cent of abusers gained access to children by offering to teach them to play a musical instrument or a sport. Forty-six per cent gave them a lift home. Sixty-one per cent of sexual abuse offences occurred in the offenders' homes and 39 per cent in the victims' homes. In addition, 44 per cent of offenders abused children in public toilets and on campsites.

In an Australian study, some convicted incest offenders told the author that, when child protection was introduced at school, their victims told them that their behaviour was wrong. The fathers instructed the children to 'do the right thing and report it to the teacher', which they did (Briggs, Hawkins and Williams 1994).

Offenders molest children in groups

Unfortunately, there is no truth in the saying that 'there's safety in numbers'. Boys are particularly vulnerable to seduction in groups, especially at camps, sports clubs, church groups and boarding schools. It is comparatively easy for a trusted group leader and authority figure to overcome the resistance of an uninformed child by demonstrating that 'everyone else does it' and 'it's fun . . . it's what guys do'. Paedophiles take advantage of children's fear of being perceived as different to their peer group. The boy who resists suffers a barrage of jibes designed to make him feel abnormal: 'Don't you like having fun? What's wrong with you? You're weird.'

Although no-one can be trusted merely by virtue of their position, religious affiliation or relationship, at the same time we cannot teach children to fear *all* adults. That is why children need personal safety education that will both help them to understand their rights to protec-

tion and assist them to identify, avoid and report inappropriate behaviour.

Offenders exploit children's confusion

Because parents reprimand children for playing with or showing their genitals and for 'rude' or 'dirty' talk, girls in particular are shocked and confused when they first encounter sexual misbehaviour involving an adult. Offenders take advantage of their confusion to gain compliance, giving assurances that what is happening is normal:

> 'I'm teaching you about what girls are for.' 'This is what people do when they love each other.'

Unfortunately, if victims do not report the first incident, offenders perceive them as willing, equally informed partners.

Use of pornography to desensitise children

It is easy for sex offenders to gain access to sexually curious children. They stimulate curiosity by introducing sex talk, dirty jokes, sex-focused magazines, pornographic videos and pictures and Internet sites, often in the guise of 'sex education', harmless 'fun' and 'what guys do'. Targeted victims are exposed to a diverse range of deviant sexual practices. This is part of a carefully planned desensitising process to persuade children that sex between adults and juveniles is normal, acceptable and enjoyable. They say, 'Look, it's obviously OK. They make movies about it.' If a child does not object and walk away when sex talk and pornography are introduced, the offender accepts silence as evidence of interest and willingness to participate.

The sharing of pornographic material with children often becomes a special secret between the abuser and the child. Boys may feel privileged to have been given entry to this secret adult world. Those who are members of highly sexualised peer groups believe that they are in control when paedophiles provide rewards for genital fondling. They suspect that the offender is crazy for paying them for what they already do with their school-mates. This early cooperation makes it difficult for victims to escape when activities become violent and excruciatingly painful. The secret is then used to maintain the abusive relationship, often accompanied by threats that victims will 'get into big trouble' if parents find out that they have been watching sex videos and other banned material. This threat usually occurs when the relationship has moved into the sexually aggressive phase.

Unfortunately, the writers have found that some fathers introduce their young sons to porn on the Internet in the mistaken belief that this is an amusing, macho thing to do. They excuse this behaviour on the basis that 'they're too young to understand'. Parents should be made aware that children are constantly learning and those exposed to pornography at home are learning inappropriate sex roles. There is a risk that boys will re-enact the sexual behaviours they see with children much younger than themselves (i.e. they could become mini-offenders), or that girls will behave sexually with older males. The question of where children learned this inappropriate behaviour is obviously an important one and parents could suffer the embarrassment of an investigation by child protection officers.

Thus, it is essential that adults who own legal pornography keep it locked away so that the risk of accidental access is minimised.

Paedophiles use victims to recruit others

Some paedophiles use their victims to recruit others to provide sex, not only for themselves but for paedophile acquaintances. Offenders told the author that boys are less likely to report them if the boys' mates are also involved. Boys are even less likely to disclose victimisation if they have complied with adult instructions to abuse younger boys in the group, making them mini-offenders. Boys trapped in brothels and paedophile groups used by community leaders (such as police officers, lawyers, members of parliament, judges, magistrates and businessmen) may experience death threats relating to silence. Victims are often given alcohol and other drugs.

Offenders exploit children's guilt

Child offenders deliberately make children feel responsible for the criminal behaviour. Boys are unlikely to report sexual offences if they've been led to believe that they were chosen because they were identified as 'homosexual', weak or girlish. When victims want the behaviour to stop, offenders tell them that they should

have said 'No' at the outset and, despite differences in maturity, power and knowledge, the fact that they failed to stop the abuse is presented as evidence of equal responsibility (Briggs 1995a). Girls are sometimes trapped by the threat that, if they report abuse within the family, their mothers will disbelieve or disown them, the offender will be jailed and they, the victims, will be responsible for the family break-up and resultant poverty and trauma. 'If you tell, I'll go to jail and it will be all your fault. You will have nowhere to live.'

When victims want the abuse to stop, they are told: 'It's your fault. You could have said "No" and you didn't. You're a bad kid. You'll get into big trouble if you tell. The police will take you away from home.'

When children are sexually abused and protest that it is painful, they are told by their abusers that the discomfort is their own fault; they are too tense and need more practice. Given that their abusers make no secret of the pleasure that they get, child victims may accept the blame and assume that they are physically abnormal.

Offenders exploit children's powerlessness

Paedophiles gain control of children by telling them that they are the only people in the world who care for them. Boys are given the impression that their parents were negligent because they didn't provide sex education or engage in physical affection that included sex. Offenders demean single mothers to their sons. Offending father-figures commonly control every aspect of female victims' lives, teaching them that they are powerless, inadequate and dependent on them. Girls are sometimes told that their mothers 'know what is happening and it's alright'. Victims may then hate their mothers as much as the offenders and feel psychologically orphaned with nowhere to turn.

STRANGER DANGER

Although most parents teach children to avoid being kidnapped by strangers in cars, comparatively few children are abducted by strangers. In an Australian survey of 200 abused males, only 13 per cent said that they were molested by a stranger (Briggs and Hawkins 1995a). Australian Police statistics have shown that as few as 6 per cent of annual reports of abuse involve strangers. The vast majority of offenders develop a trusting relationship with targeted victims (and, sometimes, their parents) before they introduce sex. Abuse by strangers is usually a 'one-off' non-violent incident in a public place. Although such incidents are traumatic and affect children's lives, they are usually less damaging than repetitive abuse that takes place over a prolonged period of time at the hands of a trusted person. An additional problem for victims is that they are often engaged in a banned activity (such as talking to a stranger or taking a short cut through a park) when the abuse takes place. The fact that they broke the rules and spoke to or accompanied the stranger prevents them from reporting offences. They live with guilt and fear thereafter.

Although child kidnap and murder are rare, such cases attract media headlines. This has caused parents to concentrate on the dangers of strangers using negative and often vague instructions.

While most young children fear dangerous strangers, the testing of 378 Australian and New Zealand children aged between five and eight years confirmed that those who are deprived of access to a comprehensive child protection program are vulnerable to abduction by strangers because they believe that:

- they can trust all adults except strangers;
- they have never seen a stranger in their lives but would recognise one instantly if they saw one;
- strangers are always males;
- women are always trustworthy;
- if you have talked to adults, they cease to be strangers;
- strangers are readily identifiable by their evil appearance, black masks and balaclavas, black clothing, old black cars and the way in which they leer at children;
- strangers are part human, part monster who burgle houses in the night and steal property and kidnap children from their beds;
- women can always be trusted to help children;
- people who know your name or say that they know your parents can be trusted because they are your friends;
- people can be trusted if they have been introduced;
- people can be trusted when they look kind, seem kind and offer to do kind things;
- teachers would never allow strangers onto

school premises (Briggs 1991a, 1991b, and research undertaken in 1998–99).

It is important to note that these views were held by all Australian and New Zealand children tested before the delivery of school child protection programs. They included the children of child protection and police officers who neglected to educate their own children because they assumed, wrongly, that their professional work would 'rub off'.

So entrenched is the stereotyping of the evil male stranger that class after class of children aged five to eight told the author (who had just arrived on an international flight) that they had never seen a stranger in their lives but would know one instantly if they saw one. They were adamant that the writer was not a stranger because:

> 'Teachers wouldn't let strangers come into school.'
> 'You're a woman.'
> 'You look kind.'
> 'You look like my gran.'
> 'You carry a briefcase which shows that you work, and strangers don't work. They just rob people.'

Despite the traditional emphasis on strangers, therefore, the concept of 'stranger' is too complex for children of this age. Their stereotyped views came from parents, peers, TV news and programs about wanted criminals (Briggs 1991a, 1991b, 2000; Briggs and Hawkins 1993). The children revealed that they would accompany any stranger who pretended to be a friend of the family, seemed kind or offered to help when they were in distress. If lost in a public place, they would accept the help of any adult with a smiling face and reject the safest solution to their problem. For example, if lost in a busy department store, children would not approach a shop assistant because she:

- doesn't know me;
- can't take me home because she doesn't know where I live;
- has to stay at the cash register and serve grown-ups;
- can't leave the shop to take me home;
- might take me to a stranger.

The only safe suggestions came from a class whose visit to a supermarket had included a demonstration of the public address system.

If lost in a street parade, some children would 'stand still' (as instructed by parents) and then (a few seconds later) search the crowd for a familiar or kindly face and ask that person to reunite them with their parents. Although they knew that police are well represented at crowded events such as street parades, children would not tell a police officer that they were lost because police:

- would tell me off for being naughty and losing mummy;
- couldn't leave their job controlling crowds [to take me home];
- have to arrest robbers and take them to jail.

Although all of the children knew that police have radios and access to cars and large stores have public address systems, it did not occur to them that adult equipment could be used to help them. The only children who viewed police as potentially helpful had fathers who were police officers. In an emergency, children think in terms of immediacy and who might solve their problem in the shortest possible time.

In the meantime, whole classes of five- and six-year-olds said that they would accompany any unknown woman who met them at the school gates claiming to have been sent by their mother to collect them. The children rationalised that adults tell the truth (because they punish children for telling lies) and that the woman was being kind and helpful. It is important to note that none of the children would have returned to seek help from a member of school staff because:

- schools are spooky when classrooms are empty;
- there might be a stranger in the school;
- teachers go home quickly when school is over;
- they view teachers' authority as limited to their own classrooms and yard duty.

It became clear that, without a comprehensive child protection program, children's concept of 'stranger' is so defective that they would ignore the safest resources and accompany the first kind-looking adult who offered help. This suggested the need for problem-solving exercises which cover a range of potentially hazardous situations in which children might find themselves (Briggs 1991a, 1991b). Schools must also work to counter boys' belief that child protection programs are irrelevant to them because only girls are abused (Briggs and Hawkins 1995a; 1995b).

OFFENDERS' ADVICE ON PREVENTING ABUSE

Offenders interviewed have suggested that safety messages should start from the age of three and continue until the age of sixteen. They said that parents and teachers should give and reinforce these messages.

Offenders emphasised that children need information about their bodies. Boys need to know about circumcision, erections and ejaculation long before they reach adolescence. That would reduce paedophiles' attractiveness as boys' first sex educators. Children with disabilities should be given sexuality education; they are vulnerable because they are ignorant. 'Children also need to be told quite clearly that not everyone is trustworthy: a child molester is often the last person you would suspect.'

In addition to these facts, offenders advised that children should be taught the following strategies and behaviours:

- avoid secluded, remote places. They place themselves at risk by playing in deserted stairways, playgrounds or streets and they should not play hide and seek where they hide alone;
- escape and 'tell' if anyone tries to trick them or 'make strange suggestions or talk about sexual things';
- escape and 'tell' if someone touches or brushes up against the private parts of their bodies 'accidentally on purpose', that is, pretending that it is an accident. Offenders watch reactions and if there is no display of annoyance, they assume compliance;
- make up a fib and get away to tell a neighbour if a baby-sitter tries or suggests anything improper (*'Children always fall for the idea that you will let them stay up late if they play a secret game with you. Parents should tell kids that if the baby-sitter tries to do them a special favour they should not be fooled.'*);
- go out only with other children (*'I never approach children in groups: there are plenty of children on their own. It just isn't worth the risk when there are several kids together because you can't control them all.'*);
- be wary of public toilets and never go into them alone (*'A great place for molesters to hang out is in a toilet in a hamburger restaurant. Little boys go into the toilets alone and they aren't expecting someone to touch them. Most of the time they are too embarrassed even to shout. I would teach kids to run out of toilets yelling the minute anyone tries to help them zip up or touch them.'*);
- walk to school with other people (*'The best time of the day to get at children is when they are walking home from school alone.'*);
- never to accept lifts (from people they know as well as don't know) or talk to anyone who comes up to them (*'Children are so trusting. A good way to approach them is to ask for the time. It seems innocent enough but once you get them into conversation, it's hard for them to get away. If you look respectable, they figure that you can't be a nasty stranger.'*);
- knock on the door of a nearby house if they are being followed (*'This really put me off when I was following a child. That child didn't get abused.'*);
- should always tell parents where they are going;
- tell and keep on telling if anyone, including a relative, is abusing them (*'Don't pretend that nothing is happening and hide it from everyone because it will only get worse. That's what happened to me.'*);
- tell a friend (*'Sometimes kids don't have a grown up to trust so they can have their friend come with them to tell a teacher or a school counsellor or someone else.'*);
- be especially wary if a man on his own approaches them (given the information that 93 per cent of abusers operate alone).

Offenders advised parents to know and keep in mind these facts:

- Over-loving or over-affectionate people are potentially dangerous.
- Abuse can begin gently and subtly and escalate over a period of time, so children need to be prompted to get help early.
- Even family members and friends could ask their children to do something sexual. (*'Parents are so naive—they're worried about strangers and should be worried about their brothers-in-law. They just don't realise how devious we can be. I used to abuse children in the same room as their parents and they couldn't see it or didn't seem to know it was happening.'*)
- Offenders will use any way that they can to get to children. (*'I am disabled and spent months grooming the parents so they would tell their child to take me out and help me. No-one thought that disabled people could be child abusers.'*)

- Children hold adults in high esteem and will do what they say. (‘*Don’t teach your kids to do everything that adults tell them, otherwise they’ll be too frightened of adult status to protect themselves.*’)
- It is a dangerous age when children approach puberty and might be sexually curious. (‘*I used that curiosity to trap them into sex.*’)
- Single-parent families are commonly targeted by paedophiles. ‘The mothers are stressed, overworked and are grateful for someone taking children out for a while’, telling themselves that the children need a male influence (Elliott *et al.* 1995, p. 590).
- Children can be abused anywhere: in church, at school, in the sports changing room, in the doctor’s surgery. (‘*Mothers can’t supervise them all of the time. That’s why they need to give kids information.*’)

In addition, offenders advised parents to undertake the following preventative measures:

- Keep a close eye on children (and boys in particular) at sports events, swimming pools in school holidays, beach toilets, shops for stamp collectors, camps and other venues frequented by children.
- Be suspicious if an adult seems more interested in their children than in them. (‘*Watch out for someone who offers to take your children on holiday or who tells you to take a break or have a night out while they watch your kids. Why would a man want to hang around your children?*’)
- Teach children that they should never keep secrets or feel that they are to blame if they are abused. (‘*Secrecy and blame were my best weapons. Most kids worry that they are to blame for the abuse and that they should keep it secret.*’)
- Teach children about the different parts of the body and ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ touches. (‘*Parents are partly to blame if they don’t tell children about these things* [sexual matters]—*I used it to my advantage by teaching the child myself.*’)
- Have family discussions about preventing sexual abuse. (‘*Parents shouldn’t be embarrassed to talk about things like that—it’s harder to abuse or trick a child who knows what you’re up to.*’)
- Tell children about their rights and that ‘if the child is uncomfortable with someone, they don’t have to be with him [or her]’.
- Be aware of children’s behaviour changing. (‘*Notice if your child becomes different or seems to feel bad or is withdrawn. Ask why. Examine small children for physical signs.*’)
- Don’t be too hard on children. (‘*Kids who felt unloved or not appreciated were easiest to victimise. They needed the love I gave them*’). Boys need physical affection from both parents.

Offenders suggested these strategies by which teachers could protect children:

- Use prevention programs for all children from a very young age. (‘*In the same way that we groom children from a young age to be victims, schools should groom them to* ‘tell’ *automatically.*’)
- Have children role-play what to do. (‘*It’s no good just lecturing to kids, they probably aren’t paying attention. Get them to run and yell so they’ll do it automatically.*’)
- Go on courses to learn about the signs of abuse. (‘*Teachers think children are just messing them around when they are really crying out for help. I cried for help and no-one saw it. In the past, people didn’t want to know and didn’t have the experience to know what kids were going through. Now, there is no excuse.*’)
- Make sure that child protection programs don’t concentrate on dangerous stranger stereotypes. (‘*Children never considered me to be a stranger if I dressed alright and seemed nice. Stereotyping people as bad, mean strangers makes kids more at risk from people like me.*’)
- Have discussions in school to prompt children to tell. (‘*Kids who are being abused sometimes need to tell someone outside the family such as a teacher or nurse.*’)
- Believe children who say that abuse is happening. (‘*Children need to feel confident that someone will do something before they will tell.*’)
- Have advertisements in school about being safe. (‘*The abuse is happening anyway—it should be publicised.*’)
- Teach sexuality education. (‘*Make sure that older children have sex education which makes them aware of the emotional and physical side of sexuality.*’)

(Elliott *et al.* 1995, pp. 590–1)

Telephone help lines for older children were regarded as ‘good protection’. For further information about child abuse and education for child protection, see F. Briggs and R. M. F. Hawkins (1997) *Child Protection: A Guide for Teachers and Child Care Professionals*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

2

THE IMPORTANCE OF CARE-GIVERS AND PARENTS

PREPARING TEACHERS

International studies show that the most effective child protection programs are those which are taught by parents and teachers in a collaborative partnership. (The term 'parent' is used here to include any primary care-giver.) This entails good communications between school and home to ensure that what is taught at school can be supported and reinforced at home by parents. Children benefit most when they receive congruent messages by the adults who care for their safety. Parents from both English-speaking and non-English-speaking backgrounds have the right to understand the program's context and know how they can help. It is educationally supportive and socially just to explain basic themes and strategies and relate these to cultural expectations and practices. Educators should be sensitive to the fact that, in some cultures, children have no rights. Some Maori, Pacific Island and Asian children told the authors that parents would not be able to protect them from abuse by a senior member of the family, that is, their father's older brother or a grandparent. Malaysian student teachers have indicated that Asian parents are unlikely to cooperate in teaching children that there are circumstances in which they can say 'No' to an adult. This confirms the importance of parent education and parent participation in programs. Cultural experts should always be involved in multicultural environments.

It is important to send home information, especially to those parents who are unable to attend sessions. Letters should be sent home regularly to explain what is being taught, why and how parents can help to reinforce the safety concepts at home. These should be written in jargon-free English with translations for those parents who have limited English proficiency.

Many schools hold two information sessions, one in school hours and the other in the evening or at weekends to enable working parents to attend. Information sessions can be held for the whole school or separately for each class. Local knowledge will be the key factor in determining what to offer.

Teachers often undertake specialist training (for example, a minimum of six hours in South Australia) to teach child protection programs such as *Protective Behaviours*. Parents seldom have access to such training. It is therefore incumbent on educators to provide sufficient information about their child protection program to enable parents to reinforce child protection concepts and skills. These concepts and skills are sometimes complex and need repetition and practice in a supportive environment. Exchange of knowledge is particularly important when dealing with the sensitive issue of sexual abuse.

Why involve parents?

Parent participation is especially important when working with very young or disabled children (see Chapter 4). Unless parents understand what is being taught and why, they are unlikely to provide the necessary opportunities for children to practise what they have learned. An even greater risk is that uninformed parents may unwittingly undo the teacher's or counsellor's good work, creating confused children who know that they have rights relating to their bodies but are prevented from exercising them outside school.

Unfortunately, due to inadequate knowledge or inadequate support and a lack of confidence,

educators are often uneasy about involving parents.

The objects of parent participation are to:

- widen their knowledge of the nature and extent of all forms of child abuse;
- give an understanding of the school program so that parents can reinforce safety concepts at home;
- help them to open up the avenues of communication with children on hitherto sensitive subjects;
- ensure that they can respond to children's concerns about sexual behaviour supportively and effectively;
- help them to use parenting styles which might decrease the risk of abuse.

A successful New Zealand model

New Zealand authorities recognised the need for consistent teaching, strong teacher support, parent involvement and home reinforcement when they created the national curriculum, *Keeping Ourselves Safe.* They incorporated the following in primary school curriculum guidelines:

- parent information sessions;
- parent workshops, including videos, about the content of the program;
- joint child–parent homework;
- an open-door policy so that parents feel free to ask questions and raise concerns at any stage;
- samples of class work sent home;
- parent evaluations so that parents can test what children have learned;
- weekly communications with parents telling them what has been taught, why and how they can reinforce safety concepts at home; and
- occasional class newsletters to parents providing brief information about the program from the children's perspective.

New Zealand schools appoint a teacher (often the health coordinator) to coordinate the program. This teacher supports staff and individual teachers, accepts responsibility for arranging parents' sessions, contacts local child protection professionals and arranges professional development for staff.

Parents are offered basic information about:

- the problem of child sexual abuse in the local community;
- how to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse;
- how to reinforce the safety concepts at home;
- how to use problem-solving methods to help children to practise safety skills;
- how to test children's safety knowledge, week by week;
- how to handle and report disclosures involving sexual misbehaviour.

Quite clearly, the most effective programs are those which involve the whole school. However, this should not deter teachers from 'going it alone' given that any well-informed program is better than none. Some schools train parents in the use of the program so that they can assist educators and act as a point of contact for parents who are reluctant to approach school professionals. Many New Zealand schools achieve continuity of teaching by timetabling *Keeping Ourselves Safe* so that all classes are using the program at the same time. A comparative study of this and the American–Australian program, *Protective Behaviours,* confirmed that timetabling and coordination helped to produce consistency in the teaching of the program from year to year. This reduces opportunities for educators to avoid essential parts of the program on the grounds that 'there isn't enough time available'.

Timing and personnel

It is important to note that, for the best results, the program should be introduced soon after children start school. There should be regular home and school reinforcement thereafter.

Studies show that when teachers delay offering programs until children reach the upper classes of the primary school, parents and children find that it is too late. By the time children are ten or eleven, neither children nor parents can discard cultural taboos to communicate about sensitive issues and both groups are embarrassed. By contrast, when parent involvement begins early, children exhibit the highest level of safety knowledge and confidence and their relationships with parents are marked by their openness and honesty (Briggs and Hawkins 1995a, 1995b).

Some administrators have found that if teacher commitment is lacking, it is better to employ a specialist child protection teacher to provide quality education across the whole school rather than risk having a program inadequately taught. (The term 'teacher' here

includes group leaders, etc.) If a specialist teacher is employed for this purpose, it is vital that class teachers are present at all sessions so that they can be involved in follow-up activities and the reinforcement of safety concepts.

TEACHERS' ANXIETIES

Most people have been influenced by the many myths and taboos that surround sexual abuse. Anxious teachers often fear that the introduction of child protection programs might arouse community and parental concerns and criticisms. When there is a school commitment to children's safety, coordinators or school principals provide opportunities for staff to air their concerns in a non-threatening environment, preferably with the help of someone who has expertise in child protection and counselling.

Sex with a young child is beyond the comprehension of most people. Few understand the power element involved in child sexual abuse. Some people resolve their personal discomfort by denying that the problem exists. They avoid the relevant literature and TV documentaries and, as a result, their views are based on myths, fears and rumours. They tend to deny the size and importance of the problem. They often convince themselves that 'children make it up'. When an offender is acquitted, they use this as evidence to support the view that children lie and the size of the problem is exaggerated.

Teachers may share many of the fears that parents have (see pp. 24–30). Male teachers and child care workers may feel particularly threatened for the same reasons as fathers (see pp. 22, 24). All of these anxieties should be discussed thoroughly and non-judgmentally. See also 'When the adults are uncomfortable', p. 26.

Professional support is crucial for teachers who lack confidence in their ability to deliver the program. Anxious teachers are likely to select the non-controversial parts, omitting the most important sessions so as to reduce the risk of having to deal with a disclosure of abuse.

In two separate studies of *Protective Behaviours*, the majority of teachers confessed that they omitted the vital sessions which teach children about their rights and what to do if they experience sexual misbehaviour (Briggs 1991a; Johnson 1995). The reasons given for these omissions were:

- 'There wasn't enough time to cover it' (in a whole year!).
- 'Our parents wouldn't want it' (they hadn't been asked!).
- 'These children aren't ready for it' (irrespective of their age).
- 'It isn't necessary in this school. Child abuse isn't a problem here . . . I trust all of our parents . . . Our children all come from good families' (assuming that incest is the only risk to children).
- 'I don't feel sufficiently confident to handle it.'

None of these reasons is valid. When a personal safety program is introduced, parents expect and have the right to expect teachers to use it conscientiously, providing children with sufficient information to enable them to stay safe from sexual and other forms of abuse.

The excuse that 'Parents wouldn't want it' is also unacceptable because international parent surveys show that there is 100 per cent parental support for school-based programs (Finkelhor 1984; Briggs 1987; Briggs and Hawkins 1995a, 1995b). Most parents are happy for their children to participate in child protection programs so long as they, as their children's primary care-givers and educators, are well informed about program aims, rationale and content. The teachers who use parental anxiety to explain their inadequate teaching are unlikely to have sought parents' opinions. They also place themselves in a vulnerable position, given the successful precedent of American parents suing teachers for negligence in relation to children's victimisation.

PERSUADE PARENTS TO TAKE PART

Because most parents underestimate the risks to their own children, there is a high level of complacency in most communities. Interest arises only when there has been a local emergency, such as an attempted abduction. The literature shows that only 22 per cent of Australian parents and one-third of New Zealand and American parents attend school information sessions (Briggs 1991a; 1991b; Mayes *et al.* 1992). The reasons given for staying away include denial, abdication of responsibility and practical problems.

Many parents deny that child protection is likely to be a problem: they 'trust' all of their friends, relatives and neighbours as well as clergy, their children's teachers, sports coaches, camp and scout leaders, music teachers, babysitters, etc. 'Ours isn't that kind of family so it's

not necessary' is a common response although, in the 1991 survey of New Zealand primary school children in the same communities, 10 per cent of under-eights revealed that they had already been sexually abused by their adolescent childminders (Briggs 1991a, 1991b). Some parents frankly acknowledge that 'child protection is an unpleasant subject and I'd rather not know about it'.

Some parents are willing to leave all aspects of teaching to the teacher and the school because:

> 'I don't know what to say without scaring the kids';
> 'I trust the school's choice of program';
> 'I trust the teachers implicitly';
> 'I'm happy to leave the teaching to the staff; they've been trained and I haven't'.

Practical problems included:

- the timing of the meetings was inappropriate;
- single parents lacked transport or could not afford a baby-sitter;
- the parents had already participated in the program.

Some parents stopped attending information meetings because, when they had more than one child in school and had attended more than one meeting, they found that the content was repetitive and attendance was 'a waste of time. I'd heard it all before.' *To counter this, we must ensure that parent information sessions are varied from year to year, so that younger siblings receive their parents' full involvement. We must also provide alternative ways of informing parents of their importance in the education process.*

Berrick (1988) found that parent participation that is limited to one session has little impact on community complacency. Most parents attend the first meeting looking for confirmation that their family is immune from the abuse problem and they have no need to worry or become involved. They 'switch off' to uncomfortable information and retain their myths.

For maximum effectiveness, the introductory meeting should be followed by several workshops which give parents the opportunity to rethink their position and work out how they can make the best contribution to their children's safety. Groups should be small. The authors' interviews with parents confirm that they gain most from sharing concerns and ideas with other parents and would prefer to discuss their experiences with them than be 'talked at' by teachers or child protection professionals. At the same time, some professional input is needed to make parents aware that child sexual abuse occurs in their local community.

PARENTS' CONCERNS

There are a number of questions that parents commonly ask about a child protection program.

- *Is it appropriate to my child's level of development?* Assure parents that sessions will be planned to meet the different needs and abilities of each child. Some children will need more repetition than others.
- *Will it make my child disobedient?* Adults are uneasy about acquainting children with their rights because they fear that this will make them disobedient. When young children make their first attempts to assert themselves, they often make mistakes and say 'No' at inappropriate times. Some parents become upset when, after sessions on body ownership and body awareness, children refuse to shower or take a bath with them. They may demand independence for dealing with all matters involving personal hygiene. Parents who understand what is being taught and why it is taught should be pleased that their children have assimilated the concept of body rights and ownership. They should applaud the newfound independence. However, those who have not attended workshops may accuse the school of encouraging paranoia. Some children may quote rights when refusing to shampoo their hair or go to bed and the school may then be accused of encouraging disobedience. Some children will reprimand parents for tickling the baby's bottom, accusing them of giving an unsafe touch. These situations are unlikely to be problematical if parents are forewarned and know how to handle them. In the early stages, children may need frequent reminders that saying 'No' is fine when they don't feel safe. 'But is bath time unsafe?' 'Is bed-time unsafe?' If so, 'Why is it unsafe? What will happen if your hair isn't clean?'
- *Will it make my child fearful?* There is no evidence to suggest that programs of this kind make children fearful; to the contrary, most children show a marked improvement in confidence and openness.

- *Will it affect my family?* Some parents may find that they have to change long-standing habits and this can be inconvenient; for example, few parents check up on baby-sitters with past employers or consult children when they employ a new baby-sitter.
- *Will I have a say?* An open-door policy allows parents to talk about any aspect of the program at any time (most schools have such a policy regarding children's reading progress). Sometimes, the program gives parents the confidence to seek professional advice relating to legitimate concerns. For that reason, teachers should have information about social welfare and support services readily available.

Communicating with parents

Interviews with 125 parents confirmed that child protection communications must *not* be included in school newsletters (which most parents only scan). Because parents complain of being 'inundated' with printed material from school and elsewhere, they seek communications which are *short and succinct*, 'preferably those which can be read between the letterbox and the kitchen' (Briggs and Hawkins 1995a). This may be unrealistic but it explains why many parents fail to notice information sessions advertised in school newsletters.

Some children are unreliable in the delivery of mail between school and home. In one school surveyed, only one-third of 10–12-year-olds handed over correspondence from the principal to parents and some failed to deliver parents' replies.

Once the program has started, brief, jargon-free letters can be sent to parents each week stating what has been taught, why and what to do to reinforce it at home. Parents should be invited to submit their ideas and comments.

The initial contact

When a child protection program is about to be introduced, a letter should be sent to all parents, inviting them to attend the information session (see page 23). This should be translated into community languages as necessary.

Communications should stress the fact that, in safety matters, parents are children's most important teachers; schools can teach safety skills but children will only be able to practise them with their parents' support.

Schools find that the response improves when letters include the expectation that parents who cannot attend the information session will make appointments for individual consultations with the teacher or coordinator to discuss how they can reinforce the program at home. This is effective because most parents prefer to be members of a group rather than singled out on sensitive issues such as this. Employment patterns will determine the timing of parents' meetings and attendance. Some schools have found it necessary to offer more than one session to cater for fathers and parents who are employed on shift work. Most teachers find that, when parents fail to respond to invitations, a personal telephone call does the trick.

Schools need to bear in mind that, although parents may be comfortable with their children's teachers, some parents feel uncomfortable in school buildings because of reminders of their own negative classroom experiences. It is often better for parent information sessions to be held in community or pre-school centres, which tend to be more homely than schools.

To facilitate parents' responses, it is important to:

- Always provide refreshments. People tend to be more relaxed when they have a cup of tea or coffee in their hands.
- Make personal contact with parents who use English as a second language. Interpreters should be accessed as necessary.
- Use a personal approach if it is known that a child has already been abused.

Fathers and male care-givers

Given the comparatively high risk of sexual abuse by father-figures, it is important that any communication emphasises the need for both mothers and their partners to attend information sessions. It is usually hard to convince fathers and father-figures that they have any contribution to make to children's safety. They tend to be uninformed and regard child protection as 'mother's business' (Briggs 1987). As a result, when mothers voice realistic concerns relating to children's safety with dads' mates or relatives, they are often dismissed as 'paranoid': 'You're crazy! My mate (or my relatives) wouldn't do that to my kid. She must be making it up.' Humiliated, the mothers take no action and the abuse continues. Children realise that their parents will not support them and this increases the psychological damage.

In an evaluation of *Keeping Ourselves Safe*,

SAMPLE LETTER FROM SCHOOL TO PARENTS

Dear [Parent/Parents' names]

The problem of child sexual abuse has received a lot of attention in recent times. Studies show that one in every three girls and about the same number of boys experience some form of sexual abuse before they leave school. Young children and those with disabilities are at greatest risk.

We realise that, with the best will in the world, you can't always be there to provide protection. We also know that it is harmful to teach children that no-one can be trusted. For these reasons, *we would like to work with you* to increase your child's safety skills. A personal safety program will shortly be introduced to your child's class. To ensure that parents and partners are fully informed and know how to help children to stay safe, we will hold two information sessions. One will be in school hours and the other will be in the evening to ensure that working parents can attend. *We wish to stress the importance of involving parents and their partners in this important matter.*

The first information session will be in school hours on [date] at [time] AM/PM. The second will be an evening meeting to be held on [date] at [time] AM/PM.

Child-minding and refreshments will be available.
Please complete the attached form and return it by [date].

Yours sincerely,

Class Teacher

Principal

Sample of return slip

Please tick the appropriate sentence and return this slip to the class teacher by [date].

I shall attend the session on ..... at ..... ☐
My partner and I will attend together. ☐
I will attend alone. ☐
I will require the use of the crêche for my children aged [ages]. ☐
I am unable to attend the workshop but can meet the class teacher to discuss how I can help. The following dates and times would be best for me. ☐

..... at .....

OR

..... at .....

From .....

Parent of .....

Telephone .....

many of the fathers elected to be interviewed (Briggs and Hawkins 1995a, 1995b). However, in all cases, they were unable to answer any of the questions about the school program or their children's involvement and, after only a few seconds of conversation, they handed the telephone to their wives.

Some schools offer separate nights for mothers and fathers to overcome the problems of baby-sitting in two-parent families. Because males feel that they, as members of male society, are blamed for the problem, they are often more comfortable in all-male groups. To attract father-figures to mixed parent groups, it will probably be necessary to offer a crêche to dispense with the common excuse that men have to stay at home to baby-sit. Men who were abused in childhood often deny the seriousness of their experiences, assuring the listener that: 'It happened to me and I'm alright. I don't know what the fuss is about.' (In other words, 'I was brave and strong and everyone should be the same. It's no big deal.') These men often have a history of failed relationships but they have not grasped the connection between their childhood experiences and their problems in later life.

Single parents

The needs of single parents (and unsupported mothers in particular) should be given special consideration because paedophiles target children in single-parent families. Single parents are often absent from workshops because they are impoverished, cannot afford baby-sitters and lack transport.

Refusal and opposition

Unfortunately, some parents cannot be persuaded to attend child protection sessions, irrespective of how attractive we make them. Although home visits are desirable, it should be remembered that some mothers live in such unsafe home environments that child protection seems irrelevant. They ask, 'How can I protect my kids when I can't even protect myself?' Some have lived in such a violent world that they regard child sexual abuse as an unavoidable fact of life, something you have to learn to live with.

Research shows that the children with the least safety knowledge and the least support are the ones in the least safe homes with parents who take no part in safety education (Briggs and Hawkins 1995a, 1995b).

Most parents are well satisfied when schools take responsibility for teaching safety skills. The greatest challenge is persuading parents of their importance in this process. When there are complaints about a program, they invariably come from parents who failed to attend information sessions. Unfortunately, insecure teachers and school principals often support the isolated dissident parent with a show of group solidarity, using the isolated complaint as an excuse to stop the program. Children are the losers.

MAXIMISING PARENT PARTICIPATION

We have covered in some detail parental concerns and preconceptions regarding the usefulness or necessity for child safety programs (see Chapter 1). If these concerns lead to a poor response to invitations to participate in meetings and workshops, teachers must devise strategies to maximise parents' involvement.

The following strategies have proved helpful in maximising parents' involvements:

- Establish a group of parents and community members who will develop and implement strategies to encourage parents to take part, e.g. a collection service for those without transport.
- Avoid the use of educational jargon in communications.
- Avoid being patronising; it makes inadequate parents feel more inadequate.
- Provide child-care, recruiting the help of colleagues, other parents and students from the local high school.
- Provide refreshments before or after the session.
- Invite interested community members to participate in staff development sessions.
- Seek advice from multicultural education services and community representatives on different cultural mores and expectations.
- Introduce a 'buddy scheme' where supportive parents visit and encourage the attendance of the reluctant ones.
- Take account of local customs and don't plan meetings that will coincide with late-night shopping, local football matches or other popular social activities.
- Hold meetings in a comfortable environment such as a community centre.

- Recruit experts to communicate with deaf parents and those who need translations.
- Use community languages for advertising: put posters in conspicuous places such as pre- and post-natal clinics, supermarkets, local churches, social security and employment offices.
- Make personal contact with parents of children recently enrolled as well as parents who rarely come to school.
- Use ethnic media and community services to publicise school efforts in child protection.
- Start a parents' library of child protection materials which includes books to use with young children.
- Ensure that children's work is displayed in rooms used by parents.
- Multicultural schools could arrange for separate meetings or sub-groups for different languages using bilingual speakers.

Joint homework

Joint child–parent homework has been especially popular in New Zealand's *Keeping Ourselves Safe* program. Homework starts with parents and children surveying the home for potential dangers such as exposed or loose wiring, pans and kettles in unsafe positions, unsafe mats, etc. Parents and children use problem-solving skills to work out how to stay safe in a variety of situations. Parents sign the homework, confirming that it has been undertaken jointly. Our research showed that most parents undertook the work conscientiously and only a small minority let children work alone and signed, falsely, to say that they had participated.

Throughout the implementation stage children's homework for child protection includes tasks they can discuss or complete with the assistance of parents. Such tasks include:

- learning their phone numbers and address;
- listing adults who might help if parents are unavailable or do not respond;
- learning to recognise and stay safe in emergencies and call on emergency services;
- learning to answer the telephone safely;
- other ways to stay safe in a wide variety of situations.

Tasks should not be too arduous and should be spaced across each term, enabling parents to be continually informed about the program over the entire year.

THE FIRST INFORMATION SESSION

Information sessions should provide participants with a clear summary of the program, the teaching strategies and how they work. It is important that participants are told what the expected learning outcomes are. It is also essential to be honest and say that programs cannot guarantee children's safety but they provide skills and knowledge which improve their chances of staying safe, escaping abuse and reporting it. Without safety knowledge, children are unlikely to be able to do any of those things.

Preparation

- Select a chairperson.
- Have curriculum materials readily available for parents to view.
- Send a press release to local media.
- Arrange for visiting speakers, video equipment and an overhead projector.
- Ensure that responsible people are in charge of child-care and that suitable activities, stories, etc. are available for the children.
- Provide sufficient copies of documents for distribution.
- Invite and introduce community members whose work focuses on child protection.
- Invite a bookseller to present a display of books for sale on a 'sale or return' basis covering topics such as child abuse, children's fears, safety, feelings, problem-solving skills and self-esteem.
- Provide free leaflets from local child protection agencies.

At the meeting

Begin by welcoming the group. Introduce staff and community representatives. Indicate that the aims of the program are to:

- help children to identify and avoid potentially dangerous situations;
- teach them what to do in emergencies;
- improve their capacity to make clear and accurate reports of their concerns;
- improve their problem-solving skills.

Warn the group that some information may be disturbing to those who have little knowledge of child sexual abuse. Point out that, although this subject is distressing for adults, the sexual abuse of children is very much

worse. When abuse occurs, it can wreck children's lives. It can also tear families apart. Prevention is easier than cure!

Given the high incidence of sexual abuse, some people in the group will have had some experience of sexual misbehaviour in childhood. Information may revive uncomfortable memories. At the outset, give people permission to leave the room if they feel the need for 'a breath of fresh air'. It is wise to place an experienced school counsellor or another reliable person at the back of the room to provide individual support if necessary. Request people not to disclose any personal experiences of sexual misbehaviour to other group members. Provide information about services for adult survivors of abuse. Have available contact details of women's health centres and counselling services for both male and female survivors as well as details of where to report suspicions of child sexual abuse.

When the adults are uncomfortable

By the law of averages, there will be several survivors of abuse in any group of adults, whether teachers or parents. Their discomfort often shows in their body language; faces burn as past memories come to haunt them and they avoid eye contact. Uncomfortable men frequently cross and uncross their legs and look at their shoes, while women blush and avoid eye contact with others in the group.

Parents or guardians who have not confronted their emotions relating to what happened to them in childhood will find it difficult to give the necessary support to their children. Typically, adults who were abused in childhood blame themselves. Teachers and parents should be reminded that children are never to blame for what adults or older kids did to them, and abusers commonly make victims feel guilty, dirty and responsible to reduce their own guilt and gain control. If they have strong angry or guilty feelings about what happened long ago, they should be referred to a counsellor who specialises in this work.

TOPICS FOR PARENTS' DISCUSSION GROUPS

The first information session should be followed by several group workshops which combine group discussion with suitable videos to get the message across. Workshop leaders should assess the needs of individuals and adapt material and teaching styles to suit individual and cultural differences.

Explain what we mean by child sexual abuse

Once the preliminaries have been completed, provide some definitions.

- *What is child sexual abuse?* Define abuse as when a bigger, older or more informed and more powerful person misbehaves sexually with a child. Abuse includes all forms of inappropriate touching, not just penetrative sex. However, as research shows, it is not unusual for children to be abused by a classmate in a primary school (Briggs and Hawkins 1995a).
- *Who are the offenders?* There are two kinds of child sex offenders: paedophiles whose sexual interest is mainly in children; and those who give the impression of being in heterosexual or homosexual adult relationships but use children for sex. Bear in mind that some females molest children too. Discard the myth that strangers present the greatest danger to children. Young children and children with disabilities are at greatest risk from people they know and trust, including people responsible for aspects of their care. Point out that abusers go to a great deal of trouble to convince parents of their trustworthiness.
- *Who are the victims?* Again, deal with the myths. Children's hospitals confirm that most victims are young children. Furthermore, boys are probably at greater risk than girls.

Allow time for questions about what you have said. Then present a sample of the first lesson in the program and ask parents how they think they can help their children to remember the content and practise safe behaviour when they return home. Finish by inviting parents to future workshops.

Implications for parents

- Discuss the size of the abuse problem and the risk to boys as well as to girls. Point out that boys are more likely than girls to be abused outside the home and family. *What are the implications of this for parents?*

- Ask parents to discuss why they think that children are vulnerable to abuse. *What are the implications for parents?*
- Most child molesters manage to offend for years without being caught and most who are caught are either not prosecuted or not convicted. Does 'not guilty' mean that they are safe to be around children? Is an offender who has served a prison sentence necessarily safe around children? *Why? What are the implications of this for parents?*
- Victims suffer psychological damage regardless of the gender of the offender. Furthermore, abuse by a female in early childhood can be the trigger that results in a boy being further abused by more violent paedophiles. *Discuss why society has not taken female abusers seriously.*
- There is every indication that boys are abused more frequently than girls: they simply don't report it. *Discuss the possible reasons why male victims remain silent.*
- Dispense with the myth that children are safe in groups. *What are the implications for parents?*
- Many children don't tell their parents when they encounter sexual misbehaviour. If they reveal abuse, it is often to a trusted friend who will not tell the secret. *Why? Would you have told your parents? Who could you have told?*

Stopping child abuse

- Ensure that parents are aware of the social and economic costs of abuse to society. It is estimated that a quarter of male victims become offenders. This is especially likely if they have been abused by several people over a long period of time and no-one helped them when help was sought.
- Ensure that parents also realise the long-term damage to victims. *Young children do not forget child sexual abuse.* Some survive by suppressing memories which tend to reappear in adolescence or adult life.
- Given that most children know their abusers, what kinds of information should be given and at what age? What kind of skills do children need to recognise and report inappropriate adult behaviour?
- Why is parental support crucial to children's safety?
- How do parents unwittingly increase children's vulnerability to sexual abuse? (Some examples are given in Chapter 1.)

Children's fears

For each of the following, encourage parents to consider 'What are the implications for me?'

a) boys' fears relating to the tag of homosexuality;
b) the fear of being punished by the parent because 'rude' behaviour occurred;
c) the threats that offenders use to control children;
d) fear that the family will break up when the offender is a parent or mother's partner;
e) the fear of being disbelieved by trusted adults;
f) why children keep abuse secret (see Chapter 1).

Parents' fears

The following could be discussed at parents' workshops.

Question: *Might the program alarm children unnecessarily and make them distrust all adults?*
Answer: No! A road safety program doesn't make children afraid of travelling and a lesson on water safety doesn't deter children from swimming. Parents find that their children are more open and confident when they understand what constitutes inappropriate behaviour and know that their parents will support them in preventing it.

Question: *Will a safety program place an unfair burden on children to keep themselves safe with adults?*
Answer: No! We adults are the ones who place unfair responsibilities on children when we send them out into the world lacking knowledge of the acceptable limits of adult behaviour. We are unfair in expecting children to recognise, reject and report sexual misbehaviour having given them no information or skills to help them to do this.

Question: *Isn't my child too young to know the words penis and vagina?*
Answer: No! These are the correct names used in the dictionary.

There has always been an irrational avoidance of using anatomically correct names for body parts below the waist. Children are often given 'pet' or ethnic names (or, in the case of girls, no names at all) to protect adults from embarrassment when children refer to toileting

matters and their genitals in public. Teachers and police in the South Pacific Islands told the author that European missionaries banned the use of vocabulary naming sexual body parts. As a consequence, children lack the means to report sexual misbehaviour. Teachers are afraid to help because words such as penis and anus are regarded as the worst form of swearing.

When we only give children private, 'pet' names for genitals, they are unlikely to report sex related concerns because they are too embarrassed. They don't have the appropriate language to enable them to communicate effectively. When parents avoid mentioning those parts of the body, they are telling children quite clearly that they, the adults, can't cope with conversation about anything sexual. Children who learn that their genitals have to be invisible and unmentionable cannot talk about sexual misbehaviour when they experience it.

Question: *Won't the program teach children about sex long before they are old enough to understand?*
Answer: No! First, children are sexual beings who pick up information from many sources—experimentation, their peers, the media—and when adults think they are asleep or somewhere else. Such knowledge is usually faulty, which can be dangerous and can also result in unnecessary fears. Child molesters often seduce children by pretending to teach them about sex.

Second, child protection programs are about safety, *not* reproduction and sexual relationships.

Question: *To keep children safe, do you have to teach them about unnatural sex?*
Answer: No! Children need clear guidelines, however, about the most common forms of sexual abuse: genital fondling, exhibitionism, anal and vaginal rape and oral sex. Without that information, they are confused and molesters take advantage of their confusion.

Question: *Won't the program make children distrust their parents?*
Answer: No! One of the myths promoted by opponents of safety education for children was that child protection programs were designed by militant feminists to destroy the family unit and make children distrust their fathers. The pioneers of protective education were certainly supported by the feminist movement but the majority of programs used in schools are the work of experienced educators, both male and female. This book is the result of international research and teamwork involving male and female teachers who have used the ideas effectively for more than a decade.

Question: *If we give children information, won't they make up stories about abuse to 'get even' with people?*
Answer: No! An international search produced no evidence to support this fear. Child sexual abuse victims give minimal information because they do not want to upset their parents. They understate what happens in order to protect adults' feelings. They will not reveal all the detail unless they are very confident of support. There are very few false allegations, least of all from children of primary school age.

Question: *Will the program interfere with the free expression of affection, for example, between fathers and daughters? If I pat my child's bottom, is there a risk that I will be reported for sexual abuse?*
Answer: No! Parents should be assured that no social worker, police officer or public prosecutor could take legal action without substantial evidence of an offence occurring. Confusion about father–child relationships and expressions of affection is most likely when limits are not clearly defined and children have no choice in what happens to them. Parents need to know that relationships improve when children realise that their parents will help them to stop unwanted behaviour (Briggs 1991a, 1991b; Wurtele 1987). One researcher found that children become more positive about genuine expressions of affection with parents after engaging in child protection programs (Plummer 1986; Wurtele and Miller-Perrin 1992; Wurtele, Kast and Melzer 1992).

Question: *Will the program teach my child to challenge authority?*
Answer: No! Parents need to know that children are taught to say no to sexual misbehaviour and touching which makes them feel uncomfortable or unsafe. Without that teaching, children believe that they have to tolerate everything that adults and older children do to them (Briggs 1991a, 1991b).

When parents and teachers work together to develop children's problem-solving skills, children soon learn to differentiate situations in which they can assert their rights from unsafe situations that they would like to avoid. While the program encourages independence, the major role of parents must be acknowledged.

Question: *Isn't the problem of child sexual abuse exaggerated? Why should we expose all children to protection programs when only a few children are abused?*
Answer: No! Given that parents can't supervise children all of the time, they cannot be sure that a child might not be targeted and victimised by someone in a trusted position.

One in four children is likely to be abused before leaving school. If one child in four had green hair, we would say that green hair was normal. But we can't accept that sexual abuse is 'normal' because it is so damaging.

Unfortunately, reports only touch the fringe of the problem; most victims lack the ability to report. Given the trauma that results from sexual abuse, it is better to be safe than sorry. Every child deserves preventative safety knowledge.

Tackling the myths

A useful exercise is to encourage participants in parents' (and teachers') workshops to differentiate between facts and myths about child sexual abuse.

Statement: *Children make up stories about child sexual abuse. TRUE or FALSE?*
Answer: This is false. In general, the more bizarre the story, the more likely it is to be true.

When a child retracts an allegation of abuse, it is usually because enormous pressure has been placed on their shoulders—the family is at risk of breaking up and the child has no support. The offenders' relatives and supporters usually give victims the impression that if they tell police that 'it was all a lie', the world will return to normal. Unfortunately, an offender who thinks that s/he 'got away with it' continues the abuse, often more violently and frequently than before. The offender is confident of the victim's powerlessness. The child is branded as a vicious liar and receives no support while the offender receives sympathy for being the victim of a malicious liar. In these circumstances, the victim may lack the courage to make further allegations and the offender takes advantage of the child's increased powerlessness.

Statement: *Girls seduce their fathers. TRUE or FALSE?*
Answer: This is false. Goldman and Goldman (1988) in an international study of children's sexuality, learned that children find adults' bodies repugnant and do not see their parents as sexual beings. They view sex in romantic terms as exclusively for the young and they are embarrassed when parents exhibit their sexuality.

Statement: *Sex offences are committed in a moment of weakness and are usually one-off events. TRUE or FALSE?*
Answer: Both statements are false. British and American studies show that the average number of offences committed by a male offender before he is prosecuted is between 561 (Abel *et al.* 1987) and 558 (Bentovim 1991). Child molesters are likely to continue offending until they have undergone lengthy and intensive treatment, usually as part of a court order. Even then, the chances of a 'cure' for their sexual attraction to children are not high.

Statement: *If a child is abused, it is best if no-one talks about it again. The child will soon forget about it. TRUE or FALSE?*
Answer: False. Victims of child sexual abuse need the opportunity to talk about their feelings relating to the abuse. This is best handled by an experienced specialist counsellor. Children who are deprived of opportunities to work through their feelings about abuse often explode with angry anti-social and self-destructive behaviour in adolescence, e.g., suicide attempts, drug and alcohol abuse and criminal activity.

Statement: *It's less damaging if victims are young or intellectually disabled because they don't really understand what is happening. TRUE or FALSE?*
Answer: False! Sexual abuse is damaging to the development of all children. They suffer psychological damage from the abuse of power, and feel used, dirty and inferior.

Statement: *When people are raped, they've usually done something to deserve it. TRUE or FALSE?*
Answer: False. This is a dangerous myth created by rapists and their lawyers to transfer blame to victims. Research shows that 60 to 70 per cent of rapists first decide to commit rape and then set out to find a victim. Most victims just happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. It should be noted that both boys and girls are vulnerable to rape (Garbarino *et al.* 1987). Boys, however, are less likely to report it.

Statement: *Females do not commit sexual offences against children. TRUE or FALSE?*
Answer: False. Women probably commit offences less frequently than men but women

have taken part in some of the most horrendous child sex crimes in history. Contrary to popular myths they also commit solo offences. In a survey of imprisoned child molesters, 50 per cent reported having been abused by a female in early childhood (Briggs 1995a; Briggs, Hawkins and Williams 1994). The offenders were often older sisters and friends of the victims' sisters, baby-sitters, and occasionally their mothers or teachers. Although (except in mother–son incest cases), the men usually viewed the offences as relatively harmless, the early sexualisation had caused a great deal of harm to some who suffered repeat abuse throughout their lives, eventually becoming offenders themselves.

Unfortunately, the lack of recognition of women offenders has meant that they find it difficult to confess to having problems and there are few services available for them.

Statement: *We don't need to worry about boys. They don't get abused. TRUE or FALSE?*
Answer: False. Boys are at high risk of sexual abuse. When they are young, they are vulnerable to abuse by cousins, older brothers and their brothers' mates as well as adults. Boys may know that 'sex' is not allowed but they view sex as involving men and women and 'making babies' and do not realise that sexual misbehaviour with males is also not allowed (Briggs 1995a).

Abuse by older females is difficult for boys to report because of male conditioning.

Statement: *You can't do anything to protect kids when they are out of sight; you can only hope and pray. TRUE or FALSE?*
Answer: False. Pray if you wish but personal safety skills should be introduced when children are about three years of age.

Statement: *Sexual abuse only happens in certain socio-economic areas. TRUE or FALSE?*
Answer: False. Sex offenders and their victims come from all walks of life. However, people who receive children's allegations of abuse are less likely to report it if the accused person is a colleague, a professional or an important member of the community. For example, when a social worker reported that he had found a naked monk in bed with a boy, a Commissioner of Police for Western Australia is alleged to have said, 'Sonny, if you ever spread such rumours against the good Brother again, you'll find yourself in terrible trouble. Now, get out of my bloody office!' (Gill 1997). Such is the level of societal ignorance that parents who report community or church leaders might find that *they*, rather than the perpetrators, are condemned and ostracised by their communities. Adults have traditionally ignored offences against children in order to protect their own institution—their church, school or profession—from 'shame'. This has enabled some child sexual abusers to damage hundreds of children during their careers.

Statement: *I don't need to do anything because I would know instinctively if my child had been abused. TRUE or FALSE?*
Answer: False. When parents agree with this statement they should be asked:

- What have they told their children that would help them to identify and reject an instruction from an adult to provide oral sex?
- What have they told boys about erections and ejaculation?
- If their children reported sexual misbehaviour, would they blame them and be angry?
- Have they given the children the vocabulary needed to communicate with adults about sexually related matters?

Other topics

Further workshops could focus on the role of secrecy and tricks in child abuse.

- How can parents adopt a 'no secrets' policy?
- How do children know which secrets they must keep and which they can tell?
- How can children be protected from tricks, coercion, bribes, blackmail and threats commonly used by sex offenders?

Another issue is the commission of sex offences by juveniles.

Schools sometimes receive reports that children have sexually abused younger children or their own class peers. School principals may deal with this by reprimanding the offenders. Some are expelled and enrol at another school.

- Are these the best ways of handling problems of this kind?
- What better methods can you suggest?

WHO ABUSES CHILDREN?

Paedophiles are people who are primarily sexually attracted to children. Some are attracted to boys, some to girls and some to both girls and boys. They usually abuse hundreds of children over a lifetime. They gain satisfaction from

planning a new seduction, gaining the trust of parents and manipulating the child.

Sexual abuse is seldom a single offence. It is a habit; if a man abuses his own children, he usually abuses their friends and others. If parents encountered sexual misbehaviour in childhood and the offender has not had treatment, there is a strong chance that s/he is still offending, however old.

Many abusers are married men who live with a partner and children. Some women abuse children too. Most offenders, both men and women, had abusive childhoods and learned to accept abuse as a normal way of life. Without a sound treatment program, they do not accept that they were harmed or that they harm their victims.

Characteristics of child sex offenders

Child sex offenders usually relate well to children. They can be found in all professions and agencies involving young people. The only characteristic that they have in common is a history of abuse in childhood. They cannot be spotted by their appearance. People find it difficult to understand why anyone would do this to another child after it had happened to them but, unfortunately, like physical abuse, sexual abuse is learned behaviour, which is why most offenders become abusers soon after they are victimised, whether in childhood or adolescence. When victims are powerless and are being abused frequently, they have to accept abuse as 'normal' to cope with it. Furthermore, if they have been sexually damaged by abuse, they may not be able to create rewarding relationships with adults (Briggs 1995a). Sex is also addictive.

Paedophiles are often generous and charming; that is how they gain the trust of children and their parents. They seek out jobs, paid or unpaid, with children. They are often respected members of the community who give up a great deal of their time to children's activities. Some loiter around playgrounds, swimming pools, sports events, stamp shops, amusement arcades and other places that children visit. They often have hobbies that appeal to children. The wealthier ones 'hook' them by giving material goodies that parents can't afford. They can provide alcohol, cigarettes and drugs which make boys and girls feel very adult, not realising that they are being trapped. It is very difficult for children to say 'No' when the abuser is a persuasive authority figure. Paedophiles often tell victims that theirs is a very special, loving relationship that must be kept secret because they will both get into serious trouble.

When victims reach puberty, they are often abandoned and they then realise that they were duped and used. These young people are the ones most likely to turn to drug and alcohol abuse, anti-social behaviour and self-destruction.

RECOGNISING THE EFFECTS OF ABUSE

Most parents think that they would know instantly if their children had been abused. Unfortunately, that is not likely. Unless parents talk to their children about sexual misbehaviour and make it clear that they will not get into trouble if it happens to them, they will keep it secret. Common signs associated with abuse include:

- unusual, often obsessive sexual behaviour and knowledge that you would not expect from a child of that age;
- night fears, bed-wetting, refusal to get undressed;
- redness and soreness around the genital or anal area;
- aggression, school difficulties, truancy;
- withdrawal;
- some children try to avoid going to see the abuser, e.g., refusing to attend activities or clubs previously enjoyed;
- verbal cries for help indicating that someone is doing something odd that they don't like.

Parents who suspect that their child has been abused should contact their local child protection services. There is usually an emergency Child Abuse Help Line number in the phone book.

When children disclose abuse, they need to know that it was not their fault that it happened, that they have done the right thing in reporting it, that you are sorry that they had such an upsetting experience and you want to help. It is especially important to support your child if the abuser is someone you know and trusted.

Work on your relationship with your children so that they find it easy to talk to you about their worries. Start early!

Helping parents respond to child abuse

Schools and teachers must handle suspicions or disclosures of abuse in supportive and helpful

ways. Few parents know about statutory child protection agencies or who to contact when abuse is suspected. They need this important information. In panic, some confront the offender who usually provides a logical explanation, assuring the parent that the child is mistaken. This is what parents want to hear. Few have the courage to say, 'I think you are lying' to another adult. Embarrassed, they return home and the offender knows that no action will be taken.

When a perpetrator is a family member, some parents remain silent to avoid family shame. They protect their own children by stopping all visits to the offender's home. This merely results in other nieces, nephews and grandchildren being victimised.

Mothers who were father–daughter incest victims often take no action to protect their own children from their grandfathers. This can be explained in several ways:

- The mother has been convinced that the abuse was her own fault.
- She thinks on the lines of, 'He knows that I know what he did therefore he won't dare touch my child.'. In the meantime, the offender is thinking, 'She knows what I did to her and she has done nothing about it. I'm safe.'.
- She feels powerless and is still controlled by the offender.

It is useful if schools invite child protection workers to parent (and teacher) sessions to talk about reporting abuse and 'what happens next'. Information sessions often give parents the confidence to disclose their own abuse for the first time. It is helpful if a social worker or counsellor can be the recipient of that disclosure rather than a teacher (Briggs, Hawkins and Williams 1994; Briggs 1995a; Elliott *et al.* 1995, pp. 590–1).

3

RESPONDING TO ACTUAL OR SUSPECTED SEXUAL ABUSE

WHEN CHILDREN DISCLOSE SEXUAL ABUSE

When children disclose information about sexual abuse there are two important things to remember:

- Put your own feelings aside and behave as if you hear such information every day. Expressions of horror, shock or disbelief freeze the conversation, causing children to back off. The most helpful response is one that is supportive and calm.
- Try to protect victims from disclosing details of abuse in public. If possible, ask someone to take care of other children so that you can continue the conversation in private (see page 49, 'Protective interrupting').

The appropriate thing to say would be something like this:

> I'm really pleased that you told me . . .
> It must have been worrying for you . . .
> I'm so sorry that this happened to you . . .
> You did the right thing by telling me. You are really strong to do that.
> Grown-ups (or older kids) know that they aren't allowed to do that to children.
> Unfortunately, it happens to lots of children. It shouldn't happen and I want to help.

There are three things that you should *never* do.

- Blame victims or make judgements about what happened.
- Promise to keep a child's secret.
- Ask questions that could make victims feel guilty or inadequate.

The sort of responses to avoid include:

> Why didn't you tell me earlier?
> Why didn't you say no?
> Haven't we told you not to talk to strangers?
> You *know* you aren't allowed to go out of school without permission.
> Are you sure that's what really happened? I don't believe it!
> You must be mistaken. S/he wouldn't do that.

You must:

- *report suspicions of abuse* to child protection authorities; it is their job to investigate whether abuse actually occurred;
- tell the child that it will be necessary to talk to a social worker because we must all try to stop adults from doing this to children;
- tell the child about what might happen once abuse is reported;
- refer victims to suitably qualified and experienced therapists or help parents to make arrangements;
- help non-offending parents to make contact with a parent support group.

For particular requirements in the case of disclosure by children with special needs, see Chapter 4.

Responding to disclosure

Without child protection programs, most adults don't know what to do when sexual abuse is suspected or disclosed.

Berrick (1988) found that parents who have not taken part in a protection program have no idea what to look for or what to do when sexual abuse is suspected. Unless adults have knowledge about the problem, they tend to dismiss children's signs and symptoms (see pp. 9–12, 33–4) as a passing phase in their

children's normal development. In school, child victims are often labelled as 'emotionally disturbed' with behavioural and learning problems and the cause of these problems is not investigated. Parents, teachers and care-givers look for everyday explanations for what they see; child sexual abuse is usually only considered as a possibility when all other options have been explored and dismissed. After abuse has been confirmed and with the benefit of hindsight, parents and teachers can usually recall the victims' cries for help over a prolonged period.

Even when cries for help are explicit, the recipients of information often react in harmful ways. In December 1997, an Australian school principal was prosecuted (under mandatory notification legislation) for failing to report a disclosure of child sexual abuse by a five-year-old boy. The court was told that she did not believe the allegation. The child's father was subsequently convicted of more than 40 charges and sentenced to nine years' imprisonment (Jones 1997).

Recipients of information are usually shocked or embarrassed and a common reaction is to tell the offender what the child said. They see this as absolving themselves of responsibility. They believe, mistakenly, that if abuse is occurring, such action will be sufficient to make it stop. In practice, the abuser thinks, 'She knows and she's not going to do anything about it. I'm safe.'. The victim is then punished by the offender for 'telling' and the offender becomes more confident (and often more brutal) than before (Briggs, Hawkins and Williams 1994; Briggs 1995a). *Parents need to know that even suspicion of child sexual abuse can be reported to police or, when the offender is a family member, the state department responsible for child protection and social welfare.* There is usually a Child Abuse Help Line in the telephone directory.

RESPONDING TO GUT FEELINGS

Teachers sometimes have gut feelings that children have been abused but they are frustrated by a lack of concrete evidence. Such suspicions are the result of many disconnected observations which come together over a period of time. Teachers are often reluctant to ask questions when children give vague hints of abuse because they 'don't know what to say' and are frightened of 'putting ideas into children's heads'. Education authorities instruct teachers *not* to investigate suspicions based upon reasonable grounds because untrained persons may ask leading questions. However, child protection agencies are unlikely to investigate a mere hunch. Furthermore, when children are under the age of eight, the risk of damaging evidence is very low because there are so few prosecutions involving young witnesses.

When abuse is suspected, make an immediate record of what happened. Record the questions asked and how the child responded. Note the dates and times of observations and statements.

Teachers who experience gut feelings can clarify the situation without putting evidence at risk. First, express concern for the child on the lines of:

> 'I'm really worried about you. You haven't been yourself lately. I don't like to see you looking so sad. I know that something is bothering you.'
> 'Is it something or somebody?'
> 'Is it at home, at school or somewhere else?'
> 'Can you tell me about it?'

If the child won't tell, you can ask:

> 'Why not? Is it a secret?'
> 'Is it a good, safe secret or a bad, unsafe secret?'
> 'Who else knows the secret?'
> 'What will happen if you tell me the secret? Who said so?'

These kinds of questions are the ones most likely to produce information without asking a child to break the secret. If children have not undertaken a personal safety program it is important to teach them that we don't have to keep bad, yucky or stinky secrets.

If there is a reasonable suspicion that a child has been subjected to abuse, questioning should cease and a report should be made.

When children show signs of emotional disturbance and indicate that they are angry with certain people, ask questions such as:

> 'You seem to be angry with ——. Let's talk about it.'
> 'Can you tell me what happened to upset you?'
> 'Has s/he done something that you don't like?'
> 'Did you have to do something that you didn't like?'
> 'Can you tell me about it?'
> 'Why can't you talk about it? Is it a secret?'

'Is it a secret that makes you happy or a secret that makes you sad?'
'Who else knows the secret?'
'What will happen if you tell?'

Always use language that is appropriate for the child's developmental level. Ask children to tell you the names that they use for their genitals and use their vocabulary.

To avoid the possible contamination of children's evidence, avoid the closed type of questions which restrict answers to yes or no. Open questions allow for a range of possible answers.

For example, ask, *'Show me where s/he touches you'*, not *'Does s/he touch you between your legs?'*

When the accused is a juvenile

Sexual offences by juveniles should be reported and taken as seriously as offences by adults. They can be just as damaging. Young offenders are often victims of abuse who re-enact their own experiences. Sexual abuse is habitual; it is important that juvenile perpetrators receive professional help to reduce the likelihood that they will become lifelong offenders.

REPORTING

Where there is a reasonable suspicion that sexual abuse has occurred, the facts should be reported directly to the statutory child protection services. *Never inform the victims' parents*; that is the responsibility of police or child protection officers. If you inform parents first, they may use violence against or challenge and forewarn the offender. If a trusted family member is involved, they may persuade the child to withdraw the allegation.

If immediate action is required to prevent the abuser from escaping detection, call the police. When the witness is a child who is deaf or has an intellectual or speech disability, it is best to request the attendance of officers who have expertise in handling offences against children with communication problems.

It is important to let child victims know that they did the right thing by talking about the abuse. They need *frequent* assurance from caregivers that children are never to blame for what grown-ups do. If secrecy was involved, explain that offenders use secrets because they know that they are doing wrong. They ask children to keep secrets because they are scared of getting into trouble. Children know that this happens in their peer-group but they are seldom aware that adults use the same strategies.

After a report has been made, it is likely that the victim will be questioned by a social worker and/or police officer. There may be a medical examination by a paediatrician. There may also be an assessment by a child psychologist who has specialist skills in this work. If an offence has been committed, the child may be interviewed by a lawyer who will decide whether the child is sufficiently confident and articulate to give evidence in court.

Each of the professionals has a different priority. Children must be reassured that it is important to tell these people about what happened because they are there to help.

Supporting the parents

In most cities there are organisations to support victims of crime. They will often provide companions for unsupported mothers taking child victims of abuse through the assessment and justice process. Support workers are usually parents who have been through the same trauma and survived. They assist parents to relate to their children in psychologically helpful ways. They assist family members to work through their own angry and confused feelings. Help of this kind is especially necessary when the abuse involves the betrayal of the parent's trust as well as the child's trust.

When groups are not available specifically for this purpose, parent counselling is usually available through parent support groups, Community and Women's Health Centres, Rape Crisis Centres and other social services. Teachers and child-care professionals should make enquiries about local counselling facilities so that they can refer parents when necessary. Counselling is vital because, if parents do not work through their own feelings about the abuse, they are unlikely to be able to support their children in psychologically helpful ways.

Supporting the abused child

There are many ways in which teachers, caregivers, parents and other adults can support child victims of sexual abuse:

- Stay close to the child immediately after disclosure and provide a sense of physical security.
- *Never* promise to keep abuse secret. If a

promise has been made accidentally, explain to the child why offences must be reported.
- Respect the child's privacy. Disclosures are confidential. They should never be discussed in staffrooms or in the presence of others.
- Emphasise repeatedly that (no matter what the child did) children are *never* to blame for what bigger, stronger and older people do to them.
- Maintain a normal affectionate interaction with the child.
- *Never* promise that reporting abuse will stop the abuse; unfortunately, no-one can guarantee a child's safety.
- When victims look worried or sad, take them aside and confirm that they have had a very upsetting time. Invite them to talk about what is worrying them at that moment.
- When victims behave aggressively, tell them that it is alright for them to feel angry. If possible, invite them to express their angry feelings. In the junior primary school, teachers can provide therapeutic activities for the release of anger, e.g., clay, paint, fingerpaint, woodwork, wet and dry sand play, punch bags, water play.
- Victims need extra support when they have to attend medical examinations, interviews or make court appearances which remind them of the abuse. Their behaviour is likely to regress immediately before and after these interviews and when they see the offender.
- If victims behave sexually, provide reassurance that they no longer have to do those things to please adults. Confirm that 'safe hugs are available at any time'.
- Allow victims to think kindly of offenders if they previously enjoyed rewarding relationships with them. Reassure the child that 'it's OK to love someone and hate what they did'.

Information needed by child protection services

When suspicions of abuse are reported, child protection agencies need to know:

- the child's name, address and telephone number, gender, date of birth and school attended;
- names and addresses and telephone numbers of parents and guardians;
- names, addresses and occupations of suspected persons and their relationship to the victims;
- what the child said or others said or did to cause the suspicions;
- details of behavioural or other indicators including dates, times, frequency and circumstances;
- the current home or care situation of the victim, that is, who lives where and with whom;
- what other agencies are involved with the family.

Most institutions provide incident report forms for teachers so that they can (routinely) keep records of suspicious behaviours. The recording of opinions should be avoided; only record facts.

THERAPY FOR VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

Parents often deny that their abused children need help even when they are acting out their abuse and behaving in emotionally disturbed ways. They insist that the children are 'alright at home' and 'will soon forget about it'. Teachers are in a good position to persuade parents that children do not forget about traumatic events; the victim's behaviour is likely to deteriorate over time if needs are ignored.

There are many reasons why parents avoid taking children for therapy. First, they are afraid of being blamed. Second, taking children to treatment centres revives painful memories and feelings of inadequacy. Parents may have a lot of thinking time during the journey or the wait in the reception area. To justify broken appointments and the termination of treatment, parents are usually negative about the value of the therapy and therapists: 'It's a waste of time. The kids only draw and play. They can do that at home.'

If children exhibit emotionally disturbed behaviours and are denied therapy by their parents, their social worker should be asked to intervene. In some circumstances, court orders may be obtained to ensure that therapy is made available.

It is important that schools help all child victims to access counselling and therapy following any sexual abuse. We cannot act as judges of victims' emotional reactions on the basis of our own perceptions of the gravity of offences.

Therapy is necessary to:

- alleviate the victim's confused, negative and guilty feelings engendered by the abuser;
- alleviate the non-offending parents' feelings of guilt;
- explore victims' feelings about themselves: most children are led to believe that they were abused because they are bad. Children with disabilities think that they were abused *because* they are disabled.

Therapy places the problem firmly with the offender (with no excuses).

Therapists also explore issues of trust to help victims regain their trust in other people and themselves. They may provide basic information about normal sexuality and interpersonal relationships; this is vital because victims have already learned about abnormal sexuality and if they do not learn the normal range of appropriate behaviours, they cannot recognise the abnormal when they encounter it.

Boys victimised by men worry about homosexual issues. They need a lot of assurance that they were chosen because they were children, not because they were effeminate, weak or homosexual. Boys are especially likely to worry about homosexuality if their bodies responded physiologically to male touching.

Homosexuality is one of the hardest topics for people to discuss when they have no experience of it. Irrespective of how inconvenient it may be to parents, victims *must* be given the opportunity to discuss these issues with suitably experienced specialist counsellors.

In addition, teachers, school counsellors and parents can:

- teach personal safety skills and inform children about their rights in relation to their bodies;
- develop appropriate ways of communicating feelings;
- encourage the development of supportive relationships;
- help children to recognise and express emotions;
- encourage the development and use of decision-making skills to reduce reliance on others;
- explore and encourage a healthy release of angry feelings (using drawing, clay, painting, water, hand painting, woodwork and physical activities);
- provide opportunities for therapeutic play and success;
- empathise when the child is feeling sad.

Parents are often reluctant to take child victims for therapy. They may need to know that therapy is important because it includes:

- exploring victims' suspicions that they were abused because they were bad, abnormal or disabled and confirm that they were abused because they were children who are not as strong and as well informed as the abuser;
- working on issues relating to body image and the development of self-esteem and independence;
- helping victims to develop a personal value system, exploring appropriate values in relationships;
- exploring, eliminating and re-channelling secondary behavioural characteristics, such as inappropriate acting out of the sexual abuse, self-destructive behaviour and aggression;
- reducing depression by helping victims to express their anger relating to their abuse, the abuser and the adults who did not protect them.

It is very difficult for a child with limited speech to express anger and other emotions. All too often there is an assumption that because children have difficulty in expressing hostile feelings, there are no feelings present. Anger is almost always present after abuse. Therapists will explore ways of releasing harmful feelings.

Barriers to therapy

Without support and therapy, child victims of sexual abuse are at high risk of serious emotional disturbance which often results in the reproduction of the abusive behaviour with other children. Unfortunately, victims with disabilities are the ones least likely to be offered therapeutic help.

It is very hard for children to get help when offenders are members of their own tight social circle. Powerlessness is overwhelming when children become trapped in abusive relationships. When a relative is the offender, the victim is often given responsibility for keeping the family together. For a variety of reasons, mothers often find it easier to accept the offenders' explanations than face the truth. Similarly, when a teacher is accused, staff tend to rally around to protect the adult and the reputation of the school. When the victim is expected to protect adults who should be protecting them, the role reversal causes enormous emotional damage.

4

INTEGRATING SAFETY EDUCATION INTO THE WIDER CURRICULUM

The child protection curriculum can be taught as a separate entity with its own regular time slot in the timetable. In addition, personal safety can be integrated into other learning areas and the integrity of both the subject and the child protection curriculum can be maintained. This can be achieved more readily in the pre-school and primary school than in the high school given that early childhood and primary school teachers usually take a group of children for a whole year or more, facilitating a high level of flexibility for program integration.

With this in mind, the following suggestions are aimed at early childhood and primary teachers.

The Arts

Children can:

- design posters illustrating safety themes and strategies;
- engage in drama activities to teach and reinforce skills required for self-protection;
- role-play responses to unsafe situations; this can be valuable if students are properly briefed and debriefed. Do *not* allow children to role-play abuse as this can be distressing and unsafe for survivors and current victims.

Language and literacy

Children can be involved in a variety of safety-focused exercises involving reading and writing. For example, they can:

- write their own picture books about keeping safe, using them in cross-age tutoring exercises;
- write to parents or people in their networks to acquaint them with progress in the program;
- write poems about keeping safe;
- create advertisements for Child Protection Week and other special occasions relating to safety. These can be displayed in shopping centres, libraries and clinics as well as school;
- debate issues about child protection: for example, bullying, children's rights and responsibilities and the right of adults to use physical punishment on children;
- read picture books and novels where children's safety is at stake and discuss problem-solving strategies for the characters: for example, *Hansel and Gretel*, *Cracker Jackson* (by Betsy Briars), *The Willow Street Gang*, *Nobody listens to Andrew* by Elizabeth Guilfoyle, *Red Riding Hood,* the *Three Little Pigs* and *Goldilocks*;
- develop accurate verbal reporting skills to include the correct use of language and adjectives for description;
- learn songs and play singing games relating to the body.

Studies of society and the environment

Children can:

- map the safest routes to and from various places used by children: shops, friends' and relatives' houses, local Safety Houses;
- research professionals and services in the community who are involved in the protection and safety of children; for example, police, welfare services, courts, children's telephone help lines, Crime Stoppers, school counsellors, school nurses, school principals, road safety, Kidsafe (accidents);
- depending on the age of the children, research laws, rules, rights, civics and citizenship focusing on the safety and protection of children.

Technology

Children can:

- design and make personal safety alarms;
- with adult supervision, use computers to research information relating to safety;
- design and produce an advertisement for an organisation such as Kids Help Line, NAPCAN (Australian National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect) or other organisations concerned with safety such as NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children—United Kingdom;)
- learn and role play the use of communication hardware to get help for someone who is hurt (e.g., email, mobile and cordless phones and public phones (with and without money or phone cards)).

Science

Children can:

- research how animals protect themselves when feeling unsafe, e.g., camouflage, run, fight;
- research how human bodies react to unsafe situations, e.g., an adrenalin rush.

Maths

Children can collect data around a number of safety topics and display it in graphs (pie graphs, column graphs, composite bar graphs). For example:

- the number of children who know how to call the Kids Help Line;
- the number of children who can remember the names of people on their networks;
- the number of children who can recall their full address and home phone number;
- types, colours and registration numbers of motor vehicles in the school car park or road outside school (emphasising safety precautions throughout the data collection);
- reasons given by children for why they sometimes feel unsafe at school (physical or verbal abuse, sexual harassment, racial harassment, rejection, etc.).

Be alert to the possibility of using the media (film, video, computer, TV, music) to enhance your child protection work and make it interesting, enjoyable and relevant for students.

LINKS TO NATIONAL HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM

This child protection program links with the health curriculum of most education authorities.

In 1994, Australia developed a national curriculum for eight areas of learning. The Health and Physical Education curriculum content is organised in three strands:

(1) Communication, investigation and application (Process strand)
(2) Human functioning and physical activity (Conceptual strand)
(3) Community structures and practices (Conceptual strand)

Within each strand there are connections to personal safety education as shown below.

STRAND 1: COMMUNICATION, INVESTIGATION AND APPLICATION COMPONENTS

Communication

From an early age, children can:

- develop interpersonal skills, learning about the importance of personal space and responding assertively at appropriate times, e.g. saying 'No' to inappropriate sexual advances and unsafe suggestions;
- develop skills in presenting feelings, e.g. 'I don't like it when you do that.'. 'I didn't feel safe when . . .';
- learn to make assertive 'I' statements and take responsibility for their own behaviour instead of blaming others.

Finding and analysing information

Children can:

- use experience as a guide to explore which people and services can be approached for help in dealing with particular problems;
- explore the work of people and organisations whose role is to safeguard the health and safety of the community;
- analyse the role of the media in informing people about child protection issues;
- learn how to use community agencies and telephone help lines;
- make judgements and consider options relating to keeping safe.

Planning and action

Children can:

- define outcomes and consequences of particular strategies that might be employed to keep safe;
- develop strategies for achieving goals such as avoiding unsafe situations;
- implement decisions to keep safe;
- create solutions through the problem-solving process;
- consider possible consequences as part of the problem-solving process.

Reflection and evaluation

Children can:

- reflect on and evaluate outcomes of action as a guide to further planning and action to keep safe. This links with the notion of the persistence expectation;
- use their own experience as a basis for evaluation;
- evaluate personal ideas, feelings and actions and those of others;
- reflect on how values and attitudes have influenced decisions and actions, e.g., how parents might discipline their children.

STRAND 2: HUMAN FUNCTIONING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY COMPONENTS

Challenge, risk and safety

'Challenge, risk and safety', a component of the conceptual strand 'Human functioning and physical activity', includes clear links to personal safety programs.

Children can:

- investigate the safety of their homes, play areas and work areas;
- study the concept of physically, socially and emotionally safe and unsafe environments;
- learn and discuss the concept that everyone has the right to a safe environment;
- learn and discuss the concept that everyone has the right to be safe with people;
- learn and discuss the concept that we all have rights relating to our own bodies;
- discuss rights in relation to responsibilities; consider how their own actions and behaviour can affect their own and others' safety and well-being;
- identify and learn to respond safely to situations that make them feel confused, uncomfortable, scared, threatened and unsafe;
- examine the concept of risk, including real and perceived risk and the concept of adventure;
- identify risky situations, places and objects and when/how to seek help;
- discuss how peers and others influence decisions about risk and safety (and consequences);
- identify what constitutes a personal emergency; learn how to get help and stay safe in emergencies in different situations where no adults are present;
- develop a list of emergency agencies for different situations and how they can be contacted, for example, the Kids Help Line;
- learn about the causes and direct/indirect consequences of different behaviours; for example, violence, substance, drug and alcohol abuse;
- learn to recognise warning signals and what to do to stay safe (teachers to use the 'one step removed' or third party strategy to avoid the disclosures of abuse to the group);
- describe how bodies react when we feel frightened, lost, unsafe, rejected, upset, bullied or receive verbal abuse;
- describe feelings when facing a new, difficult or challenging activity or situation;
- expand 'feelings' vocabulary and the ability to express themselves;
- form and use networks and learn how to approach someone for help;
- acquire a knowledge of safety resources; for example, the use of safety houses and telephone help lines to protect themselves and assist others;
- demonstrate what to say and do when someone looks at, talks to or touches us in ways that make us feel uncomfortable;
- learn to persist in reporting when help is needed to stop sexual misbehaviour;
- learn and be given opportunities to practise problem-solving skills;
- discuss how to determine who might be the safest stranger to approach in an emergency such as when separated from parents in different, crowded places;
- identify and demonstrate safe practices and ways of dealing with unsafe situations and

pressures from others to act in potentially dangerous ways;
- consider their own part in keeping safe from others who might cause them harm (Protective Behaviours);
- discuss pressures and peer influence ('I dare you') in relation to risky activities;
- discuss how they can learn from experience;
- devise an action plan to increase personal and community safety;
- identify situations of sex-based and racist harassment;
- learn to act safely when previously safe situations become unsafe or when acceptable touching becomes wrong touching;
- engage in problem-solving scenarios and behaviour-rehearsal exercises, demonstrating ways of expressing points of view, being assertive and protecting themselves.

Patterns of growth and development

Students learn developmentally appropriate aspects of human sexuality; for example, all students should:

- learn the correct vocabulary for body parts including genitals and anus;
- learn about the function of body parts and systems prior to sessions on sexual abuse;
- know why it is important to take responsibility for the care and safety of their bodies;
- know how to differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate (reportable) touching and behaviour;
- demonstrate communication, negotiation and assertiveness skills that can help to manage changes associated with puberty;
- learn and use problem-solving strategies;
- network.

Movement and participation

Children can:

- recognise the effects of fitness on body image, self-concept and levels of performance, increasing their options for keeping safe;
- support and encourage one another.

States of health

Children can:

- identify the inter-relatedness of behaviour, physical and social environments in determining health;
- develop and implement strategies for enhancing their own and others' health by being non-abusive in their relationships with others;
- investigate help services for children with disabilities;
- create basic guidelines for a safe and healthy school (including toilets);
- develop understanding of the need for balance between prevention and cure in community approaches to health including child abuse.

Identity

Children can:

- examine how individuals develop values and attitudes and how these affect personal and group identity, participation in everyday activities, and dealing with others;
- talk about feelings in different situations;
- learn to solve problems and help others;
- name pets, toys and people who have a special meaning to them.

Interaction, relationships and groups

Children can:

- learn about and demonstrate the knowledge and skills needed to function effectively in relationships in a variety of groups and settings and at different stages of life;
- study concepts such as power and conflict resolution;
- identify people who care for us and can help us if help is needed;
- learn about ways in which they can ask for help;
- identify the effects of clowning, teasing, harassment and bullying on personal well-being;
- draw, write about and chart people in our families;
- listen to others and express their feelings and points of view in a safe environment;
- practise assertiveness to deal with harassment;
- develop a group strategy for dealing with harassment and achieving group goals;
- demonstrate skills involved in negotiating sexual behaviour; for example, knowing when to say 'No' and practising how to say it effectively;
- identify actions and resources to deal with abuse, intimidation and violence;

- discuss loyalty and what to do if another child discloses abuse and asks them to keep it secret;
- learn that safe situations can change and become unsafe and it's never too late to say, 'No! Stop it! I don't like it!' or 'That's not allowed';
- learn when to say 'Yes' and 'No', 'No, you can't', 'No, I won't', 'Stop that! It's not allowed', 'Stop that, I don't like it' and 'I don't do dares'.

STRAND 3: COMMUNITY STRUCTURES AND PRACTICES COMPONENT

Consumer and community

Children can:

- identify the range of community resources and formal health-care services (including child abuse report lines, abuse counselling and support services) and how children/families can use them;
- develop skills in selecting and using resources;
- decide how far services, products and facilities are suitable, effective and safe.

Environmental interaction

Children can:

- identify conditions in the natural and built environments that affect well-being and safety;
- talk about quiet places, noisy places, crowded places, places to be alone, safe places;
- identify people and organisations involved in keeping the local area safe and healthy;
- contrast aspects that enhance well-being with those that pose threats: use examples from school, recreation and home environments.

Community practices

Children can:

- investigate the expression of community values and standards in laws, regulations and policies that affect the behaviour, values and attitudes of individuals and groups;
- consider how people can influence laws, policies and regulations to promote a healthy and safe environment;
- identify and describe standards of behaviour appropriate to their situations;
- consider whether everybody accepts these and whether standards are the same for all groups of people;
- analyse influences relating to personal values, attitudes and behaviours, including learned abusive behaviours.

Many of the links in the three strands are directly related to the specifics of protective behaviours programs while others link indirectly. For example, the 'patterns of growth and development' component in Strand 2 talks about the development of sexuality. This, in part, would involve the correct naming of body parts and their functions, including sex organs. This is seen as essential knowledge and is an important part of Protective Behaviours.

This child protection program has potential to link easily to other areas of study such as English and Studies of Society and Environment.

Student learning outcomes linked to Health and Physical Education profile outcomes

The program will assist students to work towards achieving the levels of outcomes as stated in the Health and Physical Education Profile. The table opposite connects Strands of the Health and Physical Education profile.

Student Learning Outcomes for Protective Behaviours	**Profile Outcomes:**
Personal Safety Programs	**Safety**
Identify situations in which they feel safe/unsafe.	Identifies what makes a familiar environment safe.
Recognise the feeling that they are unsafe or uncomfortable. (Early warning signs.)	Explains and demonstrates options to improve personal safety and the safety of others.
Formalise a network of trusted adults.	Demonstrates strategies that deal with unsafe or emergency situations.
Communicate confidently with a range of adults.	Assesses options and consequences in responding to unsafe situations.
Use networks to share information and seek help if required.	Evaluates behaviours that influence personal safety and that of others.
Articulate and demonstrate a range of strategies to help keep themselves safe in a variety of unsafe situations.	Evaluates community initiatives to promote safety.
Evaluate the safety of their strategies.	Plans strategies to manage identified hazards in the community.
Implement a range of strategies to keep safe in unsafe situations.	Evaluates the effectiveness of laws and policies that promote personal and community safety.
Demonstrate persistence in reporting unsafe situations to keep themselves safe ('persistence expectation').	
Use the 'one step removed' (third party) strategy when appropriate.	

Please note that although the final two learning outcomes in the table are not mentioned in the Australian Health and Physical Education Statement and Profile, they are key elements of the child protection program and need to be ever present. *Persistence Expectation* and *One Step Removed* (third party) need to be used and reinforced throughout the program.

The 'persistence expectation' strategy principle involves teaching children that they must 'tell and keep on telling' until either they are safe again or the wrong behaviour stops.

More information on 'protective interrupting' can be found on page 49. Teachers are reminded that 'protective interrupting' is an important strategy to protect children from making disclosures at any time.

'One step removed' is a strategy that enables children to discuss sensitive issues in group settings with safety.

'One step removed' involves framing questions and discussion topics using a third party approach. This minimises the chances of the child disclosing personal, sensitive and potentially embarrassing information to a group; for example, if you start a discussion with, 'What if *someone* . . . ', the discussion moves away from the personal to the impersonal. If you ask, 'What if YOU were hit by a bigger person . . .', there is a likelihood that a child will disclose personal experiences, believing that that is expected. If a child begins to disclose personal information to a group, use the 'protective interrupting' strategy, assuring the child that you wish to hear (because what s/he has to say is important) but can s/he leave it until later when there is privacy.

Children have the right to expect that school community members will know, understand and act upon their responsibilities when children report unsafe situations. They have the right to expect immediate support and follow-up.

5

STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING SAFETY SKILLS

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

International studies show that children with disabilities are from three to seven times more likely to experience sexual abuse than non-disabled children; the greater the disability, the greater the risk. A New Zealand survey of girls (aged 11–12 years) with learning problems showed that 80 per cent of students had been sexually abused by more than one offender on more than one occasion. These reports were confirmed by their social workers (Briggs and Hawkins 1995a, 1997a). This shocking statistic is consistent with the findings of North American researchers.

A worrying aspect of the survey was that, after exposure to the national school-based curriculum *Keeping Ourselves Safe*, many of the students did as suggested and disclosed their abuse to 'someone they trusted', that is, their mothers. Either the mothers disbelieved and punished them for making the allegations, or they ignored them and the abuse continued for up to a year.

Given that children with disabilities are the ones at greatest risk of all forms of abuse, it is vital that they (and their parents) have access to child protection education. These children are at highest risk because:

- People with disabilities are devalued by society as a whole; there is reason to believe that some abusers of disabled children would not consider abusing non-disabled children.
- Those with severe disabilities have restricted social environments which may involve special transport or equipment and a life that conforms to strict routines designed by teachers, medical personnel, therapists, etc. These children can become desensitised to the norms of adult behaviour.
- Adults often permit different standards of behaviour and different expectations when caring for and working with children with disabilities.
- Children with intellectual disabilities are often permitted to be indiscriminately affectionate with strangers who visit their homes and schools.
- Children with Down Syndrome are specifically targeted by paedophiles because they are easily identified, they are perceived as eager to please, and police are unlikely to prosecute if the only witness is an intellectually disadvantaged child (Husler, cited in Sank and LaFleche 1981; Shuker, cited in Longo and Gochenour 1981).
- Children with disabilities are powerless. Wurtele (1987) found that powerlessness in children relates to the need for acceptance; the greater the need, the less able the child is to exercise power. Children with disabilities are the ones most likely to suffer from low self-esteem, rejection and a sense of isolation.
- Children with disabilities are disadvantaged by the sheer volume of touch and the nature of touch contact. They are handled by many more people than non-disabled children and the severely disabled may be dependent on adults for their intimate hygiene. The degree of risk increases with the level of intimate contact.
- Children with disabilities are deprived of sexuality education; the more disabled, the greater the level of physical contact with adults and the less information children are given relating to their bodies and their rights. International researchers have found

an unacceptably high correlation between the lack of sexuality education and sexual victimisation. On the other hand, when sexuality education is available, the abuse rate drops to 12 per cent, that is, much lower than the rate for the general population (Hard 1986).

- Children with hearing and speech impairments are disadvantaged by communication barriers. Children with cerebral palsy who have inadequate speech, autistic children and those with communication disorders have difficulties in rejecting and reporting offences; they are also the ones least likely to receive sexuality education. Until recently there were no symbols to represent and communicate sexual concerns; deaf and non-verbal children are especially vulnerable.
- Many people believe (wrongly) that sexual abuse does no harm to children with disabilities because 'they won't really understand what happened'. This belief also contributes to their victimisation. The reality is that children with disabilities suffer the most violent and degrading forms of abuse involving multiple perpetrators. It results in serious emotional damage, an inability to trust and multiple problems over and above those relating to their incapacity. Intellectually disabled male victims are highly likely to perpetuate the abuse cycle by becoming perpetrators.
- Many children with disabilities are over-protected in the sense that they have few opportunities for independence and do not know what to do when there is an emergency.

Disclosures by children with disabilities

Disclosures of sexual abuse are often ignored when the reporter is disabled. Failure to provide protection can be attributed to the myths surrounding both sexual abuse and disability, including:

- only attractive children are targeted, and children with disabilities are not attractive;
- people with disabilities are and should be asexual;
- children with intellectual disabilities are promiscuous and concoct stories of abuse.

In addition, it can be hard to protect these children because accusations usually involve care-givers or members of staff, and police seldom prosecute if the only witness has a disability, especially one that impinges on cognitive and communication skills.

For further information relating to violence and children with disabilities, see D. Sobsey (1994). For more curriculum ideas to use with children with disabilities, see F. Briggs (1995b).

SPECIAL CHALLENGES

Parents and teachers of very young children and children with disabilities face many additional challenges when they introduce personal safety education. These children are likely to need a great deal of repetition and a great deal of practice using role play, puppets and the thorough exploration of one concept at a time.

Parents and teachers should not underestimate the difficulties involved in teaching safety skills to these children given that they take their concepts of what is safe and unsafe or right and wrong from those in authority. In other words, if adults say, 'It's alright. There's nothing wrong', young children and those with disabilities tend to accept those assurances irrespective of whether they like or dislike what is happening.

An additional hazard is that, for both young and intellectually disabled children, moral judgements are dichotomous (black and white). They judge the outcomes and consequences of adult behaviour as 'good' or 'bad'. They then attribute characterological dispositions to the adults based on those judgements. Adults engaged in abusive behaviour are judged according to how the outcomes are perceived; for example, when abusers present their victims with gifts (which are viewed as 'good' outcomes) the donors may be perceived as 'good' persons, irrespective of the sexual violation. These children are incapable of judging adult motives and collusion between an offender and an accomplice is beyond their comprehension. This again demonstrates the need for children to have practice in assessing *situations* rather than *people*.

Teachers and parents embarking on personal safety education should remember that some children may have already experienced sexual abuse without realising that it was wrong. Also, considerable diversity exists in any school group and teachers must be sensitive to these differences.

Additional challenges

The concepts of 'stranger', 'unsafe', 'sexual misbehaviour' and 'unacceptable touching' may

be difficult to grasp and require thorough exploration using a variety of means.

- Young children and those with disabilities tend to be 'doers'. They need a variety of concrete activities and they respond especially well to role plays and puppetry. Reinforcement must be ongoing.
- These children may find it difficult to transfer information from one setting to another. For example, if taught to go to a Safety House for help, children will view the Safety House as the *only* safe solution to all problems, even to the problem of being lost in a park or market where there are no Safety Houses. Concepts must be taught and reinforced in many different ways with ample time for revision. Parents and teachers should check children's learning after each session by asking relevant 'What if . . . ?' questions.
- Instructions and questions must be clear. Use short, simple open-ended questions. Ask one question at a time.
- Remember that children with learning problems may have a slower rate of progress than others. Information must be broken down into small segments and opportunities for practice must be provided on a daily basis.

In addition, special attention must be given to developing children's social awareness and social interactions to reduce their vulnerability to abuse.

Effective communication

Young children and those with disabilities are often disadvantaged by poor communication skills. It will be beneficial if they can be taught:

1. to provide their name and address and home telephone number;
2. to talk, listen and look at people, establishing eye contact without staring;
3. to practise using an appropriate posture and to stand at a suitable distance from those with whom they are communicating, i.e. neither too close nor too distant;
4. to use clear, firm speech for communicating serious issues: children with intellectual disabilities often shout or mutter;
5. to interrupt a conversation politely to disclose an emergency;
6. to make a clear report of what they have seen, heard or what has happened.

All of these require practice.

DEVELOPING SAFETY SKILLS IN CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Deaf and non-verbal children

Studies show that the incidence of sexual abuse is very much higher in the deaf child population than in the hearing population.

Teaching personal safety skills to deaf children requires a heightened awareness of the varied communication backgrounds of individual children. Deaf and non-verbal children may lack the means to communicate concerns about their bodies. Because shared communication is essential to the establishment of trust, extra care must be taken to create clear, open and safe communications between teachers, parents and children.

To adapt a personal safety program for use with deaf children, we have to go beyond the translation of the text from print to sign language and change the perspective to a visual one. Children who have a comparatively good knowledge of English often miss the subtleties of detail and innuendo that are used in oral presentations.

Some children now have technical aids which give them access to telephones, but they may not be aware of resources such as Rape Crisis and telephone help lines.

All children with hearing impairments benefit from opportunities to practise yelling and saying 'No'. Often they have been told that their voices sound funny and they may be reluctant to try a new form of guttural yell. They will need to use tactile-kinaesthetic cues to differentiate the new yell from the one formed in the larynx. In common with intellectually disabled and non-verbal children, they also need to be taught when and how to use other attention-seeking strategies, such as pulling alarms on trains, stopping buses, triggering fire alarms and writing simple requests for help. In addition, physical defence training is an important asset for all children with disabilities (Mounty and Fetterman 1989; Kennedy 1989).

Successful programs address the following issues:

- Some schools have found that the best teachers for personal safety programs are

deaf teachers who can present material from a 'non-hearing' perspective.
- Deaf teachers need sensitive training to teach personal safety skills, bearing in mind that many members of the adult deaf population are also survivors of abuse.
- Visual materials (such as pictorial cards, puppet shows, role plays and, if possible, special videos) should be used to extend and reinforce children's learning.

For further ideas on working with deaf children see publications by Margaret Kennedy, founder of Keep Deaf Children Safe (UK), and contact services for deaf children.

When reporting suspicions of sexual abuse involving hearing impaired and non-verbal children, staff should request the child protection agency to employ the services of a qualified and suitably experienced interpreter. Problems arise when interviewers are inexperienced in translating information relating to sexual offences, feel uncomfortable with the subject and/or fail to gain the victims' trust. Children may feel more comfortable if the trusted staff member who received the report works in tandem with the interviewers. This is useful when assessment is urgent or when the interviewee has intellectual disabilities, multiple disabilities or a very idiosyncratic communication system which strangers may not understand.

Children with visual impairments

Children with severe visual impairments are likely to need extra help to develop body awareness. Anatomically correct dolls with genitals, mouth, anus and breasts are essential aids for sightless children. Dolls should be selected for their realistic 'feel'. Again, it is useful to involve an adult with impaired sight to ensure that teachers provide the appropriate cultural perspectives.

Children with severe physical disabilities

Developing safety skills in children with severe physical disabilities involves a focus on ways of increasing independence, especially in matters relating to personal hygiene, the development of confidence and self-esteem and the identification of appropriate and inappropriate touching. The latter is especially important for children who depend on others for personal care. It is essential that they are taught to discriminate between intimate touch for hygiene purposes and inappropriate tickling touching for 'fun'.

Children who have been sexually abused

Teaching children that they have the right to be or feel safe can be very difficult when the children have never been protected. Safety programs can be met with a great deal of cynicism from abused children of all ages.

A particular challenge comes from victims who have accepted money and a warm bed from 'dirty old men' when the alternative is a night on the streets. Child prostitutes gain kudos in their peer group when they display large sums of money. They do not understand that they are not in control or that drug abuse, physical abuse and early death are commonly associated with juvenile prostitution.

Another challenge is to ensure that child abuse victims are not left with increased feelings of guilt as a result of the program. Child victims should not receive the impression that they were stupid for allowing the abuse to occur or that they should have found the abuse unpleasant (affectionless children may find genital fondling pleasant if it is presented as love). Children who have not realised that what is happening to them is unlawful are likely to be very confused when they learn that it is a reportable offence.

A positive self-image is at the root of all confidence building and self-protection. Children with disabilities and those from abusive or affectionless backgrounds are especially vulnerable to low self-esteem. There are now many publications to enable adults to help children to develop a positive self-concept. Children with disabilities should be helped towards independence and control over their bodies.

In addition to the methods used for all children (see Chapters 1 and 2) the following strategies will be of use.

Let children work at their own pace

Please allow participants to work at their own individual pace, taking as long as necessary to develop each safety concept. For some children, it may be necessary to repeat the same session, with slight variations, several times and in different ways until they show that they are capable of transferring safety knowledge to different hypothetical situations. Some ideas are

extremely difficult to grasp. Those who have a poor body image and those trained to be compliant will require much more repetition and practice than those who have achieved a high degree of independence.

Group work

In general, the smaller the group, the better. Sessions should be held in a quiet and comfortable place where the group will not be interrupted. If possible, the class teacher should have a co-group leader or assistant.

Seat the children in a circle so that each person has eye contact with the teacher or group leader and other class members. Use warm-up exercises at the beginning of each session to encourage children to participate and focus on 'self'. For example, sing and do actions to songs such as 'Hokey Cokey' and get children to establish their own personal space. Sing the song, 'My body' (see page 69).

Establish a set of group rules at the beginning of the program in consultation with the children. For instance:

- we listen to what each person has to say;
- we agree to take turns in talking;
- no teasing;
- no telling tales to others about what was said in the group;
- we can 'pass' or leave the group if we feel uncomfortable.

Debrief the children at the end of each session by referring to group rules, emphasising that if they wish to talk to leaders privately between sessions, they may do so.

When working with groups, ensure that each child has the opportunity to contribute to discussion. Take care that sessions are not monopolised by the most confident, articulate (and safest) members. Questions should be addressed to specific children rather than to the group as a whole.

Problem-solving skills

We cannot prepare children for every possible dangerous situation; they have the best chance of staying safe if they can think of a range of possible solutions and choose the safest. This is a skill that is only learned by practice. The following hints are provided for helping children to develop problem-solving skills.

- Identify a problem that is relevant to the children. Frame questions around the problem and ask, 'What if' or 'Just suppose that someone . . . What could s/he do to stay safe?'
- Use a third-party approach ('One step removed') whenever possible in presenting hypothetical problems for children to solve (especially problems relating to touching); for example, look for answers containing 'he' or 'she' rather than 'I'. A third-party approach is essential for protecting children who may have already been abused.
- Use puppets to represent offenders and victims. Questions then revolve around what victims could do to stay safe.
- Use brainstorming methods to generate a list of possible strategies that could be used in the situation. If the children are new to brainstorming techniques, simple rules must be created for them, such as:
    - Everyone must be given the right to speak.
    - Only one suggestion may be given at a time.
    - Everyone's contribution will be respected and recorded.
    - We don't tell family secrets in public.

The teacher will be available to talk to individual children about things that concern them at the end of every session. Parents and other family members should be recruited to provide practice in solving problems in and around the home.

Develop children's assertiveness

It is important that children learn and have opportunities to practise the appropriate assertiveness so that they can respond to potentially exploitative situations in a convincing way. For children to acquire safety skills, we need to go beyond cognitive learning and provide opportunities for children to translate their knowledge into safe behaviour through active participation and practice. As most children with disabilities have learned to be passive, this will necessitate changing their attitudes to change their behaviour.

Parents, teachers and care-givers are often afraid of giving children permission to say 'No' in case they then say 'No' to them. Compliant children are easier to handle than those who express their needs and feelings. Sessions for adults should stress the reasons for children needing appropriate assertiveness skills.

If children give unsafe answers, ask 'Is that the safest thing someone could do? Can you think of something even safer?' From time to time add, 'Suppose that the grown-up wasn't listening, what else could someone do?' Encourage children to think of several possible solutions so that they are less inclined to give up if the first adult fails to help.

Provide a positive learning environment

It is important for teachers and parents to work towards the growth of self-esteem in each individual child. The least confident, least articulate children can be encouraged by praising their efforts. When children are offering suggestions for safety, use supportive phrases, such as:

'Thank you for trying so hard. That was a difficult question.'
'Well done! Now, can you think of something else that . . .'
'You have some good ideas there. What else could you do?'

Sometimes children make silly, unsafe responses. Boys from violent homes and those who spend a large part of their time watching violent movies and video games are the ones most likely to offer violent answers to everyday safety problems, for example:

'If I got home to a locked house, I'd smash a window and climb in.'
'If someone gave me a sloppy kiss, I'd stab them to death.'

When children make bizarre suggestions, take care that others do not ridicule them. Invite the contributors to suggest possible consequences of their proposed actions. Thank them for trying but ask:

'Would that be safe?'
'What might happen?'
'What else could happen?'
'Tell me what you could do that would be safer.'

If foolishness persists, give a stern reminder that 'We are here to learn about staying safe. Now, please try again.' Draw attention to rules as necessary.

When children say that they cannot think of a solution to a problem, draw them in gradually with, 'Just suppose that . . . Would that be safe? Now, if s/he . . . Would that be even safer? What else could s/he do?'

An alternative is to say, 'Let's pretend that you do know'. This usually results in a smile and an attempted response.

Protective interrupting

When children feel safe in a group, they sometimes disclose personal information about family fights or sexual abuse. Some disclosures are unpredictable. Be ready to interrupt and protect children from disclosing sensitive information about themselves or their families. Say, 'I'm glad that you want to tell me about this. It's very important and I want to hear it. Can we talk about it in a few minutes, when we can talk in private? Right now, we must finish what we were saying' and bring the child back to the job in hand.

Ensure that the child is taken to a quiet, comfortable, private place to continue the conversation at the earliest possible opportunity.

Teach children what protective interrupting is and why we use it. It is important to discuss with children why they should not disclose personal information to the group. Remind them that, if they are worried about something, they need to tell you or another reliable person because public disclosure could lead to malicious gossip, teasing and distress. Impress on children that they can always come to talk to you in privacy.

Inform children about the helping services

When children are sufficiently mature to make telephone calls, tell them about Kids' Help Lines.

It may be useful for older primary school children to meet professionals involved in child protection and other helping services so that they know who to contact if they need help. School counsellors and school nurses should be invited to tell children about their jobs and how they can help to protect children. Ensure that all children are aware of how, when and where to contact the counsellor, principal or nurse.

Ensure that all class members are capable of making emergency and collect telephone calls. Use role play to practise reporting emergencies with a two-way or 'pretend' telephone.

Provide opportunities for children to practise making decisions

Because some children, especially those with disabilities, have few opportunities to make

decisions, it is important that schools provide choices in the curriculum.

Teachers can:

- give children a selection of activities from which to choose;
- encourage children to provide reasons for their decisions;
- use a contract system in which children make a commitment to the completion of specific tasks of their own choice;
- use learning centres which provide a variety of learning experiences;
- give children a list of themes or topics from which they can choose;
- let children take turns to choose stories or songs;
- give children a wide range of materials for creative activities;
- create class meetings where issues can be discussed;
- help to make children responsible for their own behaviour;
- have student representatives on a committee for the whole school.

When children behave badly, encourage them to express how they feel and why they are upset. Help them to realise that they have choices in what they do. If they choose to behave in an anti-social way, they must be helped to understand the likely consequences:

'What might happen if you do that?'
'Then what might happen?'
'How will everyone else feel?'
'Is that what you really want?'
'What would you really like to happen?'

If children have been debarred from playing in a specific area because of misbehaviour, they should be involved, after a reasonable period of time, in deciding when they are ready to return and comply with the rules. It helps, of course, if teachers involve children in deciding what the rules are, why they are needed and what penalties might be appropriate for rule-breakers. Caution is advised, however, because children frequently want to adopt very harsh penalties for infringements by other people.

6

ON-LINE SAFETY

It is widely assumed that the Internet is anonymous and that email is a safe, shielded method of communication. Unfortunately, both of these assumptions are proving to be wrong, as is highlighted by increasing reports of stalking by Chat Line contacts, email harassment and the use of the Internet by paedophiles to locate and target new child-victims.

Although most people have trouble-free communications, a UK Novell survey reported in *The Australian* (8/3/99, p. 16) showed that 41 per cent of female net users had received unsolicited pornography, been harassed or 'stalked'. Obscene emails can be deleted but the worry for net users is the potential for cyberspace harassment to transfer from the computer screen into real life.

Adults need to be cautious to protect themselves. *However, it is even more important that teachers, parents and care-givers take steps to protect children.*

An Australian Institute of Criminology Study ('Paedophile Internet Activity: Trends and Issues' paper No. 97) has shown a huge increase in child abuse networks operating on the Internet.

Young Media Australia has identified a range of issues in relation to children's safe use of the Internet. These involve exposure to:

- illegal content (such as how to construct a bomb);
- sexually explicit material;
- explicit violent material;
- material which vilifies others on the basis of gender, race, religious or sexual orientation;
- material unsuitable for children and young people including deviant sex, drug information and obscene language;
- disguised advertising;
- commercial techniques designed to sell alcohol and tobacco to under-aged children; and
- access to inappropriate cyber world services for adults.

INTERNET TERMINOLOGY

What is the cyber world?

The cyber world involves the use of information technology (computers) to communicate, get information and play games. Sometimes it is referred to as multimedia.

Multimedia is a combination of information such as:

- text;
- pictures;
- sound;
- cartoons;
- video; or
- inter-activity presented on the World Wide Web page on the Internet or on CD-Rom.

What is a CD-rom?

A CD-Rom (meaning Compact Disk: Read Only Memory) looks just like the CD that you buy to play music. CD-Roms are replacing floppy disks as they hold much more information; for example, an entire set of encyclopaedia can be bought on one disk.

What is inter-activity?

Simple multimedia programs can be a passive experience rather like reading a book. Inter-activity is akin to having a two-way conversation with a computer. Introducing an interactive element allows users to become involved by choosing the aspects they want to see by clicking a mouse. The computer can ask questions

and users can respond. The computer comes to life with pictures, music and sound effects. The Internet uses multimedia and inter-activity extensively.

How do users access the Internet?

To link into the Internet, you need a computer, a modem and connection to a telephone line. Access to the Internet is virtually worldwide and there are as yet no formal regulatory controls in place. The US Supreme Court recently decreed that the Internet deserves the highest protection for free speech and that it is up to parents and teachers to make the decisions about what children should see on-line. This means that parents and teachers need the tools and knowledge to provide protection and help children to use the Internet safely.

Who uses the Internet?

As of May 1999, almost half (49 per cent) of all Australian children had access to the Internet at home. Children living with two parents were three times more likely than those with single parents to have this facility (http://www.abs.gov.au Cat. 8147.0).

ELEMENTS OF THE INTERNET AND HOW THEY ARE MISUSED

email

Electronic mail allows letters and messages to be sent to other email addresses anywhere in the world, instantaneously and cheaply. Photographs and articles can be attached to these messages. They can be read and printed with the click of the computer mouse.

Some paedophiles use this facility to send pornographic photographs to other offenders and the children they wish to seduce.

User safety may depend on how much information can be ascertained from an email address. Although few emails reveal a home address, the full name and city may provide the bare bones for tracing you or your children. If an email does not provide these details, they can be sought from an email directory where listings are captured from marketing databases or supplied by net users.

Web sites

All the elements of multimedia (see page 51) can be combined into an information page called a Web page or a set of several pages called a Web site. Web sites are created by individuals and groups as well as by organisations, universities and commercial companies advertising their products.

Unfortunately for children, some paedophiles have constructed their own web sites containing pornographic material, which invariably shows very young or pre-pubescent children engaged in sexual activity with adults. Children usually stumble on these sites by accident. Another recent trend is for porn sites to copy the names of popular and respectable company sites, changing a letter in the web page address so that a child who makes a single typing error may be taken directly to the pornographic site.

Chat Lines: Internet Relay Chat (IRC)

A Chat Line is a location which, when accessed, enables users to 'talk' and reply to each other by typing messages and responses. Each user's message is shown on the screen and can be read by everyone else using the line. Children enjoy using these lines but, unfortunately, they can be dangerous places if they or their supervising adults are not safety conscious.

Users of Chat Rooms often freely give detailed information about themselves without realising that 90 000 people access them in Australia alone. Some Chat Line services encourage users to provide personal information to locate others with similar interests. The anonymity of the Internet allows children to communicate more intimately than in face-to-face conversation. In a friendly atmosphere, people naively hand out information as if there is only one listener and that person is trustworthy. It can be dangerous for children and young adolescents to use Chat Lines (sometimes called Chat Rooms) without close supervision. Paedophiles can gather information from the Chat Lines relating to children's relationships and their likes and dislikes. They look for lonely children and those who feel that their families are not treating them fairly. Pre-pubescent and young adolescent boys are especially at risk.

Paedophiles may try to gain the confidence of child participants by pretending to be children. In this way they can acquire personal

information which they can then use to plan direct access. For example, they try to find out which schools the children attend, the names of their class teachers, where and when they play sports or participate in other interests and when they are at home alone. (There have been reports of children being accosted by adult Internet 'friends' in the vicinity of their school.)

During the 'getting-to-know-you' phase, the Chat Line paedophile will investigate factors relating to his own and the child's safety before suggesting that the child sends a photograph via the post or as an email attachment or that they meet. For example, the paedophile will casually enquire where the computer is housed and who else is in the room. The relationship is less likely to develop further if the computer is in the family room and others are present.

If communication continues, the paedophile will sympathise with the child and his/her problems and give the impression that he is a special friend. Later, because they share confidences, the paedophile will suggest that their relationship must be kept secret from the child's parents.

When he feels secure in his relationship with the child, the paedophile introduces sexual jokes, enquires whether the child or young person has ever seen 'sexy' magazines, whether he has had sexual experiences or would like sexual information. If the child or young person responds positively, the paedophile suggests sexual activity such as masturbation. He then sends images of hard-core child pornography to the child and emphasises that what the child is seeing is enjoyable, normal practice.

He insists on secrecy for mutual protection because the sharing of information 'will get us both into trouble'. As trust increases, a meeting is arranged and the child or young person is then used to supply sex for his 'friend'. When the behaviour is no longer acceptable, the typical victim is too embarrassed to report it because of his own involvement in the earlier sexual conversations.

Children who have been exposed to sex through the Internet are often eager to demonstrate their new adult knowledge to their peers. Even if parents have banned the Internet from their own homes, there is a possibility that their children will be endangered in the homes of their friends and relatives. This is why all children need to be warned of the possible dangers.

Some Chat Lines are monitored to ensure that conduct is at an acceptable standard and these are obviously the safest Chat Lines. However, if a Chat Line tells you that it is monitored, check to make sure that it is a human, not a software, monitor. Also, check time schedules for live monitoring given that some sites are only monitored at certain times of the day.

At an International Police Conference organised by New Zealand Police (September, 1998), it was reported that Internet paedophiles have been able to persuade boys to leave home after showing them sympathy and offering a more loving, less restrictive and more materially rewarding lifestyle.

Bulletin Boards

These are sites operated by individuals or organisations for the 'electronic posting' of messages regarding a particular topic of interest. Many Bulletin Boards feature explicit sexual material and are used by paedophiles. Some Bulletin Boards may attempt to stop juveniles from gaining access, but with limited success. Again, parental supervision of any messaging facility is advised.

CYBER SAFETY

Most employers now expect their employees to be computer literate and schools are encouraged to develop children's computer skills. Information technology now plays a significant part in the school curriculum. Most schools have a computer room and Internet access. Early childhood educators have collaborated with multimedia creators to develop well-designed CD-Rom material for children on a range of educational and entertainment topics.

Most schools have information technology rules to protect children but close supervision by an adult is the most effective form of protection.

In the home, however, parents are unable to supervise every second of their child's activity on the Internet. Schools are in the best position to provide information for parents on how to protect children who use the Internet.

Make yourself familiar with the Internet service

It is easier for adults to supervise children when they understand what is available and how to find it. Don't let children's technical know-how

daunt you. Their skills far exceed their judgement.

First of all, parents and teachers should get to know the Internet Service Providers responsible for the sites used by children. Look for information about child safety and learn about the various ways of blocking out objectionable material.

How to block children's access to specific sites

On-line services may have parent control facilities which allow parents to ban the use of Bulletin Boards, Chat Lines and other meeting rooms. Parents also may be able to limit children's access to specific sites as well as to email facilities. The following addresses are useful:

Young Media Organisation (Australia): http://www.youngmedia.org.au
Australian Broadcasting Authority's Australian Families Guide to the Internet: http://www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/internet/
A Parent's Guide to the Internet (US Department of Education's Tips for Parents): http://www.familyguidebook.com/
Media Awareness Network (Canada): http://www.screen.com.mnet/
Kidsonline (USA): http://www.kidsonline.org
Mamamedia: http://www.mamamedia.com
Netmom: http://www.netmom.com/
Safe Teens: http://www.safeteens.com
Smartparents: http://www.smartparents.com
Netparents: http://www.netparents.org or http://www.americalinksup.org
Center for media education: http://www.cme.org
Parent soup online guide: http://www.parentsoup.com.onlineguide/
Family PC Parental Guidance Clearinghouse: http://www.zdnet.com/familypc/safety/index.html
Childnet International UK: http://www.childnet-int.org/who.html
Media Awareness Network: http://www.screen.com/mnet/
NCH Action for Children (UK): http://www.nchafe.org.uk
Action for Children: http://www.nchafc.org.uk/internet/index.html

For information on laws relevant to the Internet:

Australian law: http://www.law.gov.au
Netlaw: http://www.netlaw.com/

Schools can encourage uninformed parents to install software programs on home computers to screen out information that is unsuitable for children; however, the use of blocking or filtering software should not be regarded as the complete answer to safety.

New ways of filtering information on the Internet are being developed and tested. For information on the latest developments, visit the following web sites:

Cyber Patrol: http://www.cyberpatrol.com
Net Nanny: http://www.netnanny.com
Safe Surf: http://www.safesurf.com
Surf Watch: http://www.surfwatch.com
Net Shepherd: http://www.shepherd.net/
MailGuard: http://www.fundi.com
Junkbusters: http://www.junkbusters.com

Net Nanny is one of many filtering software products that can prevent sensitive information from going into the Internet; for example, it can prevent your name, address, your telephone number, email address and other sensitive data from being transmitted. A free trial version can be downloaded from Net Nanny and software can be purchased on-line.

Some organisations (such as Cyberangels and Young Media—Australia) have built up a selection of approved safe sites for children. Cyberangels will share various safety options with parents.

Close adult supervision is essential

The best way to make sure that children make wise use of the Internet is to show an interest in their activities using a combination of good sense and sound supervision. If the Internet is to be part of a child's life, it should be part of the parent and teacher's life too. If the computer is housed in a family area, using the Internet can be a family activity.

Depending on children's ages and levels of sophistication, responsible adults may prefer to start out in full control, using filtering software with the most restrictive setting. It is easier to add more liberal access later than to restrict it after something unpleasant has happened. Unless you are dealing with a teenager (who will have different needs and require different rules) this might be sufficient assuming that you are willing to respond if and when the child finds that other sites are fun, educational or otherwise valuable and they are blocked. Many filtering products will allow you to add access to a specific site or you can provide access

under your own password when you return home.

Parents should be encouraged to spend time with children 'on-line' just as they spend time with children engaged in sport or other activities. If they use Chat Rooms, parents should make efforts to get to know children's on-line 'friends'. This is much more effective than imposing 'bans'.

Safety precautions

- Discuss the risks honestly and set mutually agreed rules for using the Internet. Specify time limits and indicate which sites can be visited and which are banned. Adult supervisors should draw up a formal agreement which should be displayed close to the computer as a reminder (see sample on page 56). Parents should ban late night usage for children and young adolescents.
- Bear in mind that people may not be who they appear to be; for example, a 'girl of 12' could, in reality, be a 60-year-old man.
- Encourage children to use 'pen names' and never their own names when on-line.
- If a child uses email to communicate with people you do not know, remove the address and telephone details from your system.
- Never respond to messages that are suggestive, obscene, harassing, belligerent, threatening or make you feel uncomfortable. Encourage children to tell you if they receive such messages. Print them out and inform the Service Provider and, if necessary, police.

Hotlines for reporting illegal material

Australia: Crime Stoppers:
http://www.crimestoppers.net.au

USA: Cybertip: http://www.missingkids.com/cybertip

UK: Internet Watch: http://www.iwf.org.uk/

In New Zealand, report to the Department of Internal Affairs.

The questions children should not answer

Teach children not to answer the following questions which are commonly used by paedophiles pretending to be friends.

- How old are you?
- Have you any brothers or sisters? How old are they?
- Which school do you go to?
- What is the name of your teacher?
- Where are you now? Who else is with you?
- Where do your parents work?
- What do you do when you get home from school?
- What are your interests . . . e.g. where do you play sport?

Later:

- Will you send me a photo?
- Would you like to see some pictures?
- How about us getting together as we're such good friends? Would you like that?

Why photographs should never be sent to Internet correspondents

Please ensure that children do not send photographs to Internet friends. Paedophiles sometimes 'morph' the child's face onto a nude body in a sexual pose and publish it for anyone to see. Alternatively, they use these pictures to blackmail the children into doing what they want them to do: 'What would your parents say/do if they saw this? I'll show them if you tell.' This has happened so frequently that a scene has been included in a video used with 10–12-year-olds in New Zealand's school based child protection curriculum, *Keeping Ourselves Safe*.

SAMPLES OF POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND RULES FOR USING THE INTERNET IN A SCHOOL

Schools should establish policies and procedures for the use of the Internet along with rules governing the behaviour of students who access the system. Students who do not comply with the standards of behaviour agreed and outlined in the student conduct and discipline plan or with the Internet rules may lose their privilege to use the system and/or be subject to other disciplinary action.

Safety agreement

The following sample agreement can be adapted for home or school use.

sample agreement can be adapted for home or school use.

ON-LINE SAFETY AGREEMENT

The Internet is a great place to be but there are risks to children that can be avoided. Some of the people you meet on the Internet may not be who they say they are. Some could try to cheat you, hurt you or steal from you and your family. To play safely on the Internet, you must follow the rules:

- Don't tell anyone your real name, your address, telephone number or the name of your teacher or school. Don't give anyone the names of your parents. Don't tell anyone where your parents work, what time they get home, the times when you are on your own or whether you have a security system.
- If someone asks who is in the room with you, say that your parents or your teachers are there (whether they are or not). It's OK to lie to stay safe.
- People may not be who they say they are. Never agree to meet someone you write to on the Internet without your parents checking them out first. If your parents agree to you meeting with another boy or girl, make sure that you meet in a public place and take mum or dad with you.
- Never send your photo or a photo of family members to someone you have met on the Internet.
- Never reply to messages that are about sex things. Tell your parents or teachers immediately if someone writes to you about sex. Tell your teacher or parents if someone is mean or makes you feel uncomfortable. They should tell the Service Provider and, if someone is breaking the law, you or they should tell the Police.
- Use the Internet only when your parents or teachers are nearby. They can help if you have a problem with someone.
- Remember, when you 'talk' to a stranger on the Internet, it is much the same as bringing a stranger into your home.
- Never accept gifts or information that require your address.
- I have agreed with my parent(s)/teacher about the times that I can go on-line. The times are from ..... to .....
- We have agreed that I can go into areas about .....

  .....

  .....
- and I will not visit sites about .....

  .....

  .....
- If I want to change this agreement, I will ask my parents/teacher first.

Name .....

Date .....

Procedures for use of the Internet at school

The school will allow students to access the Internet providing that the parent or legal guardian does not object in writing.

Each year prior to use, students will discuss information with their teacher regarding responsible use of the Internet, including copyright laws to which users must adhere. The concept of an Internet licence should be raised and discussed along with the sanctions relating to inappropriate Internet usage.

Any claim of a student violating either the Internet policy or values expressed in the 'netiquette' protocols of using the Internet will be subject to the school behaviour management policy and code.

In the event of a claim that the child has violated the policy, s/he will have the claim recorded after some investigation and discussion with the accused student. There will be an opportunity for parents/guardians to discuss the claim with the principal. Where the claim is substantiated, the parents/guardians may be involved in developing an agreed sanction, depending on the severity of the substantiated claim.

School and home 'Netiquette'

Schools and parents should create their own 'Netiquette' or rules for using the Internet.

The Netiquette will be worded differently for different age groups but it should include some or all of the following safety-related issues with discussions about why these are important.

- Remember that a real person is reading your emails and lots of real people may be reading what you write on Chat Lines. Those people have feelings and they can get annoyed. Never write anything on the Internet that you would not say face-to-face to the reader. Never deliberately send a message to annoy the reader. Don't correct other people's spelling mistakes or grammar as that could annoy them. If you make a mistake, apologise.
- Use the same standards of behaviour on-line that teachers expect in the classroom or parents expect in the home.
- Respect other people's privacy.
- Report it to your parent or teacher immediately if someone breaks the rules.
- Don't lend your email login or password to anyone else.
- Don't use the school network to send personal messages.
- *Never* agree to meet anyone you have met on-line without asking permission from an adult.

Schools should also examine their position of legal liability arising from children's use of the Internet.

There are many books available on the subject of children and the Internet.

For further reading try Waters (1995) and Glover (1997).

7

PROTECT YOURSELF

TOUCHING CHILDREN—A RISKY BUSINESS?

Touch is a powerful form of communication. Appropriate touch can enrich human interaction; inappropriate touching can destroy it.

The highly publicised Wood Royal Commission into Police Corruption in the State of New South Wales (1997) threw a spotlight on the issue of paedophilia and the inadequacy of schools and education authorities in protecting children from paedophile teachers. Throughout the following year, the topic of how professionals can provide appropriate care and protection for young children without placing themselves at risk of wrongful accusation exercised the minds of educators around Australia.

The challenge is not unique to Australia. An article in *The Times Educational Supplement* in Britain ('A touchy subject', 11 May 1990) covered the same topic and discussed the question, 'Should teachers be allowed to touch children or should touching be banned?' Although many teachers feel that they are 'damned if they do and damned if they don't', Professor Richard Whitfield, chairman of the National Family Trust (UK) said, 'Not to communicate . . . to stay silent . . . not to touch or give any signals is not to relate; while not to relate is in a very significant sense, not to be human'.

The answer to the touching dilemma probably lies between the two extremes of the continuum. At one end is the notion that it is dangerous for a teacher or care-giver to touch a child in any circumstances. Early childhood teachers in this group would refuse to pick up and comfort a distressed or injured child. It is inevitable that children sense their anxiety.

At the opposite extreme is indiscriminate touching with no regard for the needs or feelings of the children involved. An example of that would be the teacher who gives out and demands hugs indiscriminately because s/he wants to be hugged, irrespective of the fact that some children resist.

Teachers and care-givers have hundreds of interactions with the children in their care every day. Most adults touch children (and other adults) with no ill intent whatsoever. They touch to provide comfort and support, to demonstrate skills, to acknowledge achievement, to give direction and instruction, to indicate approval and for safety, for example, by separating children who are being aggressive. They also touch children to provide safety in some curriculum areas such as health and physical education.

The question is, how many professionals seek permission from children before they touch them? How often do doctors ask permission before they undertake an examination? A doctor was highly affronted when a teacher in a centre for children with severe disabilities suggested that children's permission should be sought before conducting medical examinations, given that they have few opportunities to exercise rights or control over their lives. Many professionals take it for granted that they can touch children without even saying, 'Do you mind if I . . . ? I need to touch you because . . .'

What are the rights of young people to be touched or not to be touched? What constitutes appropriate and inappropriate touch? Before you touch a child, ask yourself, 'Why am I about to touch this child? Is it to meet my needs or the child's needs? How do I know?'

Most children, when physically hurt, appreciate a comforting arm around their shoulders (unless, of course, they have suffered a shoulder injury) or a touch on the hand. Most children who are distressed welcome a comforting hug.

A current survey of children aged between six and eight years (Briggs 2000) has shown consistently that early childhood teachers are viewed as caring and kind because they make such gestures:

> 'My teacher is kind because she gave me a hug when mum didn't turn up to meet me and I was crying.'
> 'My teacher is kind because she washed my knee and put a Band-Aid on.'

How children feel about being touched is likely to depend on factors such as immediate needs; the gender of the adult; the age and gender of the child; whether the child knows, trusts and likes this person; cultural considerations; and family background.

Model protective behaviours

Younger children are more often involved in affectionate touching relationships with teachers and carers than older children. Countless youngsters have stroked their teachers' legs while listening to a story on the classroom floor. Many children compete to hold the teacher's hand in the school playground. Six-year-olds (of both sexes) often proclaim their undying love and write proposals of marriage to their teachers. However, adults entrusted with their care and education should not take children's adoration for granted. Protective education programs teach children that they have a choice; it is their right to reject unwanted touching. And yet when it comes to changing our own ways, teachers and parents experience difficulties. Some parents display hurt feelings when their five-year-old sons decide that they don't want to be seen holding hands or being kissed in the vicinity of school. Some fathers are upset and blame the program when children suddenly insist on privacy and refuse to share the same bath or shower. Some teachers have lessons in protective behaviours but never practise what they teach.

All adults who care for children should develop a habit of asking permission before touching. For example, ask children who are hurt whether they would like a hug or not. It is easy when you get into the habit and it shows respect for children's feelings. Most children like to be tickled. Parents can empower them by telling them to say 'Stop' when they want the tickling to stop and then complying with their wishes.

Should primary schools invoke a total ban on teachers touching children? We believe that this would be an unnecessarily backward and draconian step.

However, clear guidelines must be formulated at the local school community level in close consultation with staff, children and parents. The issue needs to be open for debate and decisions made. Some will say that the decision whether to touch or not to touch is a matter for common sense and 'a lot of unnecessary fuss is being made of it'. Nevertheless, inappropriate touching and reports of child sexual abuse on school premises continue to cause problems for education authorities.

Inform children of their rights

Decisions about touching need to be viewed in the context of risk reduction for both teachers and children. Everyone needs to be clear about which parts of the body can be touched and under what circumstances. Children need to know how to recognise the difference between touch that most people would consider appropriate and touch that is inappropriate and, in many cases, illegal.

Teaching children about these issues needs to be done in the context of well-planned, sequential and developmentally appropriate programs on protective behaviours and sexuality education. One-off sessions are relatively ineffectual, out of context and are more likely to increase anxiety than sessions which are ongoing, reinforced and contextual.

Teachers also need to consider how well they know their children. Some boys and girls are quite comfortable with an appreciative pat on the back or touch on the hand; others are not. Find out who is not a 'touchy' child: this information is needed both for safety and for respecting children's wishes. Learn to recognise body language that gives clear 'do not touch' messages, such as children who shy away or flinch.

Touching a child to demonstrate an action such as throwing a ball, mixing dough or holding a pencil may seem to be quite reasonable. So might a touch to help a child over climbing equipment. However, some people use these opportunities to touch children inappropriately and adults need to ensure that they ask children's permission before assisting or performing demonstrations. Children need to know why a hands-on method of demonstration is necessary before it is used and, whenever possible, volunteers should be sought.

Avoid private situations

Schools and teachers need to give careful consideration to the issue of adults being alone with children. Male early childhood teachers are usually conscious of risks (sometimes to the point of being over-cautious). However, regardless of the sex of the adult and child, schools have to consider how they can balance the child's needs and safety with the teacher's needs for safety.

School counsellors and school social workers are particularly at risk of accusation because they often work in one-to-one situations with children who have suffered stress and trauma. Risk increases if they operate behind closed doors. Counsellors need a room that allows for privacy and confidentiality of conversation but provides visual contact with other adults, e.g., a window at a high level, possibly with net curtains. School staff should obviously take care to avoid being alone with one or two children in any room, store or library.

SAFETY GUIDELINES AND CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION POLICIES

Corporal punishment is banned in most schools. Teachers need guidelines for physical restraint in relation to the duty of care and the safety of others. State authorities usually have guidelines for the manual handling of children with physical disabilities to ensure that they are lifted and moved in a manner that is both safe and respectful. Guidelines are especially necessary when children have disabilities which prevent them from attending to their own toileting.

All schools should have child abuse prevention policies which are shown to visitors, student teachers, parent helpers and new staff. The aims of such policies are to protect children from child abuse, and to respond in ways that will help children if abuse is suspected or identified. A clear policy reduces stress on staff by providing guidance, reduces the risk of wrongful accusation, and reassures parents that the school takes child protection seriously.

A successful policy should encourage staff to:

- identify and make public the school's commitment to the care and protection of children;
- develop a knowledge of child protection agencies, including support for parents;
- protect children from the risk of abuse by other children, employees and visitors to the school;
- regularly affirm sexual harassment grievance procedures with children of all ages;
- protect staff from the risk of wrongful accusation by establishing boundaries and maintaining high professional standards;
- protect children by teaching protective behaviours;
- protect children by involving parents in child protection programs;
- report suspicions of abuse, irrespective of the relationship of the suspected offender to the child or the school.

To implement a successful child protection policy the school should:

- work with parents to establish basic principles which underlie the school or department's child protection policy. These principles should be set out in a clear statement and a staff member should be responsible for ensuring that the policy is developed and implemented.
- provide in-service training for staff. All personnel (including relievers and regular volunteers) need to be aware of children's emotional needs and the damage caused by abuse. They need to understand the signs and symptoms of abuse and how to respond to disclosures and suspicions of abuse. Some will need help to recognise and deal with their own feelings. Some will need guidance on aspects of confidentiality.
- establish clear policies on what should be done if a member of staff or a volunteer is suspected of abuse.
- create clear policies relating to checks on staff. As the New South Wales Wood Royal Commission showed, because paedophile teachers are rarely convicted of offences when children are too young to give evidence in court, education authorities have been unable to remove them from teaching. They have been moved to other schools where, more often than not, they continued their offences. For that reason, police checks are unreliable guides to applicants' suitability for working with children.

  Most people have histories which can be validated. This can be done best by contacting past employers by telephone and asking for a detailed appraisal of the applicant's strengths and weaknesses when dealing with children and other members of staff:

- take extra care when visitors are on school premises. Visitors' names and the reason for their visit should be recorded. A member of staff should accompany visitors at all times while they are on school premises.
- ensure that children are not removed from school premises by anyone other than parents, guardians or designated carers nominated by the parents.
- limit opportunities for adults, whether members of staff or parents, to be alone with children.

For further information on policy formation, see Freda Briggs and Russell Hawkins (1997c).

Part 2

Themes and activities

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING BEFORE YOU TEACH THE THEMES

The 'Note to Teachers' is for whoever is teaching the child protection program, including group leaders, facilitators, parents and caregivers.

GROUP NORMS

Commonly identified group norms related to protective behaviours must be used at all times. These include:

- No put downs.
- Only one person speaks at a time.
- Everyone actively listens.
- Keep discussion 'one step removed' or third-party.
- Everyone's contribution is seen to be valued.
- Protective interrupting is used to help children to avoid embarrassment by disclosing personal information in public.
- Children attempting to disclose abuse of any kind must be invited to talk privately to the teacher or facilitator after the session.

DEBRIEFING AND CLOSING THE SESSION

It is important to monitor the impact of child protection programs on children. Some sessions may relate to personal experiences and recollections of abuse; a puppet scene or a story can evoke strong feelings and debriefing will dissipate these feelings and help the children.

The teacher should state that the lesson is over and ask children the following questions:

'How do you feel after the discussion/activity?'
'Is there anything else you want to say?'

The teacher should then encourage the children to participate in the following activities:

'Talk to the person sitting next to you and tell him or her how you felt when we talked about . . .' (being the boss of your body, the private parts of our bodies, wrong touching, etc.).
'Now tell them what you liked about the session.'
'Now tell them about touches that you like.'

Always close a session in a positive way. Group leaders must ensure that time is allowed for sensitive discussion to be completed before the end of each session. There are benefits in focusing children on what happens next in the day.

Evaluate the sessions to ascertain which children have developed the necessary concepts and which children need more time and opportunities for practice.

TALKING ABOUT SENSITIVE ISSUES

Educators find that, in the early stages, they are the only ones who feel uncomfortable when talking about private body parts and inappropriate behaviour with young children. This discomfort relates to adult taboos. It diminishes when we find that children are not worried about the story of a flasher but say 'yuck' when talking about sloppy kisses on the mouth.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Objectives	**Learning Outcomes**
Children will develop an understanding of:	*Children should be able to:*
Why it is important for them to take good care of their bodies	Name and list different body parts including genitals and anus
Why the 'private' parts of their bodies are special and need 'special' care	Identify and name the private parts of their bodies: breasts, mouth, vagina, anus, testicles, penis
Appropriate assertiveness	Reject (convincingly) inappropriate behaviour in school and in role play
Safe practices	Make a call to emergency services and give an accurate report of what help is needed and where it is needed
	Identify behaviours that might place them at risk
	State how their parents can be contacted when they are not at home
	State behaviours that would help them to stay safe
What constitutes an emergency and how to get help	Practise making a telephone call to emergency services and accurately report where and what help is needed (role play)
The importance of clear communications	Give their full names, addresses, telephone numbers
	State clearly what happened instead of giving hints
What constitutes safe and unsafe touching	Differentiate between acceptable and unacceptable touching
What constitutes tricks, secrets, blackmail	Reject unsafe secrets and report them along with unsafe tricks and blackmail
A support network	Identify people and help services
The need for persistency in reporting	Use problem-solving skills to suggest a number of safe alternatives to hypothetical problems
The fact that children are never to blame when other people do wrong things	Confidence in reporting concerns

Theme 1

IT'S MY BODY

AIMS

- To develop the child's body image and body awareness.
- To introduce the concept that we own and must take responsibility for our bodies.
- To develop a positive self-image by emphasising that each child is different, has different abilities and is valued.
- To help children understand that they have to take good care of their bodies.

Note to teachers

Many young children have no real understanding of their bodies. They know that they have arms and legs and other appendages but they have no concept of *the body as a whole*. Young children, abused children and those with disabilities are unlikely to realise that they can take responsibility for their bodies because they are so accustomed to adults controlling them that they have no sense of body ownership. Research has shown that children who are ignorant of the concepts of body awareness and body ownership are the most vulnerable to abuse.

Ideally, sessions to develop body awareness should be accompanied by developmentally appropriate sexuality education, so that children know about what their body consists of and how the parts function. (Please read Chapter 1 for more information. *Note that we are not suggesting that children should be taught about adult sex or reproduction because that would be beyond the comprehension of children in this age group.)*

It should also be noted that when children are disabled and dependent on mechanical aids for mobility, those aids are part of their body image and must be treated with respect. When we touch wheelchairs, crutches or frames inappropriately and against the wishes of the owners, our actions are tantamount to abuse.

The following sample letter can be used to introduce parents to the 'body awareness' component of the school's child protection program. As we discussed in Part 1, some parents can feel threatened by their children's increased sense of body ownership and it is important for teachers to offer support.

RELEVANT ACTIVITIES

Individual children can:

- make fingerprints and handprints to demonstrate individuality;
- use large mirrors to look at themselves and describe their bodies in a positive way (including rear and side views);
- draw a silhouette of a child (which can also be used for maths);
- use a male and female silhouette to arrow and name all body parts, including breasts, penis, testicles, anus and vagina;
- use the worksheets in this book, with or without help from parents or teachers;
- make a group poster: 'Nobody has a footprint (or handprint) just like mine';
- use the pictures of male and female children's and adults' bodies (see pp. 86–9) to discuss which parts of the body other people are allowed to touch (with the recipient's permission);
- discuss which parts of the body children like to be touched;
- discuss which parts of the body other people are not allowed to touch.

Groups of children can:

- Engage in activities which draw attention to body parts, such as singing 'Dr Knickerbocker', singing and dancing 'The Hokey Cokey', 'Hands, Knees and Bumps-a-daisy', playing at 'Simon Says', 'Heads, shoulders, knees and toes' and 'One finger, one thumb keep moving'.

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS

Dear [Parent/Parents' names],

As part of the school's child protection program, the class will be involved in a unit of work entitled 'My body'. They will learn that:

- Our bodies are all different.
- We can do many different things with our bodies.
- We are the boss of our bodies.
- We need to take good care of our bodies.

With the risks associated with AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, it is important that children, from a young age, are given accurate information about their bodies and the fact that *they* have a responsibility to take good care of them.

To help your child to understand what this means, we suggest that you:

1 encourage your child or children to be responsible for washing the private parts of their bodies as soon as they are old enough to do this;
2 respect a child's need for privacy, particularly in showering, toileting and bathing;
3 bear in mind that boys in particular tend to play with their genitals. You need to confirm that 'It's alright to do that in private in the bedroom or bathroom but it's not OK to do it in public places when other children or older people are present';
4 don't 'explode' or punish young children who exhibit normal sexual curiosity. 'Normal' behaviour involves equal partners exploring each other's bodies on the lines of 'You show me yours and I'll show you mine'. A child who has been punished finds it very difficult to tell parents about sexual misbehaviour for fear of their reaction;
5 respect children's wishes when they don't want to be kissed, hugged, tickled, etc. by family friends, brothers and sisters, grandparents, aunts and uncles (or you!). Tell the adults that while your child still loves them, s/he is growing up and no longer likes to be kissed, etc. Discuss with your child how these situations can be handled without upsetting the relatives;
6 teach and encourage your child to use the correct words for body parts including penis, anus, testicles, vagina and breasts. This is not 'sex education', it is language development. Without the correct words, children find it difficult to get help when they encounter sexual misbehaviour at school and elsewhere outside the home.

If you would like further information about this part of the program, please contact me at school. Your support is vital for keeping your child safe.

Yours sincerely,

Class Teacher

- Use pictures, charts, histograms and graphs to demonstrate how we are all different (e.g. measuring and recording height, weight, hair and eye colouring and individual interests).
- Listen to stories such as Jenny Hessell's *What's wrong with bottoms?* and Kathy Stinson's *The Bare Naked Book.*
- Start *A Book about Our Bodies* which shows the functions and importance of different body parts.
- Start a book, *How We Take Care of Our Bodies*. Children who are unable to write should be encouraged to dictate their statements to adults who will read them back to check them for accuracy.

OUR BODIES ARE ALL DIFFERENT

Point out to children that, although there are billions of people in the world, no two people look exactly the same. We are all different.

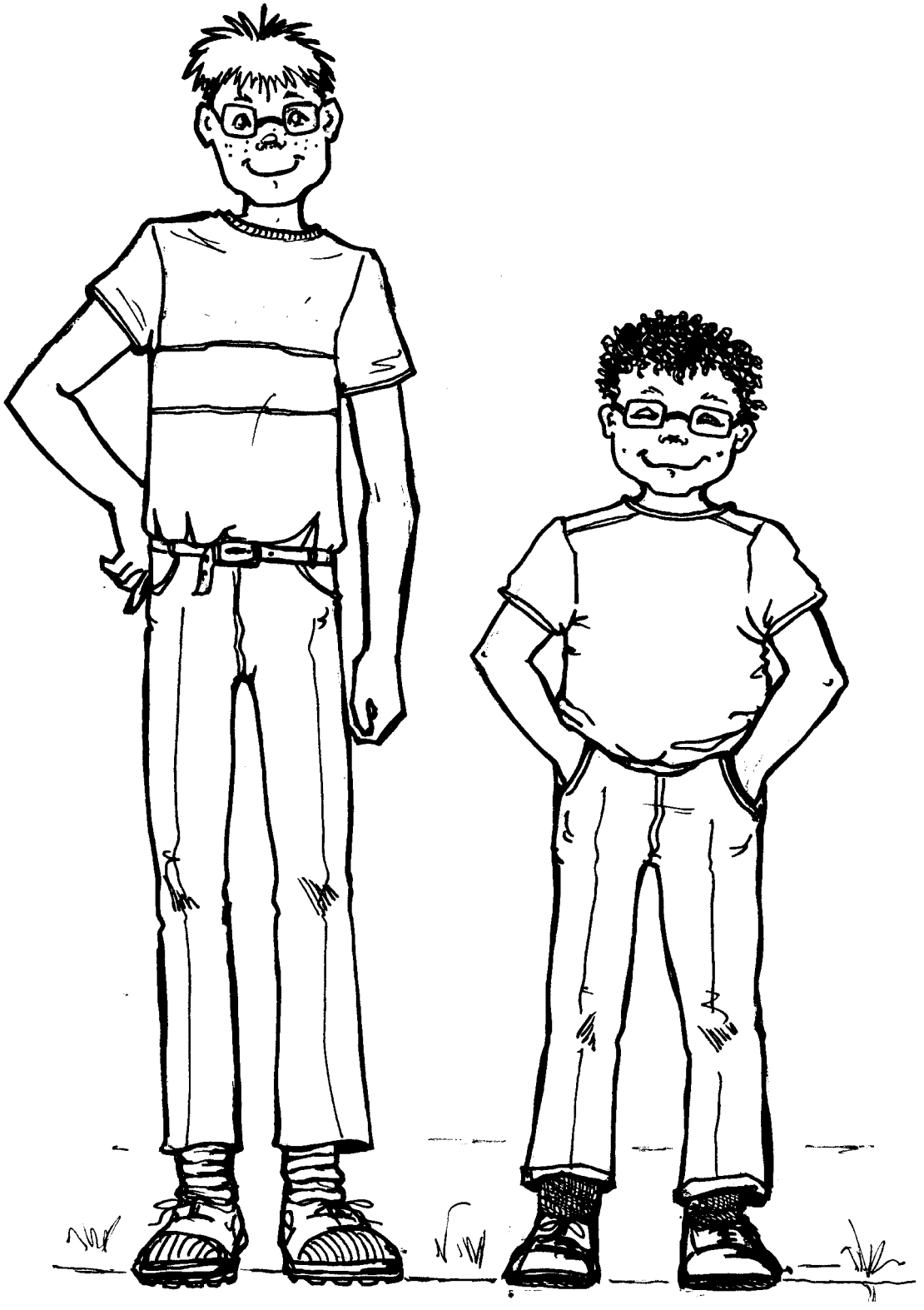
We all have bodies.
I have a body.
You [child's name] have a body
[name children in turn].
Your body starts at the top of your head.
It goes down to the ends of your toes
and to the tips of your fingers.
All of our bodies are different.
And we have to take good care of them.
Some of us look a bit like our mums or our sisters.
Some look a bit like our brothers or our dads.
But no two people are ever quite the same . . . not even twins.
All our bodies are different.
And we have to take good care of them.

Discuss how we take care of our bodies.

Discuss why we have to take good care of our bodies.

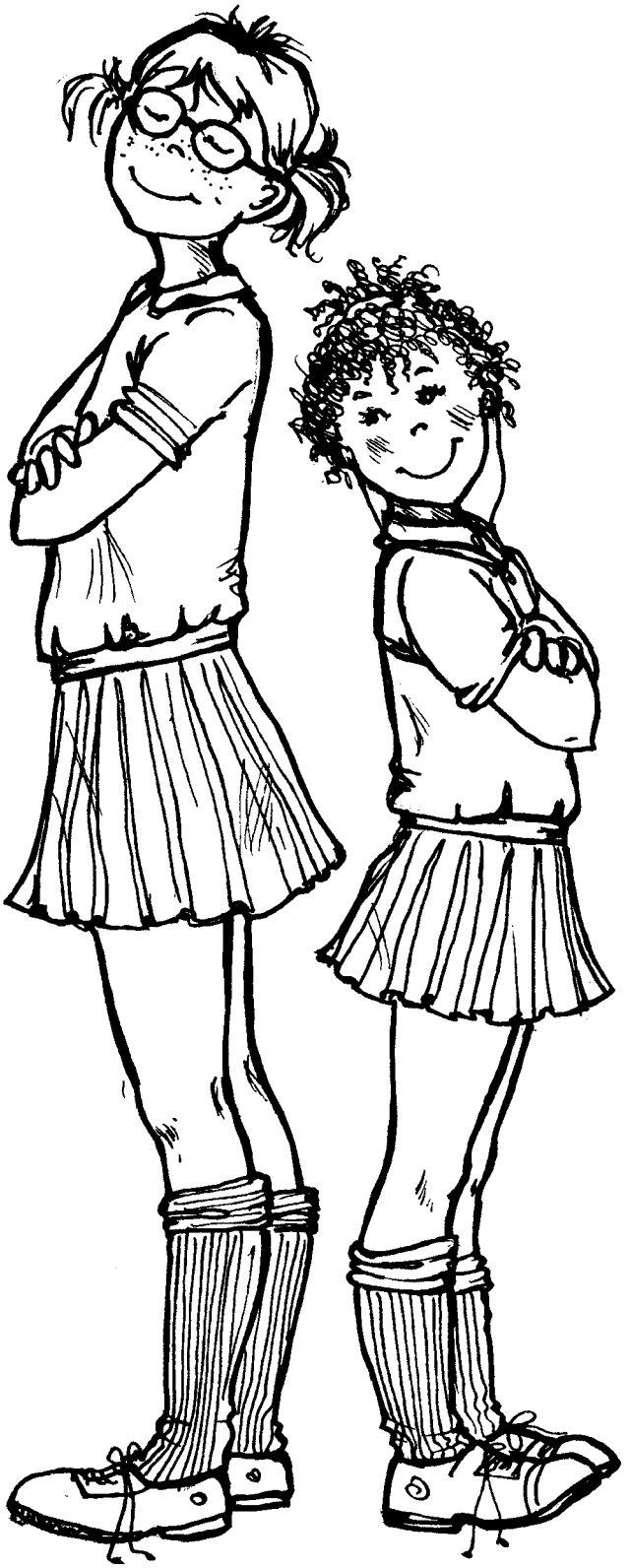
WORKSHEET

We are all different:
Some bodies are tall and some are short.



WORKSHEET

We are all different:
Some people have straight hair and some have curls.

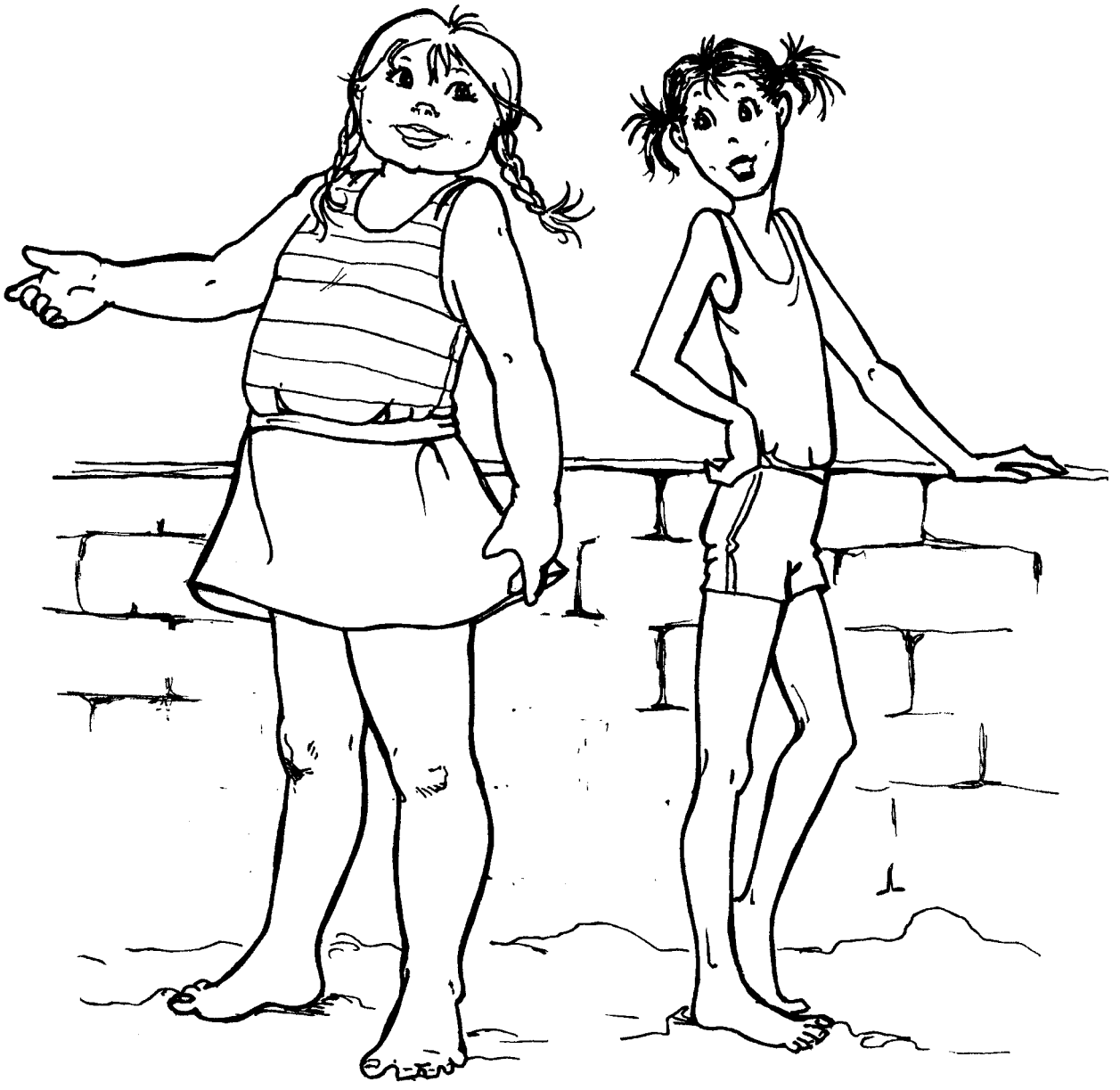


WORKSHEET

We are all different:

Some children run with their legs and others rush past in wheelchairs (and even the wheelchairs are different!).

WORKSHEET
All bodies are different!



WORKSHEET
Even our hands are different!

Compare your hands with someone else's. How are they the same? How are they different? Look at them under a magnifying glass.

WORKSHEET

Even our handprints and fingerprints are different. This is what one of my hands looks like.

Now compare your handprint with others!

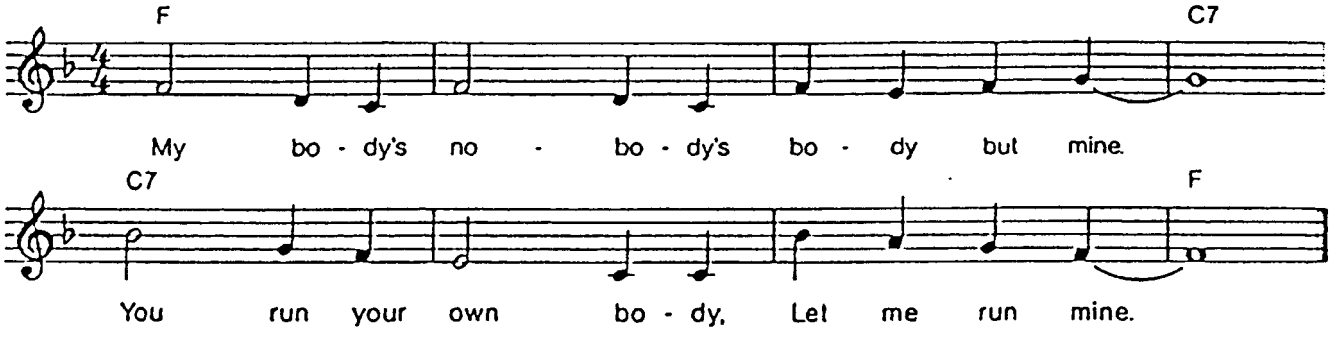
WE ARE ALL DIFFERENT AND SPECIAL

Our bodies are all different
From the tops of our heads to the end of our toes.

Our bodies are special and useful
And we have to take good care of them.

Song: 'My Body' by Peter Alsop

Chorus



Please note that verses 1 and 4 may be inappropriate for children with physical disabilities.

1. My legs were made just to dance me around
   To walk and to run and to jump up and down.

Chorus to be repeated after each verse:

My body's nobody's body but mine
You run your own body
Let me run mine.

2. My mouth was made to blow a balloon.
   I can eat, kiss and spit, I can whistle a tune.

3. My lungs were made to hold air when I breathe.
   I am in charge of just how much I need.

4. My body loves me to peddle a bike.
   Our bodies do just whatever we like.

5. Don't hit or kick me, please don't push or shove.
   Don't hug me too hard when you show me your love.

6. When I am touched then I know how I feel.
   My feelings are mine and my feelings are real.

7. Sometimes it's hard to say 'No' and be strong.
   When 'No' feelings come then I know something's wrong.

8. My body's mine from my head to my toe.
   Please leave me alone when you hear me say 'No'!

9. My body's mine to be used as I choose.
   It's not to be threatened or forced or abused.

10. This is my body. It's one of a kind.
    I've got to take care of this body of mine.

(Reproduced by kind permission of the National Film Board of Canada on behalf of the Green Thumb Theatre People. Featured in the personal safety video, *Feeling Yes, Feeling No* (Canada), Rolf Harris' video *Kids Can Say No* and *The ABC Song Book*.)

Activities

- Read or sing the song and discuss the ideas in it with children.
- Use the worksheets provided.
- Introduce related activities.
- With younger children, the beat can be emphasised with hand clapping or percussion.

Every body is special

We are special people. We are all good friends.
We are special people. We are all good friends.
[Name child] is special,
[Name another child] is special, too.
Of all the people in the world, there's no-one just like you.
We are special people. We are all good friends (repeat).
I am very special and you are special too.
No one in the whole wide world looks just like me or you.
——, you are a very special person
[refer to several of the children in the group].
We are all special people . . . me . . . and you and you.

Activities for young children in small groups

- Sing 'My Body' (see page 76).
- Place a full-length mirror in a safe but accessible place. Ask each child to stand in front of the mirror and say,
  'Look—this is my body.
  It belongs only to me.
  I'm the boss of my body.
  I tell my body what to do.'
- After the child has said that, confirm his or her individual ownership with words like:
  'Look, this is Luke's body.
  It's a very special body. His body can do wonderful things.
  No-one else's body is quite like Luke's body.
  All of our bodies are different.
  All our bodies are special because they do wonderful things.'

What wonderful things can you do with your body?

WORKSHEET

We can all do different things with our bodies.

These are the things I can do with my body without help from anyone else:

These are things I can do with my body if someone helps me when I ask:

And this is what I would like to be able to do with my body next year:

WORKSHEET: I'm the boss of my body.

I have a body.
You have a body.
We all have bodies.

My body is my body.
It's nobody else's body but mine.
My body belongs only to me.
And I'm the boss of my body.

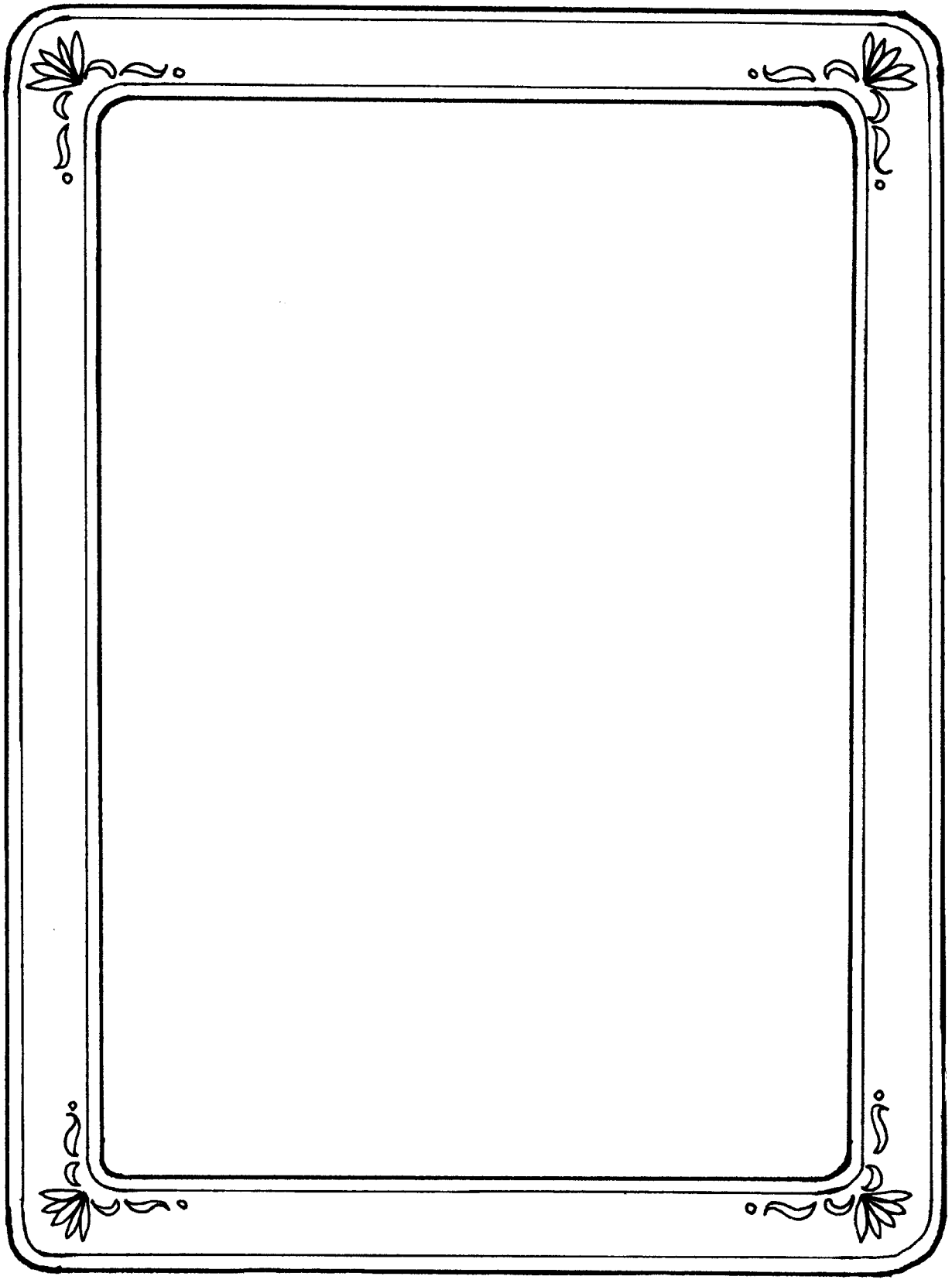
Sometimes, I like sharing my body with someone else.
Sometimes, I like to give someone a hug.
Sometimes, I like a friend to hug me.
But I don't always want to be hugged.
I don't always want to be cuddled or kissed.
And if I don't want to share my body with somebody,
I have the right to say 'No! Don't do that! I don't like it.'
I can say 'No' because it's my body and I'm the boss.
Let's all say, 'No', together.
Now, louder! Louder still . . . as if we really mean it!

Shout 'No'!

And louder still!

And again!

WORKSHEET: This is a picture of my body.



WORKSHEET: Checklist of things that I can do with my body. (Please tick.)

	By myself	With help from someone
Fasten buttons		
Put on shoes		
Use the toilet		
Clean my teeth		
Tie shoelaces		
Shower myself		
Throw a ball		
Catch a ball		
Use a knife and fork		
Remember the number of my house and the name of my street		
Remember my phone number		
Answer the phone safely		
Make a phone call		
Change a TV program		
Use the video		
Use a printer		
Answer the door safely		
Get ready for bed		

Theme 2

SOME PARTS OF OUR BODIES ARE PRIVATE

AIMS

- To help children to differentiate between acceptable and unacceptable touching.
- To make children aware that certain parts of their bodies are private, namely their genitals, breasts, buttocks, anus and mouth.

The mouth must be included as a private body part because of the tendency of child molesters to use both boys and girls for oral sex.

Note to teachers

The concept of body privacy is complex and may be alien to very young and disabled children who receive assistance for their intimate hygiene. Children will recognise our hypocrisy if, while teaching them that they have the right to body privacy, we routinely subject them to intimate touches for hygiene without asking their permission.

Professionals must consider the steps that will be necessary if children reveal that they are being touched in unacceptable ways by members of staff, visitors or voluntary helpers. All schools and centres catering for children should have guidelines and policies in place for these contingencies. Teachers in particular have a poor record of reporting their abusive colleagues. Children's rights and safety must always be a priority. If children indicate that they have been sexually abused, the accused person should be removed from contact with children pending a formal investigation.

It is likely that girls will have no accurate knowledge about their genitals. In sexuality education, educators may assist severely disabled girls to look at the construction of their bodies in private by providing them with mirrors and diagrams.

Sexuality education should inform all children why their genitals are important and why they must take care of them. A positive message should be transmitted, acknowledging that sexual touching can be pleasurable and genitals are special and private places. They are special because 'You'll probably want to share them with a partner when you grow up. It takes a long time to choose the right partner because you have to choose very carefully if that person is going to be the mummy or the daddy of your children'.

Teachers in schools are urged to enlist the help of specialists for this difficult and important task.

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS

Dear Parent/Caregiver,

As part of the school's child protection program, the class will be learning that 'Some parts of our bodies are private'. Children will be taught:

- what 'private' means; to name parts of the body considered to be 'private', i.e. their mouths, breasts, penis and testicles, anus, vagina;
- that touching is an important part of our lives but some touching is acceptable and some is not;
- that they can tell you if anyone breaks the rules;
- that you will listen and help them to stay safe.

As a parent/caregiver, you can help your child in the following ways:

- At bath time, check to see if your child knows the correct words for body parts;
- Ask your child to tell you about the rules for the private parts of the body, i.e.:
  - bigger people are not allowed to play around with, mess around with or tickle those parts of the body;
  - no-one is allowed to put their hands under clothing to touch those parts of the body;
  - no-one is allowed to ask children to touch those parts;
  - no-one is allowed to put yucky or stinky things in their mouths.

Those are the rules to protect children from people who don't behave themselves. *Please remember that children will only tell you about sexual misbehaviour if you have already talked about it and they know you will listen to what they have to say.*

If you have not been involved in a child protection program before, these topics may be difficult for you to talk about. It is vital for your child's safety that you discuss them. If you need help, please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Class Teacher

INTRODUCE THE CONCEPT OF PRIVACY

- Revise what was taught in earlier sessions.
- Start sessions with action songs and warm-up activities relating to bodies.
- Proceed as slowly and as repetitiously as necessary to meet the needs of individual children.
- Bear in mind that, although we aim to teach the correct biological names for body parts, it may also be necessary to use children's own crude expressions from time to time to ensure that they understand.
- Use the diagrams provided of male and female human bodies (pp. 86–9) and/or good-quality anatomically correct dolls for this session.
- Introduce the word 'private'. What does 'private' mean? What does it mean when people put 'Private' on a door?
- Can children provide evidence that they understand the concept of privacy? What do they know about private possessions and other private places?
- Investigate children's understanding of the term 'special'. What does 'special' mean to them? Do they realise that when something is special, they have to take good care of it?

Some parts of our bodies are private

- Using the diagrams of the human body (pp. 86–9), invite children to label which parts of the body are private.
- Explain to the children that it's OK for them to touch their private parts if they are in a private place such as their bedroom or bathroom but it *isn't* OK for bigger kids or grown-ups to touch them.

I have a body. You have a body.
We all have bodies.
Our bodies are made up of lots of different parts.
All the parts of our bodies are important.
Some parts of our bodies are private, too.
Can you remember what private means?

It means, 'Keep out!'
'Don't touch.'
'No messing around. It's very special.'
Private means, 'Hands off! Keep out! I'm the boss.'

The private, special parts of our body are so special that we keep them covered up.
We don't show our bottoms to the next-door neighbours.
We don't show them to people in the supermarket.
We don't ask people to look at them when we're on a bus.
We don't even share them with our friends and relatives.
Our bottoms are private places, they're ours and no-one else's.

Now, take a look at the pictures of bodies and label the private places.

Naming body parts

Children should be invited to either draw around the body of a boy and a girl or, alternatively, the teacher should photocopy and, if possible, enlarge the pictures of a male and female body provided on pp. 86–9.

I have a body.
You have a body.
We all have bodies.
Our bodies have lots of parts.
And all the different parts have important jobs to do.

Let's see how many body parts you can name and we'll write the names down. *Some children may giggle and provide 'rude' words. Accept the various names and say, 'Yes, some people use that word but today we're going to use the words that are in the dictionary'.*

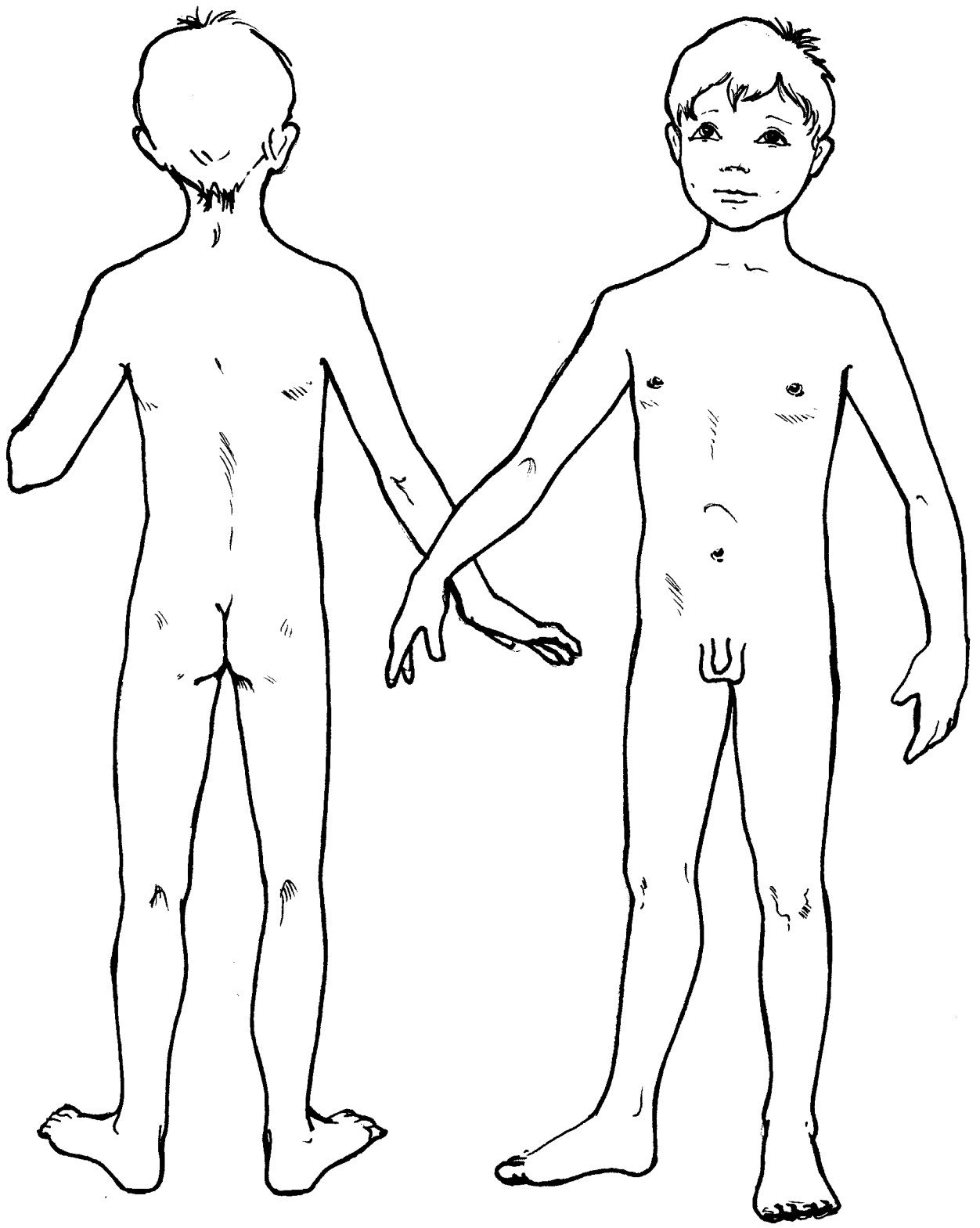
With each body part named, the teacher should ask children whether they know the functions of the body parts. Why is it important to take good care of/look after them?

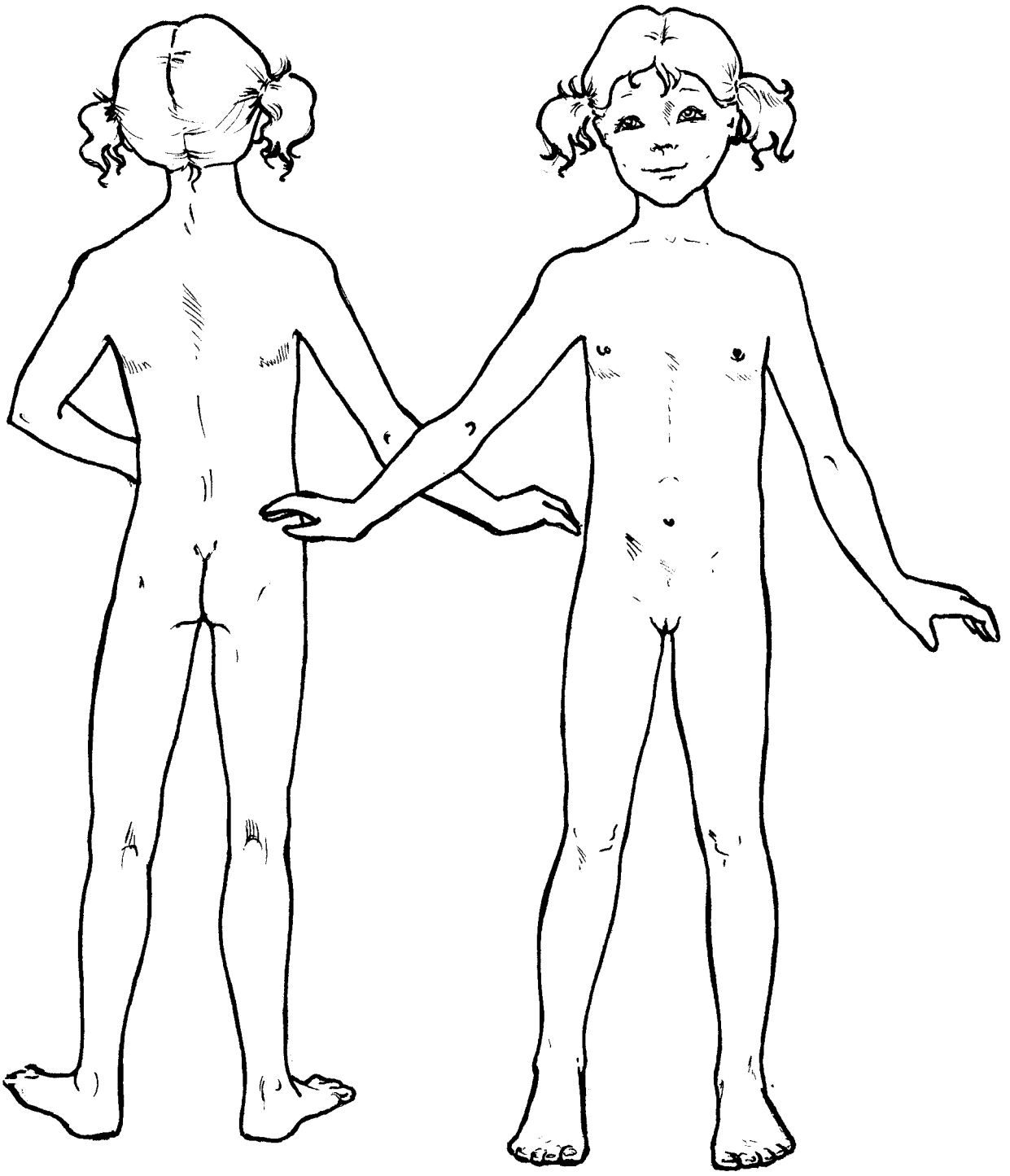
Our mouths are private places

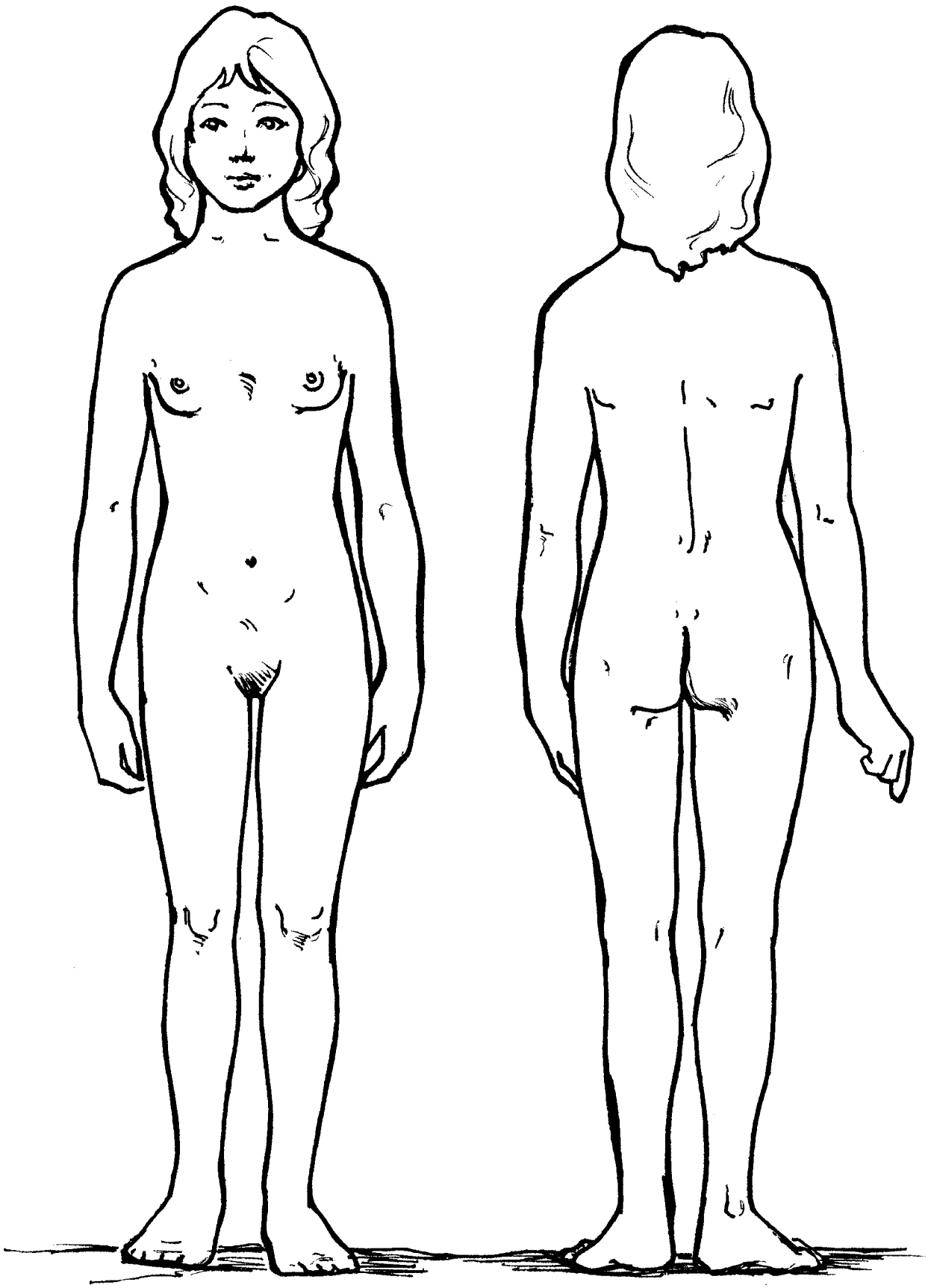
(*Note*: this material continues on p. 92.)

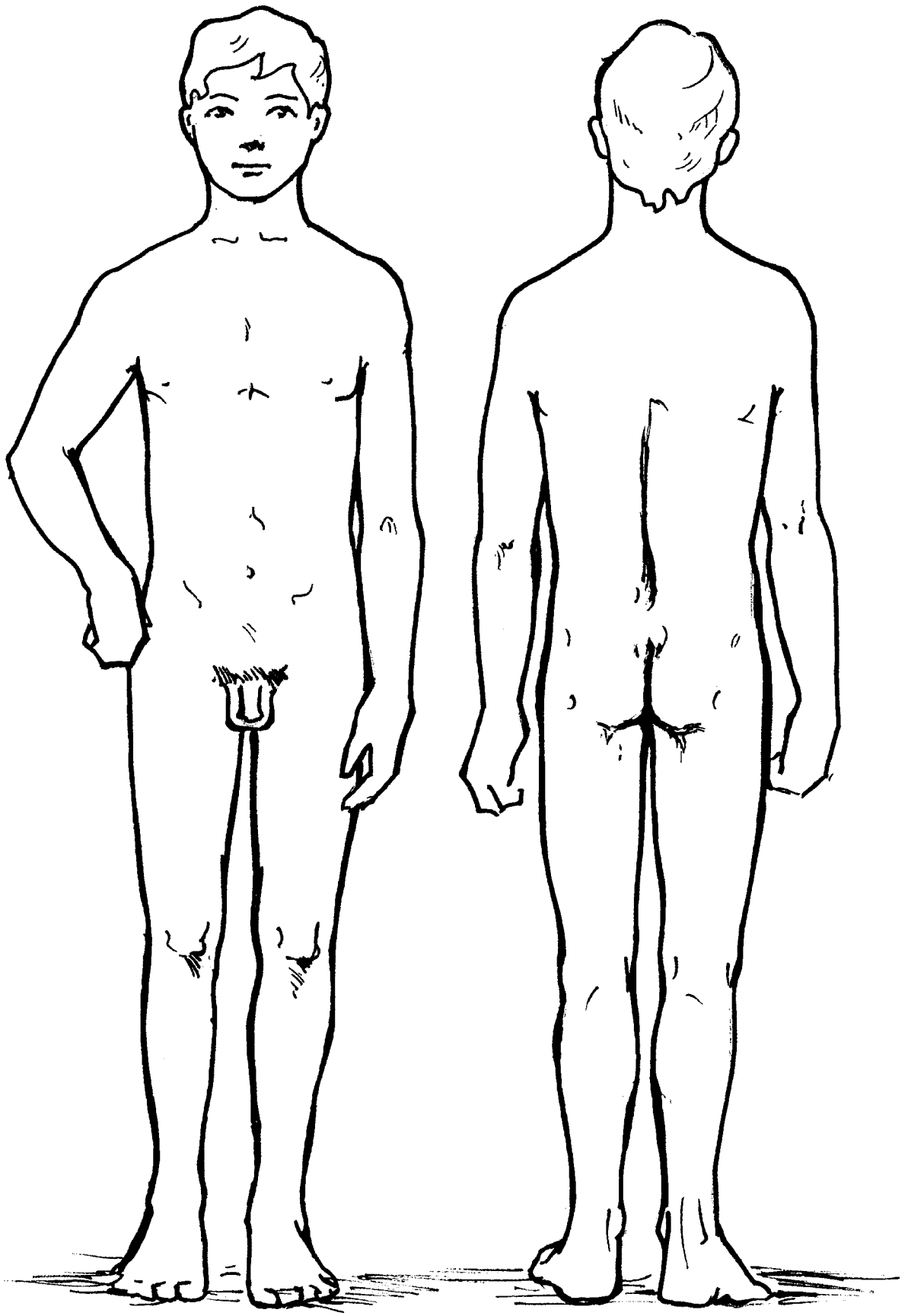
Using the drawings of bodies or a puppet, the teacher should point out that the very special private parts of the body start with our mouths and go down to our knees.

Your mouth is private.
It's a very special, important part of your body.
Does anyone know why it's so important?
How do we look after our mouths?
Why do you think we have to look after our mouths?
What could happen if we didn't look after them?
Is anyone allowed to put things in our mouths?
(If yes, who and what kind of things are allowed?)
No-one is allowed to put things in your mouth without your permission . . . unless you have to take doctor's pills or medicine and can't manage to do it by yourself.
Is it OK for your mum to put chocolate in your mouth if you like chocolate?
Suppose you don't like chocolate?
Is it OK for the dentist to put his hand in your mouth? Why?
Suppose that a grown-up wants to put something yucky in a child's mouth. Is that allowed? What could the child do? What could a child say to the grown-up?
What if grown-ups don't stop when children ask them to stop? What could they do?
Is it OK for a bigger kid to put something yucky in a child's mouth?
What could the child say? What could the child do?
Other people aren't allowed to play around with your mouth.
They're not allowed to put their fingers in your mouth.
They're not allowed to put any part of their body in your mouth because they might have germs and bad germs can make you very, very sick.









WORKSHEET

We shouldn't even suck our fingers if they are dirty.

WORKSHEET

Don't let anyone put anything yucky in your mouth.
Don't let anyone put anything stinky in your mouth.

Why do you think we have to look after our mouths?

(continued from p.85)

Next time you go to the dentist, you'll see that they wear plastic gloves before they put their hands in your mouths. That's so that you don't get the germs from their hands.

Suppose that someone tries to kiss us on our mouth and we don't want to be kissed. What can we do? What can we say?

Some people give sloppy mouth kisses that are really yucky.

Sometimes we don't like the person who wants to kiss us.

Suppose that it's a relative who gives sloppy kisses? What could we do about it?

Suppose that it's a relative that we like and we don't want to upset them?

Can you think of what we could do?

Sometimes we might like to be kissed but sometimes we don't want to be kissed.

Nobody wants to be kissed all the time.

It's OK to say 'No' and get away if you don't like being kissed.

And remember, never kiss other people if they don't want to be kissed.

STORY: YOUR MOUTH IS PRIVATE

The story reader should adapt the questions to the developmental levels of the individual children.

Nick was standing all alone in the corner of the playground. He looked around. All of his friends were busy. Two were talking. Two were chasing. Nick didn't join in because he can't run as fast as the others. He was feeling a bit sorry for himself because there was no-one to play with.

Ben spotted that Nick was on his own. Ben is the bully in the next class. He's a year older than Nick. Ben called to two of his friends. 'Hey guys! Come over here. I've got an idea.' Ben was holding a jam jar. The boys came over and looked inside. Then, they huddled together whispering. Ben and Darren started laughing and all three boys looked towards Nick. He sensed that they were laughing at him.

How do you think he felt?

Nick felt much happier when Ben called out, 'Nick, would you like to play with us?' He couldn't understand why these boys were choosing him, because they didn't usually play with younger kids. They usually kicked a ball around the oval at lunch time. Nick was so pleased that someone wanted to play with him that he said, 'Alright' and ran across the yard to join them.

'What are we going to play?' he asked.

'It's a new game. You haven't played it before,' said Ben. Darren sniggered. Ben told them to shut up. Darren turned away because he couldn't stop laughing.

Nick felt a bit uncomfortable. He didn't know why . . . but he was so pleased that the big boys wanted to play with him that he didn't take any notice of his feelings.

'The first thing you have to do is stand up against the wall,' said Ben. Nick obeyed.

'Now, close your eyes,' said Ben.

Nick did as he was told but felt very uncomfortable.

Do you think he should have stayed? What could he have done?

'Close them tighter', Ben instructed. 'No peeping or you won't get a special surprise'.

Ben put his hands over Nick's eyes to make sure they were tightly closed.

'What special prize?'

'Close your eyes first,' snapped Ben.

Nick did as he was told.

'Now, open your mouth', instructed Ben.

Nick opened his mouth just a little bit and peeped out of the corner of his eye. Ben spotted this and told Nick that unless he closed his eyes and opened his mouth wide, he wouldn't receive the special present that they had for him.

'You keep it wide open until I tell you to close it', instructed Ben.

Although he felt a little bit worried, Nick did as he was told.

Nick had early warning signs but he didn't take any notice of them. Why?

Darren laughed and laughed. Ben told him to shut up. Nick felt even more worried. His heart was beating faster and he found it hard to breathe.

Ben came closer to Nick. He heard the other two boys trying to suppress their giggles. Nick felt even more worried. His heart was beating faster and his tummy had butterflies in it. He now had such a bad feeling that he opened one eye . . . just a teeny-weeny little bit. Out of the corner, he could see that Ben was holding a long, brown, wriggling, slimy garden worm and he was just about to put it into his wide open mouth.

What do you think he did?
How do you think he felt?

Did Ben have the right to put a worm in Nick's mouth? Why?

If someone put something yucky in your mouth, it would give you a really bad feeling too. Mouths are very important parts of our body and we have to take good care of them. Things that are dirty and yucky can make kids very sick.

What should Nick do?
Who should he tell?
What should he say?
Why do you think that the boys played that nasty trick on Nick?

When Nick opened his eyes, Ben tried to push the worm down Nick's shirt but Nick managed to get away and tell the teacher.

The teacher told him to remember two things: 'First, when you get a warning sign that tells you that something isn't quite right, get away quickly. Don't join in. Second, remember that your mouth is a special and private place. That means, everyone else must keep out. You can put your own toothbrush in your mouth and you can use toothpaste too,' said the teacher. 'You can put good food in your mouth because that's what mouths are for. You can put medicine and pills in your mouth if they come from the doctor or the chemist's shop and they were bought just for you. But other people must keep out. Mouths are private and private means "Keep Out". Mouths are special. Take care of yours. It's an important part of your body. No-one is allowed to put parts of their body in your mouth. Nobody is allowed to put yucky or stinky things in your mouth. That could make you very sick. If you want to put your own fingers in your mouth, you should give them a good wash first to get rid of the germs. And if anyone else wants or tries to put something yucky in your mouth, say, "No! That's not allowed." Get away as fast as you can. Tell your teacher (school counsellor, parent, school nurse) or someone who can help. Keep on telling different people until someone believes you and does something to help you.'

Nick smiled. He knew that, next time, he would do something to stay safe when he felt a warning sign.

WORKSHEET

Even tough kids have to take good care of their mouths.

This is what we can do to look after our mouths:

And if someone tries to mess around with our mouths, this is what we can do:

WE HAVE OTHER PRIVATE PLACES

For this section, use the drawings of male and female bodies on pp. 86–9.

You know that your mouth is private.
Did you know that your breasts are private too?
Some people call them 'boobs' or 'tits' but today we're going to use the word that grown-ups use. The word that's in the dictionary is breasts.

Everybody has breasts.

When girls grow up, their breasts change shape ready for making milk to feed babies. When boys grow up, their breasts don't change because men don't breast-feed babies.

You have to take good care of breasts because they are very important body parts. That's one reason why we cover them up with clothes. Nobody is allowed to mess around or play around with kids' breasts. Your breasts are yours and no-one else's.

If you're not feeling well, the doctor may need to sound your chest with a stethoscope but your mum, dad or a nurse will be there. That's the rule.

Now, let's label the breasts of the boys and girls in the pictures (pp. 68–7, 88–9).

AND WE HAVE *MORE* PRIVATE PLACES

We have even more private places.
Can you think where they are?
Do you know what they are called?
They are the parts of our body that we keep clean and safe by covering them up with our pants.
They are very important parts of our bodies.

What do you call the names of the body parts between a boy's legs?

A boy has a penis and testicles between his legs. Some people give these funny names, but today, we're going to use the grown-up words, the ones in the dictionary.

A penis and testicles are very special and private things to have if you are a boy. You have to take good care of them because they can easily get hurt. How do boys take care of their penises and testicles?

What do you call the parts of the body between a girl's legs?

Girls have a vulva and vagina between their legs. They are hidden out of the way. The vulva is a bit like the top of a box of tissues. It protects what's inside and keeps out the germs. The vulva and the vagina are very special places for girls and you have to take great care of them. How do girls take care of these private places? Can you remember what private means?

Yes, private means that it belongs only to you. You are the boss of your special and private places and other people have to keep out. Being the boss also means that you have to look after them and keep them clean and safe.

If a boy's penis or a girl's vagina is sore or has a rash on it and itches, a doctor might want to examine it. Your mum or dad or a nurse must be there. Those are the rules!

AND WE HAVE *EVEN MORE* PRIVATE PLACES

We have some more private places covered up by our pants.
Do you know their names?

We all have buttocks.
We all have an anus.
Some kids call it their 'bum' or their 'bottom' or their 'arse' but we're using grown-up words today, the names that are in the dictionary.

Your buttocks and your anus are private, special places. Your anus is very important because it's the opening that gets rid of the faeces when you go to the toilet. 'Faeces' is the word that is in the dictionary but some kids call it 'poo' or 'shit'. We have to look after this special part of our bodies and keep it clean.

Nobody is allowed to play around with it.
Nobody is allowed to poke anything inside it.
They are the rules because your anus can easily get hurt.

We wash and dry our buttocks and anus well when we have a shower or a bath.

Why do you think we have to look after them and keep them safe?

If we don't look after them, they can get very sore and uncomfortable. Then it's difficult to walk and it even hurts to sit down. So, if someone wants to play around with your private parts, you can say, 'No! It's not allowed.' Tell them to go away and tell someone about it. Remember, your body is yours.

You're the boss of your body.
But the parts of your body from your mouth to your knees are extra special and private. Private means that no-one can touch them without your permission.
Private means they're yours. Private means you're the boss. And when you're the boss, you have to look after your special private parts.
If a doctor needs to examine your anus and buttocks, your mum or dad or a nurse should be there. Those are the rules.

RULES FOR THE PRIVATE PARTS OF OUR BODIES

Children can be invited to create rules for keeping the private parts of their bodies safe. Points to discuss are that:

- Doctors should only examine the private parts of their bodies with a parent or a nurse present. Some programs suggest that health professionals are safe. Unfortunately, sexual abuse is sometimes disguised as a medical examination.
- If medical examinations involve the private parts of the body, the doctor should ask the child's permission to make the examination.

If children need help with their personal hygiene, the caregivers must keep to the rules.

- Bigger people are not allowed to hurt or play around with the private parts of your body.
- Bigger people are not allowed to tickle the private parts of your body under your pants. Bigger people are not allowed to look at the private parts of your body just for fun.
- No one is allowed to play around with your body if you don't want them to.

We keep our private parts private.

The following scenario can be used with a genderless puppet.

Hello girls and boys. How are you today?

My friend told me that you've been learning about staying safe. He said that you'll be able to help me because you know what to do. Is that right?

This is what happened to me.

I have a friend called Bungle (*or any name that children are unlikely to relate to friends or relatives*). He used to be nice to me. He used to give me lots of lollies and presents and I thought he liked me a lot but I'm not sure what to do any more. You see, sometimes he breaks the rules about touching and tickles the private parts of my body. Is he allowed to do that?

(*Children: No!*)

What do you think I should say to him if he does it again?

(*Children: No! Don't do that! It's not allowed.*)

Can you shout that even louder? I can't hear very well. (Repeat)

That's a good idea. Can you shout louder still?

(*Children: Stop that (or) Don't do that! I don't like it (etc.))*

What else should I do?

(*Children: Get away as fast as you can.*)

Anything else? (*Tell someone.*) Who could I tell?

What should I say?

Suppose that the person I told didn't believe me? Maybe they'd laugh and say I'm stupid. Or they might say I'm making it up. What else could I do?

Who else could I tell?

You've given me some really good ideas. Thanks for listening and helping me. I'll do that.

Using a second puppet on the other hand

It's funny you should say that because I have a problem too.

I have a cousin who makes me do really yucky things sometimes.

I keep saying I don't want to do it but he doesn't take any notice.

Tell me, if bigger people want children to play around with *their* private body parts, do we have to do it?

(*Children: No!*)

What could I say? (*Give children the opportunity to practise saying 'No', shouting louder.*)

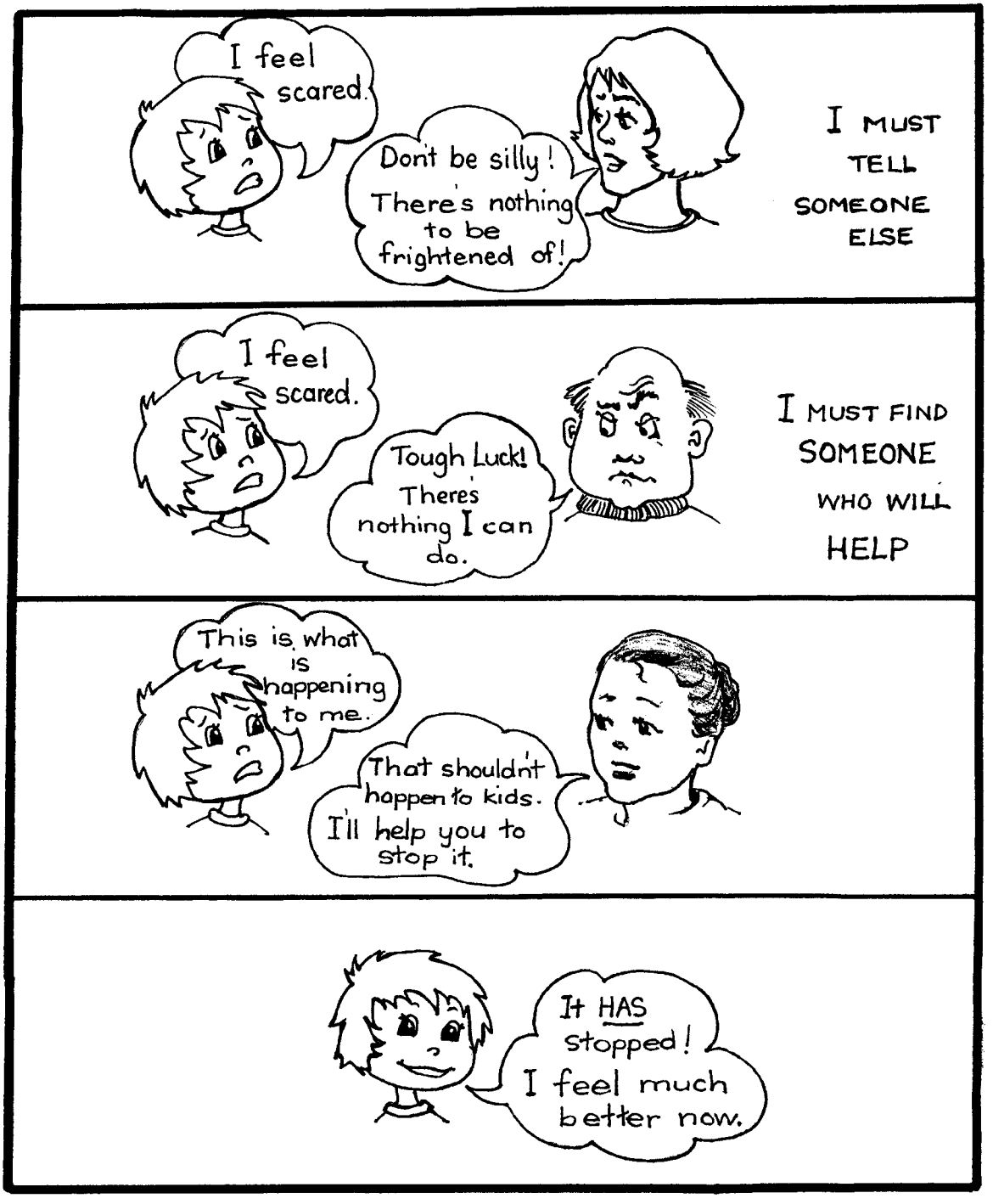
What else could I do? . . . Anything else?

Thank you for helping me.

You have some really good ideas for staying safe.

WORKSHEET

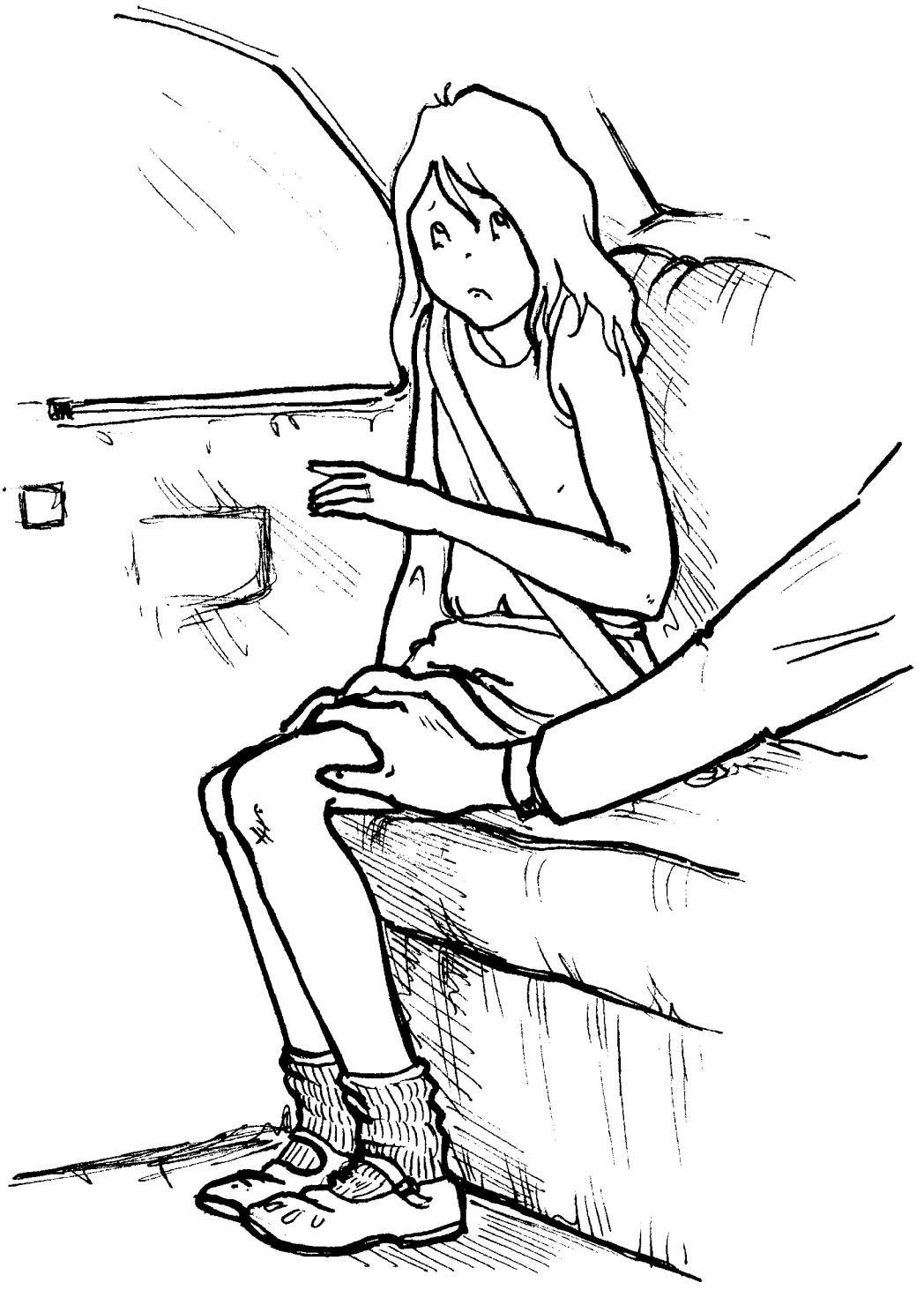
Tell your teacher (counsellor, parent, school nurse etc.) or someone you know will help you.



Keep on telling different people until someone believes you and does something to help you.

DISCUSSION: Say 'No' and tell somebody.

If you're a girl and someone tries to lift up your dress to look at your private places, shout 'No! Stop that! It's not allowed.'



What else could this girl do?
Remember, you are the boss of your body.

DISCUSSION: SAY 'NO' AND TELL SOMEBODY.

If someone puts their hand inside your pants, you can shout 'No! Stop that! It's not allowed' and get away as fast as you can. People aren't allowed to play around with kids' private places.

Remember, it's your body. You're the boss. You could say 'No' and tell somebody. Who could you tell who might help you?

Note for teachers

Traditionally, programs have defined child sexual abuse as involving offenders who are five or more years older than the victim. In several New Zealand schools, ten-year-olds criticised the author for using that definition. They pointed out that most of the girls and some of the boys in their classes had been sexually abused by boys of the same age while they were in the school yard and classroom (Briggs and Hawkins 1995).

It is important for children to create rules for the behaviour of peers. While we do not want to make children feel guilty for acts involving normal sexual curiosity which are mutually acceptable, children and young adolescents need to be protected from juvenile sex offenders. Rules can usually be discussed with children from about six years upwards.

It is important to inform parents of what is being taught because of the confusion that can arise at home. The line is blurred between what is acceptable with a baby or toddler and what is acceptable behaviour with older children. These lines can profitably be discussed with parents and with older children in the group. Children's author Jenny Hessell is one of few authors who have tried to explain to children (using their own language) why sexual abuse is wrong. Her book *What's Wrong with Bottoms?* is valuable for use with individuals or small groups of young children. (However, it should be noted that she used the word 'bottom' when she really meant 'penis'.)

Some New Zealand teachers explained to children that abuse must be stopped because it is habitual and cyclical. The children understood that, if abuse was allowed to continue, 'Children might think it was alright. Then, they might do it to other kids and they would all get upset'.

Can you tell me the names of the private parts of your body . . . starting with your head and going down to your knees?

If someone touches or tickles a private part of your body, you can shout 'No! Stop that! It's not allowed.'

If someone asks you to touch the private parts of their bodies, you can shout 'No! Stop that! That's not allowed.'

Suppose that it's a grown-up? Can kids shout 'No' to grown-ups?

Suppose that it's a relative? Can kids shout 'No!' to relatives?

Suppose that it's a priest? Can kids shout 'No' to priests?

Suppose that it's a teacher? Can kids shout 'No' to teachers?

Yes, children can say 'No!' to anyone who is doing something that's not allowed to a private part of the body. **Remember, you're the boss of your body.** You have to keep your body safe.

Unfortunately, some big kids don't behave properly with little kids.

And if nobody stops them, they just keep on breaking the rules.

And when they become grown-ups, because nobody stopped them, they might keep on breaking the rules . . . upsetting lots of children.

If someone touches the private places of your body and they are breaking the rules:

- it's alright to scream;
- it's alright to yell;
- it's alright to shout 'No! Stop that! That's not allowed'; and
- it's definitely alright to get right away as fast as you can and tell and keep on telling until someone helps you.

Let's hear you shout 'No! Stop that! It's not allowed.'

Now, face a partner. Stand tall. Look your partner straight in the eye and shout again.

Shout louder.

Again . . . louder still, as if you really mean it.

It is important for children to have the confidence to shout 'No!' to an adult. Ask the children, individually, to face you and shout 'No! Stop that! It's not allowed.'

Unfortunately, sometimes children can't stop people from breaking the rules. It's really important to tell a grown-up who can help you. Tell someone straight away. And if that person doesn't believe you, tell someone else. Tell your teacher, tell the school principal or you could even tell the police. How could you tell the police?

Keep on telling people until someone helps you to stop the wrong behaviour. If you don't, the naughty person will just keep on doing naughty things, upsetting lots of children.

Who else could you tell?

Activities

- Make problem-solving cards for individuals or small groups, e.g. 'What if . . .', 'Just

suppose that . . . What could s/he do to stay safe?'

- Suppose that the new baby-sitter wanted a child to play a new game and said, 'You have to take all your clothes off to play this game'. Should the child play? Why? Is it OK to play this game with an older person? If children say that they could tell their mum, ask, 'What would you say to her?' Ask children for other ideas.
- What if a bigger boy unzipped his pants near the school toilets and showed someone his penis? Is that allowed? What should the child do about it? What could the child say to a grown-up?
- What if some bullies grabbed a boy and took off his pants? What could the boy do?
- What if the same bullies grabbed a girl and pulled her pants off? What could the girl do? What should she say?

PROBLEM-SOLVING WITH A PUPPET: THE INCIDENT ON THE BUS

Hello everyone. I'm a boy and my name is ——.

I have a problem. I'm told that you kids have done a safety program and you're the best ones to tell me how to stay safe. You see, I don't know what to do. This is what happened.

I live a long way from school and every day I come on the school bus with a lot of other kids. Some of the big kids are really noisy and they fight a lot. They mess the little kids around. Sometimes the driver gets really mad with them.

One morning, a big boy came from the back of the bus and sat in the seat next to me. He started teasing me. The big ones often tease the little kids and we're all scared of being beaten up.

I ignored him and looked out of the window. That didn't stop him. He called to two of his mates at the back of the bus and said, 'Come and look at this kid. He's really stuck up. He doesn't want to talk to me. I think we should teach him a lesson, don't you?'

Two big boys came from the back of the bus and stood in the aisle by their mate.

'Hello little kid,' one said. I was really scared but I pretended I hadn't heard him and carried on looking out of the window, hoping they would get bored and go away.

'Yuh! I see what you mean. He is stuck up,' one said.

'Do you think he's deaf?' asked the other. 'Naw! He hasn't got a hearing aid.'

'He's just rude,' said the boy in the next seat, gradually squeezing me against the window. 'I think we should give him a lesson in good manners, don't you?'

'Yeah,' they both agreed.

'I know what we'll do. We'll take off his pants and throw them through the window. Then he'll have to go to school in his undies. That will be a laugh.'

They all agreed and came closer. I looked up and saw that the window was open.

How do you think I felt?
Are bigger boys allowed to remove kids' pants?
What do you think I could have done?
What else could I have done?
What can I do to try to make sure that it doesn't happen again?

PROBLEM-SOLVING WITH A PUPPET: THE MAN IN THE PARK

I walk to school every morning with two friends. My mum sometimes tells us to walk straight there and never talk to strangers. She tells me that I mustn't accept lollies from strangers or get in a stranger's car. But she never told me what to do if someone behaved as they did this morning.

We came to school early because one of my friends was going on an excursion. There are some big trees just before you get to school. It's really a small park. Just as we got to the first big tree, a man walked from behind it and stood straight in front of us and said, 'Look at this. I bet you've never seen anything like this before.' We were so busy talking that it gave us a really big shock. It always gives you a shock when someone jumps out and takes you by surprise—like when you play 'Hide and Seek'. But this was a grown-up, someone we didn't know. And guess what? He hadn't any clothes on. So he gave us a big, big shock. Now I know that people can take all their clothes off at some beaches but this wasn't the beach. It was the road to school and it was a cold morning.

Nothing like that had ever happened to me before and I didn't know what to do.

What do you think we could have done? Why?
What else could we have done? Why?
Well, thanks for those suggestions.

My friend Melissa said that we mustn't tell anyone because it would be too embarrassing. She said we'd get into big trouble if we talked about it.

Do you think she was right?

Then my friend Polly said that we mustn't tell anyone because she'd get into big trouble at home. Her mum tells her that she must never come to school through the park. She must use the other road—but it's longer.

Do you think Polly was right? Should she keep quiet to stay out of trouble? Why?
Are bigger people allowed to take their clothes off and frighten kids in the street?
And what do you think would happen if we told no-one?

Although we were really very scared, we pretended that we hadn't seen the man and we walked straight past him. We tried not to look at him. That was really cool!

How do you think we felt?

Yes, we were scared and when he was out of sight, we ran as fast as we could and only stopped when we reached the shop near to school.

'I think we ought to ring the police,' I said. 'That man is weird and if he isn't caught, he'll probably scare some of the other kids.'

Do you think I was right?

Well, we went into the shop and asked the lady to call the police. I said, 'A man just jumped out at us from behind a tree by the park and he had no clothes on.'

What number do you think she dialled?

The police wanted to talk to us and they said they'd send a car to collect us.

A policeman and a policewoman took us for a drive around the park and then we went to the police station and they gave us ice-creams because we'd helped them.

The policeman asked us what the man looked like. Melissa said that she'd seen him before somewhere. She thought she knew him but couldn't remember where. They wanted to know whether he was tall or short, fat or thin, young or old, dark haired or fair, bald or grey. That was hard!

Then Melissa remembered who the man was! 'He's the man with the ice-cream van that sells to kids in the park,' she said. The policeman said, 'That's cool! We'll send a car to find him.'

It was a bit boring going back to school after that. The school principal said that she was proud of us and she told everyone all about it at assembly. 'People aren't allowed to scare children like that,' she said. She said that the police had arrested the man and they'd taken him to the psychiatric hospital because he had big problems. He admitted that he's scared lots of people before.

The police said that it was a good job that we reported it because he would have carried on doing it if he hadn't been caught . . . and he needs help to stop doing it. They said we did the right thing by ignoring the man and getting away quickly. 'People do things like that to give you a shock,' he said. 'They like to scare you but it's not allowed.'

Melissa said that she was worried about telling her mum because she'd get into trouble for walking near the park.

'Leave that to me. I'll tell your mum,' said the principal smiling. 'And I'm sure that she will be as proud of you as I am.'

Melissa says she wants to be a detective when she grows up.

GET AWAY FROM PEOPLE WHO USE RUDE (OR 'DIRTY') TALK OR SHOW RUDE (OR 'DIRTY') PICTURES

To understand the importance of protecting children from adult sex talk and pornography, see Chapter 1.

Talking to children about the dangers of pornography and sex talk can be quite difficult for some adults. One way of handling this is to say that, 'If anyone, no matter who, shows you or tries to show you rude pictures of people with no clothes on, get away quickly and tell your teacher or school principal.'

Who else could you tell? (Mother, school

counsellor, school nurse or another trusted adult.)

Ask children, 'Why do you think that older people show rude pictures or rude videos to kids? Is that allowed? Why not?'

Because some films, magazines and advertisements show pictures of semi-naked adults, children need to talk about this as part of their discrimination process, i.e. discriminating between appropriate and inappropriate nudity and behaviour. Because pornography is so widely used in child sexual abuse, they should be taught to report anyone who initiates sex talk or shows sexually explicit material.

It is crucial that parents receive clear messages about the dangers associated with pornography. It is important that children receive a consistent message to escape and tell a trusted adult, if an older person:

- uses dirty/rude/sex talk with a child;
- shows dirty pictures in magazines, books, videos or Internet sites;
- wants children to do what they see in rude videos, magazines, etc.

PROBLEM-SOLVING WITH A PUPPET: PORNOGRAPHY

Hello, my name is ——.

I've got a problem and I think you might be able to help.

Our baby-sitter couldn't come last night and mum got the big boy next door to look after me while she went to work. I didn't mind. We watched TV sport until it was bedtime. Then, the big boy said, 'Come and take a look at these'.

He took some pictures out of his pocket. I looked and saw they were pictures of people without their clothes on.

'Have you seen anything like this before?' he asked.

'Yuck! They're rude,' I said.

'No they're not. They're fun,' the big boy said. 'Take another look.'

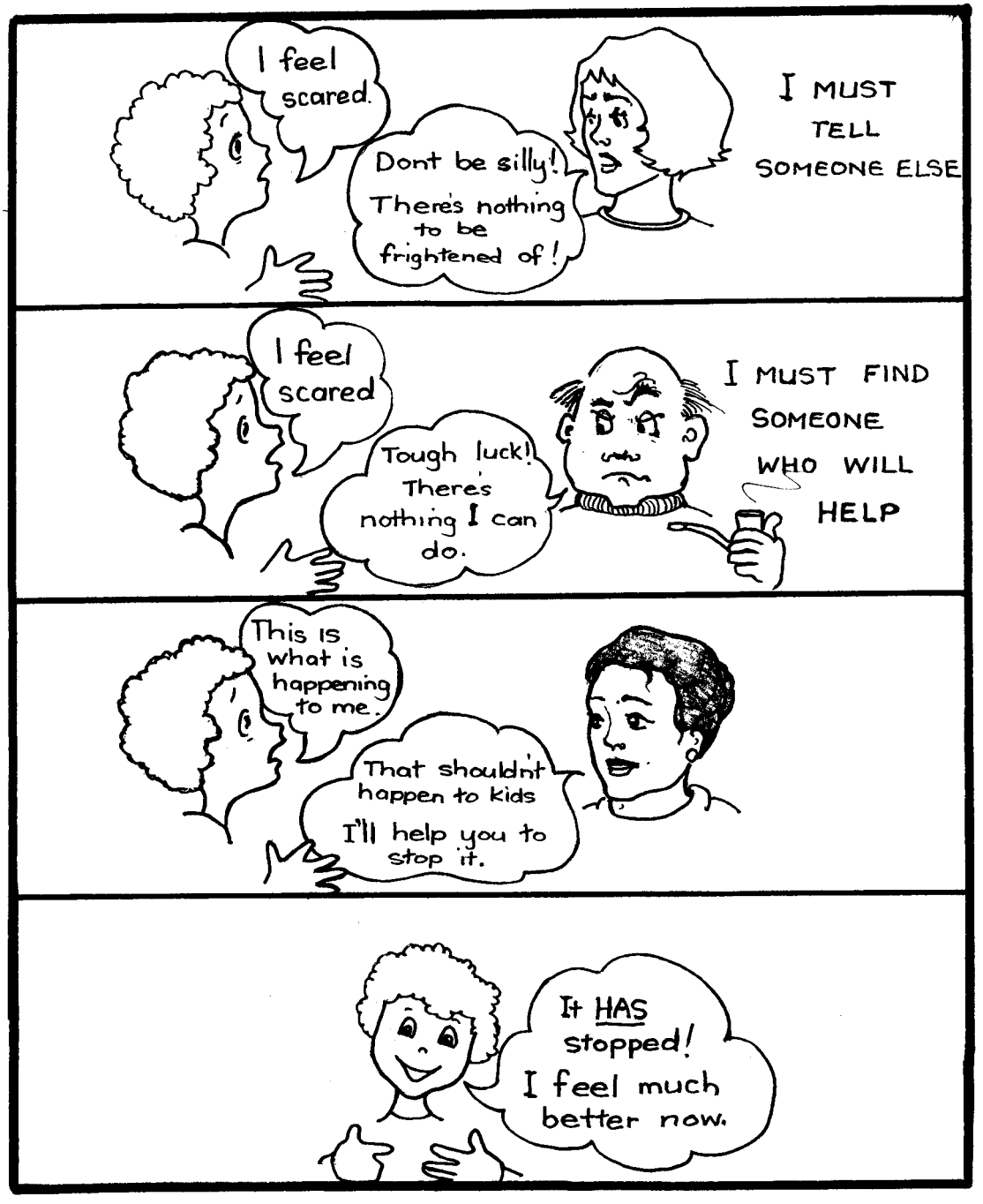
I didn't know what to do.

What do you think I should have done? Why?
Is it OK for big boys to show rude pictures to little kids?
What should I have said to mum?
Can anyone suggest something safer?
Does anyone know why bigger people and grown-ups shouldn't show dirty pictures or use dirty talk with little kids?
Why do you think it's not allowed?

Thank you for your help. I'll know what to do if it happens again.

WORKSHEET

If a bigger person or another kid touches the private parts of your body, tell an adult you trust.



If a bigger person or another kid plays around with the private parts of your body and you don't want that to happen, tell an adult you trust. If that person doesn't listen, doesn't believe you or doesn't help, tell other people and keep on telling until someone helps and you feel safe again.

THEME 3

TALKING ABOUT TOUCHING

AIMS

- To provide opportunities for children to identify wrong touching.
- To provide opportunities for children to practise saying 'No' to unwanted or inappropriate touching.
- To teach children that they can tell responsible adults (and keep on telling until action is taken) if someone touches them sexually; if they are confused about the appropriateness of touching; and if their requests to stop are ignored by the toucher.
- To teach children safety rules for touching and identify people who will help.

Note for teachers

Learning about what sort of touching is appropriate and what sort is inappropriate is one of the most difficult aspects of the child protection program. For this reason we refer to 'wrong' or 'rude' touching rather than 'unsafe' touching. Chapter 1 explains the problem. Here we recapitulate several important points:

- Parents often oblige children to permit unwanted hugs, kisses and other touching from themselves, relatives and family friends.
- Messages about inappropriate touching must be clear. Touching is an essential part of life, especially for children with disabilities. Give a clear message that older children and adults, both male and female, are never allowed to play or mess around with children's genitals (and vice versa) for fun; hints and vague statements are useless.
- The early stages of abuse may not feel unsafe or unpleasant. Many child protection programs avoid giving clear messages about the rules of touching. This is in deference to the feelings of adults. There is an unstated assumption that if touching feels alright it is safe, but this is both untrue and dangerous. Abuse often has its beginnings in safe touches such as cuddles, kisses and hugs accompanied by overt favouritism, attention and flattery. Paedophiles concentrate on giving pleasure before they demand it. When abuse hurts or becomes unpleasant, victims want it to stop but find themselves trapped.
- Children acquire concepts of 'safe' and 'unsafe' from adults. Paedophiles now know that protective behaviour programs rely on children identifying unsafe feelings. If adults say, 'It's alright, there's nothing to be afraid of', children accept this as fact, and thus find it difficult to identify and report sexual abuse involving trusted adults (Kraizer 1986). Moreover, children are unable to reconcile wrong touching or behaviour with 'good' people; that is, people they trust and those who say they love them. When sex is presented as a sign of affection to children who are starved of affection, it is unlikely to be regarded as unwanted or unsafe.
- Children associate touching with the use of their hands. Unless there is a broader perspective, oral sex or anal penetration is unlikely to be identified by the child as wrong.
- Child molesters take advantage of children's confusion. Molestation may create a mixture of pleasant and unpleasant feelings. Worried feelings are especially likely when children are excited by genital stroking but know that it is wrong. They feel embarrassed and accept the blame for what happened, telling themselves that they 'must have liked it'. Confusion is especially likely when the offender gives a mixed message;

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS

Dear [Parent/Parents' names]

As part of the safety program, children will be taught:

- what constitutes 'wrong' touching;
- that they can say 'No' to unwanted and wrong touching;
- that they can tell you and you will help without blaming them if:
  i) someone touches them sexually;
  ii) they are confused about the way in which they are touched;
- that, sometimes, good touching that we like can change to wrong touching that we need to stop.

As parents/caregivers, you play the most important part in keeping your children safe and teaching safety skills and safety knowledge. Children need opportunities to practise their skills. You can help in the following ways:

- Find out if your children can remember the names and whereabouts of the private parts of their bodies.
- Ask 'What touches do you like best? Who do you like to touch you? What kind of touches don't you like? Are you having to put up with touches that you don't like?' (If so, find out what is happening, who is touching them and what they, or you, can do to stop it.) **It is important to tell your children that you will help them to stop unwanted touching.**
- Emphasise the importance of telling you, a teacher or another trusted adult if someone breaks the touching rules, or if they are worried about something to do with rude behaviour.
- Make it clear to your children that if someone breaks the rules it is not their fault and they will not get into trouble.
- Help your children to choose a group of trusted adults who could help if someone broke the rules.
- Remind your children that they, too, must respect other people's bodies and not give wrong touches.
- Tell your children that you will help them to stop unwanted hugs, kisses, tickling that hurts and other wrong touches.
- Develop touching safety rules that apply to everyone in the house.

An easy way for you to introduce this topic is to use your children's class work and worksheets to ask questions. Ask your children to explain what it means. Ensure that they have understood correctly.

When children are practising saying 'No' to unwanted touching, they are likely to make mistakes and accuse you of giving a wrong touch, for example, when changing a nappy. If this happens, thank your children for giving you a reminder and discuss what 'wrong' touching is. Listen to your children.

If I can be of assistance, please contact me at school.

Yours sincerely,

Class Teacher

Brainstorm positive aspects of touching

Communication	Fun and games	Pleasure
Love	Comforting children	Giving reassurance
Bonding	Positive reinforcement	Acceptance
Security	Social greetings	Friendship
Therapeutic care	Body awareness	Support
Approval	Mutual sexual relationships	

Mutual sexual curiosity: 'You show me yours and I'll show you mine'

for example, assuring the victim that 'everyone does it' but simultaneously asking the victim to promise secrecy. There is also confusion when the perpetrator causes pain but assures the victim that what is happening is terrific. A victim who protests is assured that 'it will be better next time', and concludes, 'I don't think it's great so there must be something wrong with me'.

CURRICULUM FOR 'TALKING ABOUT TOUCHING'

- Introduce the concept of touching as outlined in the text. Discuss touching that we like and dislike.
- Use slides and pictures from books and magazines to demonstrate touches that people are obviously enjoying and are safe, and touching that is obviously not enjoyable or not acceptable. Ask children what is happening in the pictures: 'What kind of touching is it? Is it OK for people to touch like that? Does that girl want to be touched? How can you tell?' Encourage children to relate touching to feelings. New Zealand, British and Anglo-Celtic Australian children often use the word 'rude' to describe sexual behaviour and sex talk. American children may use the expression 'dirty' for the same circumstances. Find out what children know about 'rude', 'dirty' or worrying behaviour and touches. Most children have experienced these in their peer groups. However, care should be taken to adopt the one-step removed (or third-person) approach to prevent children from disclosing inappropriate information in public.
- With groups, make picture cards showing different kinds of touching. Let children cut out pictures from magazines to supplement the text and provide further opportunities for discussion.
- Examples of different kinds of touches can be provided by using puppets and role plays. Remember to include the mouth. *Do not use role play to demonstrate abusive touches as this could constitute abuse.* It can also be distressing for children who have been abused.
- Discuss appropriate touching. Make a list of touches that we need. Appropriate touches should be demonstrated as hugs, pats, kisses and strokes that are clearly enjoyed by both parties. Discussion will focus on what it feels like when we get appropriate touches that we like.
- Teach children that appropriate strokes are nice, but strokes and tickling touching can change to become wrong, 'rude' or worrying touching and it's OK to stop it when you don't want any more. Encourage discussion on touching situations that feel good at the beginning but when someone gets tired of it, they might want it to stop. Discuss various approaches for stopping unwanted touching. (It may be helpful to give reminders about protective interrupting during this session.) Worrying touching could include being pushed too high or for too long on a swing and wrestling or tickling that goes on too long. Note that adults, especially relatives and family friends, often find it amusing when young children say, 'No! Stop that! I don't like it.' The adults often 'do it all the more' with statements such as 'You were laughing. You like it really.' Parents need to be made aware of this and the need to provide support for children who want to stop touching by family members.
- Teach children to tell others, clearly and using eye contact, 'I didn't like it when you did that to me' when touched inappropriately in the classroom or school yard.

- Create group rules about safe and acceptable touching in class rules.
- Advise parents of the need to promote and implement the same rules within the extended family. Efforts are wasted if, while teaching children that they have the right to reject unwanted touching at school, parents deprive them of opportunities to practise that right at home.
- Repeat simple safety guidelines whenever opportunities present themselves, such as, 'We never keep secrets about touching' or 'I think you should try to do that yourself. Adults aren't allowed to touch those special parts of your body'.
- Ensure that children know the names of the private parts of their bodies and are encouraged to use them in conversation.
- Ensure that children understand the meaning of 'private'.
- Ensure that children know that no-one is allowed to kiss them without permission.
- Ensure that children know that no-one is allowed to put body parts or yucky/stinky things in their mouths.
- Tell children as often as necessary that touching safety rules apply all the time, whoever they are with.

'Some adults don't know about the rules for touching children . . . Kids may have to tell them. Some men don't know, some women don't know, some kids don't know. The rules apply at home and school, on the school bus, in a taxi . . . anywhere and everywhere.'

- Tell children to let you know if they are unsure whether touching is right or wrong.
- Start class books called *Different Kinds of Touching*, *Touching We Like*, *Touching We Don't Like* and *Touching That's Wrong*.
- Let children know that you will help them to stop touching that they don't like.
- Ensure that children practise saying 'No' to adults (and each other) in a convincing way.
- If children need help with personal hygiene, ensure that they and staff are aware of and practise the basic rules for safe touching.

ABOUT THE RULES FOR TOUCHING

1. ***When talking about unacceptable touching be open and honest and admit that some children and some adults don't keep to the rules.***

   Tell children that:

   > People who give 'rude' or wrong touches know that what they're doing isn't allowed but they do it just the same. Unless children report it to a responsible adult, people who break the rules just keep on doing it, upsetting lots and lots of children. The only way to stop this is to tell someone about it . . . and keep on telling people until it stops.
   >
   > Who could you tell?
   > What if that person didn't believe you?
   > What if they believed you but didn't do anything?
   > Who else could you tell? What else could you do to keep safe?
   > How do you know when to stop telling? What else could you do?

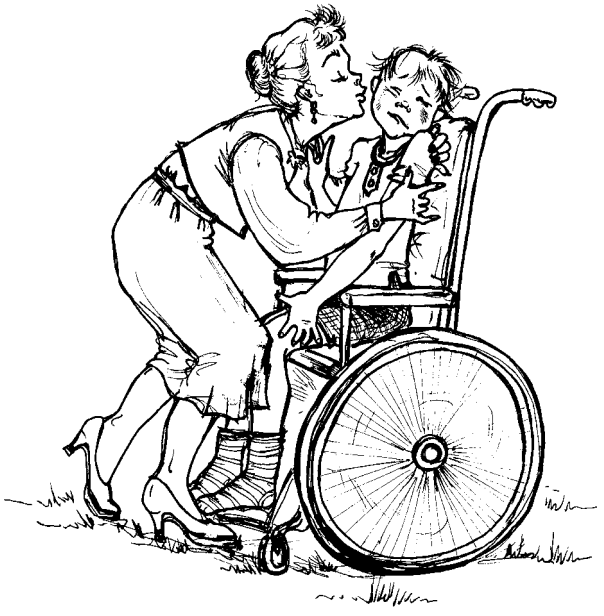
   The last sentence should be asked routinely until children run out of ideas. If children fail to mention teachers as potential helpers, they should be given regular reminders that they are there to listen to children's problems. Although you are delivering the program, few children place teachers or group leaders on their network. Most children report concerns to their mothers. Unfortunately, when parents have not been involved in a child protection program they may accuse reporters of telling 'dreadful lies' or engaging in 'dirty talk'. At best, they may confront the offender who professes innocence and discredits the child.
2. ***Check that children, parents and care-givers know the rules relating to body ownership and body privacy.***
3. ***Ensure that parents are aware of the importance of practising safety rules at home.***
4. ***Emphasise that, if someone breaks the rules about touching, it is important for children to tell an adult who will listen and help.*** Grown-ups are not allowed to break the rules. Other children are not allowed to break them. If people forget the rules, they need to be reminded that it's wrong. 'If you don't tell a grown-up when you get wrong or worrying touches, the touchers will keep on doing it, breaking rules'. Because of parents' unreliability as recipients of information, it is important to contact all parents and care-givers and tell them their responsibilities.
5. ***Tell children (and give regular reminders) that 'If other kids or adults do***

Story: Tara's aunty

Tara has a nice aunty who takes her out in her wheelchair. Her aunty has a big car and the wheelchair fits in the back of it. Tara's aunty is kind. She buys ice-creams and Big Macs and takes her to Wheelchair Sports.

However, Tara has a problem. The problem is that her aunty is always kissing people. She kisses everyone when she comes and she kisses everyone when she goes. She kisses Tara's mum and anyone else who happens to be around.

Tara hates being kissed. Her aunty gives her those big, sloppy wet kisses right on her mouth and it makes her feel yucky when she sees her coming towards her. And they're not just wet and sloppy: they go on and on. Tara hates it so much that when her aunty phones, she sometimes pretends to be feeling sick, which makes her feel bad because she loves going to Wheelchair Sports.



'What's wrong with you?' asked Tara's mum using her cross voice. 'I thought you liked going to sports.'

'Yes, I do,' replied Tara. 'And I like Aunty Jessie but . . . I just don't like the way she kisses me.'

Mum was impatient.

'Don't be silly! She loves you. Why else would she come over to take you to Wheelie Sports. That's why she kisses you. She kisses everybody. Aunty Jessie's like that. And she gets ever so upset when you don't go. You'll just have to put up with it. You have to learn to put up with a lot of things in this life. We all have to do things that we dislike at some time or other.'

Is Tara's mum right?
Should Tara have to put up with kissing that she doesn't like?
Why?

Tara wants to go out with her aunty but she doesn't want to be kissed. At the same time, she doesn't want to hurt her aunty's feelings.

Just as they were talking, Aunty Jessie arrived.

What should Tara's mother say to her?
What should Tara say to her? [This provides an opportunity for role play.]
What else could they do or say to stop the kissing without upsetting Aunty Jessie's feelings?
[For younger children, give prompts or ask questions such as:]
Could she tell her aunty that she loved her but doesn't like being kissed at the moment because she's growing up?
Would it be a good idea for Tara's mum to have a word with Aunty Jessie?
What else could she do?

wrong or "rude" things to you, it's never your fault and you are never to blame'. Sadly, we can't promise children that they will not get into trouble for reporting sexual misbehaviour, nor can we promise that reporting will stop it. We have no control over what happens at home and parents often support the adults they trust rather than their children.

6. **Tell children that people can get a rude, wrong touch anywhere at any time.** You can get a wrong touch in school, in the playground, at home or on the way home. The person giving a wrong touch might be an older person, or a big boy or girl. It might be a woman or a man. It could be someone you don't know or someone you know really well. It could be someone you like or someone you don't like. It could be anyone.

7. ***'We don't have to put up with rude, dirty or wrong behaviour and if someone breaks the rules, we must tell a responsible adult.'***
8. ***Encourage children to work out who they can tell.***
9. ***Give children the opportunity to practise reporting inappropriate touching*** by using puppets. For individuals and small groups, use cards that have scenarios starting with 'Just suppose . . .' and 'What could someone do if . . .?'
10. ***Teach children to be persistent.*** Tell children that if the first person they tell doesn't listen or doesn't believe them, they must keep on telling until someone helps them to stop it; use role play and puppets to demonstrate situations in which adults ignore children.
11. ***Use problem-solving methods.*** Encourage children to work out solutions for themselves: 'Suppose that your mum was busy and didn't listen, who else could you tell?' . . . 'Suppose that person didn't believe you. What could you do next?' Ensure that children include you on the network.

INTRODUCING WRONG TOUCHES

'Today we're going to talk about touching.

'Some touches feel good and we like them. Can you tell me about touches that most children like . . . touches that feel really good?'

(Brainstorm (page 107), list and discuss.)

'Now, can you tell me about touches that most children don't like?'

If children run out of ideas, use prompts such as 'touches that hurt', 'touches that feel yucky', 'touches that make us feel uncomfortable'.

(List and discuss.)

If none of the children have included touches that involve feet or parts of the body other than hands, point out that we can touch people with lots of different parts of our bodies.

'We can touch with our feet. We can touch with our heads, our shoulders and our arms. We can even touch with our mouths.'

'Wrong touches are the hardest touches to talk about.'

'Can you tell me what kind of touches are wrong touches?'

'If someone gives you a wrong touch, just remember . . . it's your body and you're the boss. You don't have to put up with wrong touching. You can do something about it.'

What could you do?
Who could you tell?
What could you say?

If someone gives you a wrong touch, it isn't your fault

'It's never your fault if someone gives you a rude touch.'
'It's never your fault if someone gives you a yucky touch.'
'It's never your fault if a bigger person touches the private parts of your body.'
'If someone gives you a wrong touch, it's their fault, not yours. They know it's wrong.'

Use a puppet to tell the children: 'I have a friend who gets wrong touches from his uncle.'

What should I tell him to do?
Do you think I could help him?
Who do you think we could tell?

'What if that person said, "Not now! I'm busy" or didn't believe us? What else should my friend do?'

Problem-solving with two puppets: Hair-pulling

Parent puppet brushes child puppet's hair and tugs it very hard.

Child puppet protests and wriggles away.

Parent puppet grumbles at child puppet for making a fuss and instructs it to sit still.

Tugging is repeated and there are more protests, wriggles and reprimands. Child puppet cries. The audience is asked what the child puppet could do given that hair has to be brushed.

Repeat the scene. This time, ask the children to instruct the child puppet when to say, 'No! Please don't do that, it hurts.' The mother puppet will then say, 'Oh! Sorry!' and brush more carefully.

Use puppets for different scenes to represent different kinds of unwanted touching with the children telling the victim puppet what to do to stay safe.

Problem-solving with a puppet: My friend's dad

If possible, use a genderless puppet as follows:

'Hello everyone. My name is ——. I live near your school. My neighbour told me that you are learning to stay safe and I wondered whether you could help me to solve a problem.

'I have a friend called —— and when I go to see him, his dad's always there. Yesterday he sat me on his knee and it gave me an uncomfortable feeling. I like going to play with my friend but I don't really like the way that his dad touches me.

'I didn't know what to do about it but you kids know how to stay safe so I thought I'd come and ask you what to do. I know you have lots of good ideas. Do you think I should go to my friend's house again?

Why do you think that?
What can I do if my friend's dad touches me again in a way that I don't like?'

At the end of the discussion, the puppet thanks the children for their suggestions and compliments them on their good ideas.

Problem-solving with a puppet: Mopping up a spill

The puppeteer is having a drink. The puppet deliberately knocks the puppeteer's arm so that the water spills on to the puppeteer's clothing. The puppet then says, 'Oh dear! I am sorry. It's OK. I'll clean it up for you.'

The puppet quickly picks up a tissue and begins to touch the puppeteer's own thigh or chest.

'Children, is the puppet allowed to touch me like that? Was that a wrong touch or a touch that's allowed?

What makes you think that?
What should I do about it?
Who could I report this to?
Can you tell me what to say?'

Problem-solving: Who should he tell?

A male puppet tells the audience that he was in the school toilet when some big boys came in and one grabbed his penis and squeezed it while the others stood there and laughed.

'That hurt,' says the puppet. 'I'm scared to go to the toilet and I'm scared to tell the teacher because they might hurt me even more if I report them. Can you kids tell me what to do about it?'

Why do you think the puppet is scared of going to the toilet?
What do you think will happen if he tells the class teacher?
What do you think could happen if he tells the school principal/head teacher?
What do you think will happen if he tells his mum or dad?
What should he say when he tells?

Deter children from suggesting violent solutions to problems. Ask them, 'Would that be really safe if the person was bigger or stronger than you? Now, can you think of something safer?'

Problem-solving with work cards

Work cards can help children to differentiate between acceptable touches that are allowed and wrong touches that are not allowed. For example, discuss whether the following touches are wrong:

- the teacher pats you on the head and says, 'That was a good effort';*
- your mum gives you a cuddle when she tucks you into bed;
- a mum puts powder on the baby's bottom;
- a dad changes the baby's nappy;
- dad carries on tickling you when you've already asked him to stop because it hurts;
- the man sitting next to you in the cinema puts his hand inside your pants.

What could a boy or girl do if:

- they were wrestling on the floor with the baby-sitter when he put his hand under their clothes;
- they were in the swimming pool and someone tried to pull off their clothes;
- an adult wanted to dry them when they came out of the shower and they really preferred to dry themselves;
- someone pinched their bottom when they were in a shop;
- a man said, 'I'll give you all this money if you will play with my willy/dick/penis';
- an adult sat too close to them on a bus.

* Please note that, in some cultures, it is not acceptable to touch children on the head.

WORKSHEET: The touching I like.

Some touches are great! These are the touches that I like:

This is a picture of someone who gives me touches that I like.

My good toucher is called:

I like giving good touches too. Here are the good touches that I give:

I give good touches to:

WORKSHEET: The touching I don't like.

Good touches can change to wrong touches.
Most touches are good touches. **We all like good touches.**

But sometimes good touches change and become wrong touches.

Wrong touches can hurt.
Wrong touches can feel yucky.
Wrong touches can be worrying.
Wrong touches are not allowed.
Smelly touches are wrong.
Stinky touches are wrong.
Wrong touches must be stopped.
These are the bad touches I wouldn't like:

_____

_____

_____

_____

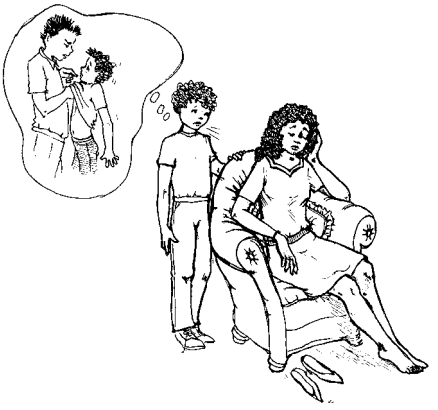
It can be a good touch when someone pushes you on the swing to make you go higher if you want to go higher.

It's a wrong, bad touch if someone keeps on pushing you when you've asked them to stop.

If someone gives you a touch that you don't want, say, 'Stop that! I don't like it!' And if they don't stop, tell someone who can help you to stop it. Tell your teacher. Tell the school nurse or the school counsellor. Tell your mum or dad.

WORKSHEET

Remember that some grown-ups don't listen to kids. What could you do if the person you tell doesn't listen?



If the first person you tell doesn't listen, tell someone else. Say, 'I've got something important to tell you.'

And if that person doesn't listen, tell the whole family. Say, 'Mum, dad, everybody! I have something important to tell you. Someone gave me a wrong touch today and I need help to make sure that it doesn't happen again.'

WORKSHEET

No-one is allowed to touch the private places on your body.
No-one is allowed to tickle you under your clothes.

Private parts are private and we keep them covered up.

Remember, it's your special body. You have to look after it. You're the boss. So, if someone is rude (or does wrong things) or if someone touches you in a way that you don't like, say, 'No! Stop that'. Then tell a grown-up who will listen and help.

Who could you tell?

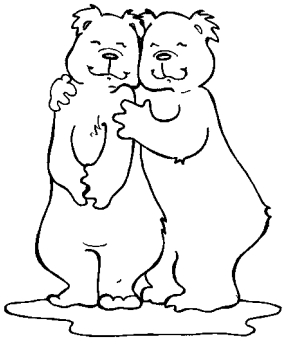
And if that person didn't help, who else could you tell?

We touch things all the time

Touching is something that we do all the time. We touch things every minute and every hour of the day.
We touch the sheets when we're asleep.
We touch our bodies when we have a shower or a bath.
We touch our clothes when we get dressed in the morning.
We touch the food that we eat.
We touch the ground with our feet.
We touch things with different parts of our bodies.
What are you touching right now?
What are your feet touching?
What is your arm touching?
Some touches feel good.
Some touches feel bad.
Let's talk about the touches we like.

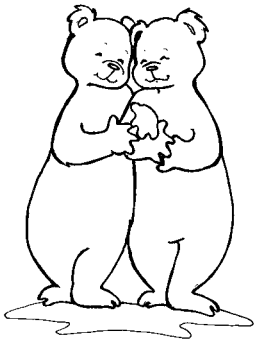
Rules for hugging

There are hugs that we like and hugs that we don't like.
Good hugs are great!
Have you ever had a good hug?
Who gives you good hugs?
Sometimes, we don't want to be hugged.
Nobody wants to be hugged all of the time.
Sometimes, the hug we liked yesterday we don't like today.
Some hugs are so tight we can't breathe and some go on too long.
Sometimes we don't like where people put their hands.
So, we have rules about hugging.
You can only hug people if you know that they want to be hugged.
And if you give a good hug that someone likes, there's a very good chance that they'll give you a good hug back.
What can a person do if someone is about to give a big bear hug and they don't want to be hugged?
The teacher could encourage children to suggest their own set of rules for hugging.
There are lots of good hugs. Which hugs do you like?
There are cheek hugs and back-stroking hugs and arm hugs and side-to-side hugs.
There are quick hugs and group hugs.
Which hugs do you like best?

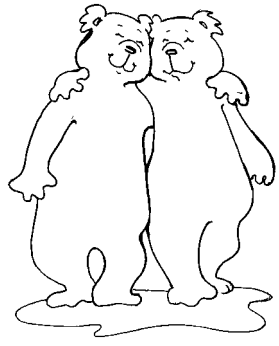


Cheek hugs

Back-stroking hugs



Arm hugs



Side-to-side hugs

About tickling!

Tickling can be fun!
Tickling makes us laugh.
But sometimes we don't want to be tickled.
Sometimes, tickling goes on too long and we want it to stop.
Sometimes, people tickle too hard and it hurts.
Sometimes, people tickle kids under their clothes in private places.
That kind of tickling is wrong and has to stop.
When someone wants the tickling to stop, what can they say?
Say that again using a big, loud voice as if you really mean it.
And again!
What else could a boy or girl do to stay safe from bad tickling?

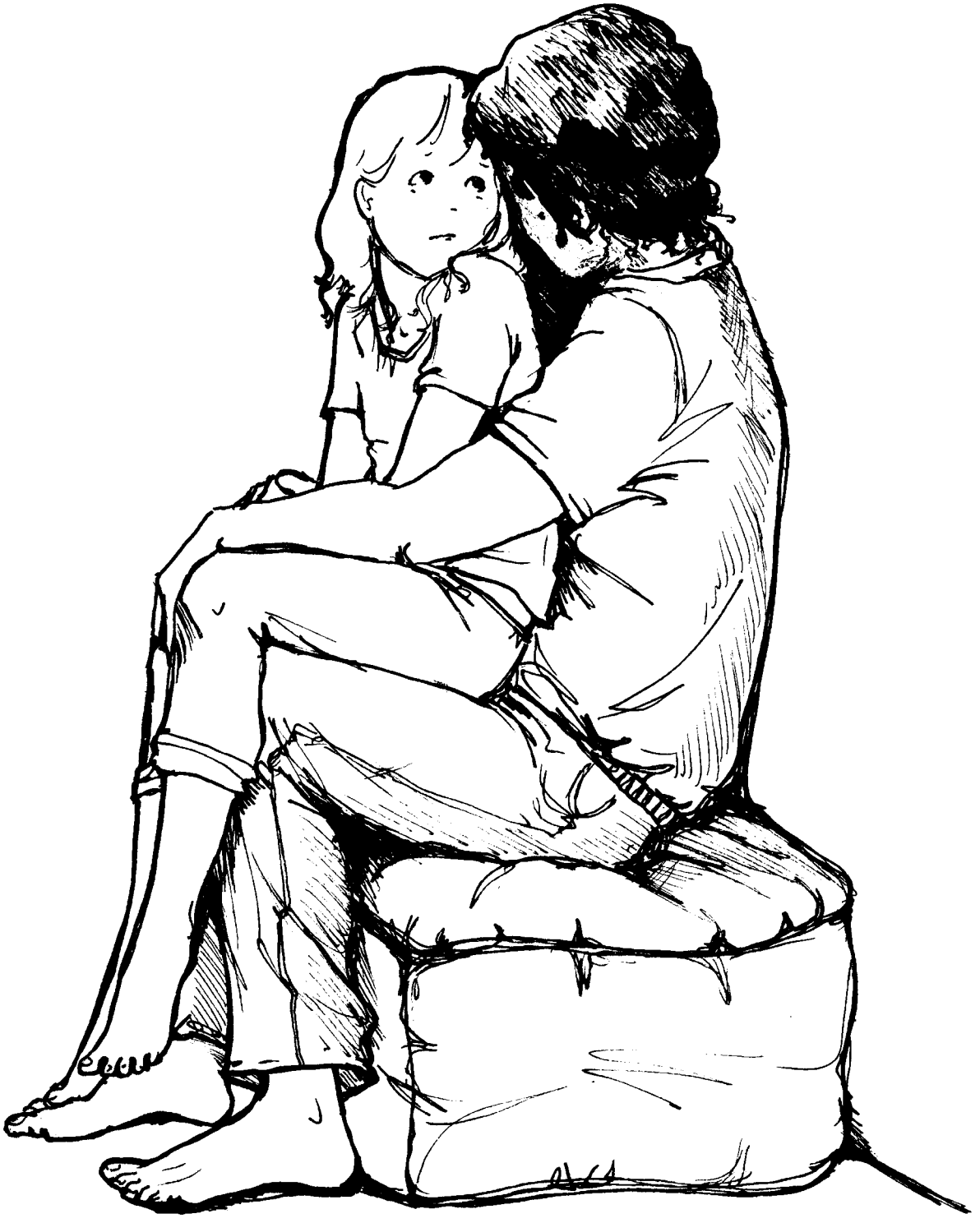
WORKSHEET: The rules about touching.

Keep away from wrong touches.
Never give wrong touches to other people.
Wrong touches can hurt.
Wrong touches upset people.
How many wrong touches can you think of?
Here is my picture of a good touch.

WORKSHEET

Some cuddles are yucky.

If you don't want to be touched, say, 'Please don't do that, I don't like it.' It's your body and you are the boss.



WORKSHEET

Yucky touches can be worrying.
Some people give stinky touches too.
Sometimes, we're not quite sure what to do when we get a yucky or a stinky touch.
Sometimes touching can start out feeling nice, and then it changes and we don't like it any more.
A yucky touch can be a worrying one, especially if it hasn't happened to us before. Can you think of any yucky touches?

What can we do if we get a yucky touch?
Some people give yucky touches and think it's fun. We should never give yucky touches. And try not to get one!

WORKSHEET: Wrong touches that are not allowed.

It's worrying if someone wants us to do wrong things.
It's worrying if someone does wrong things to us.
Is this boy receiving a good touch or a wrong touch?
How can you tell?
What could he do?

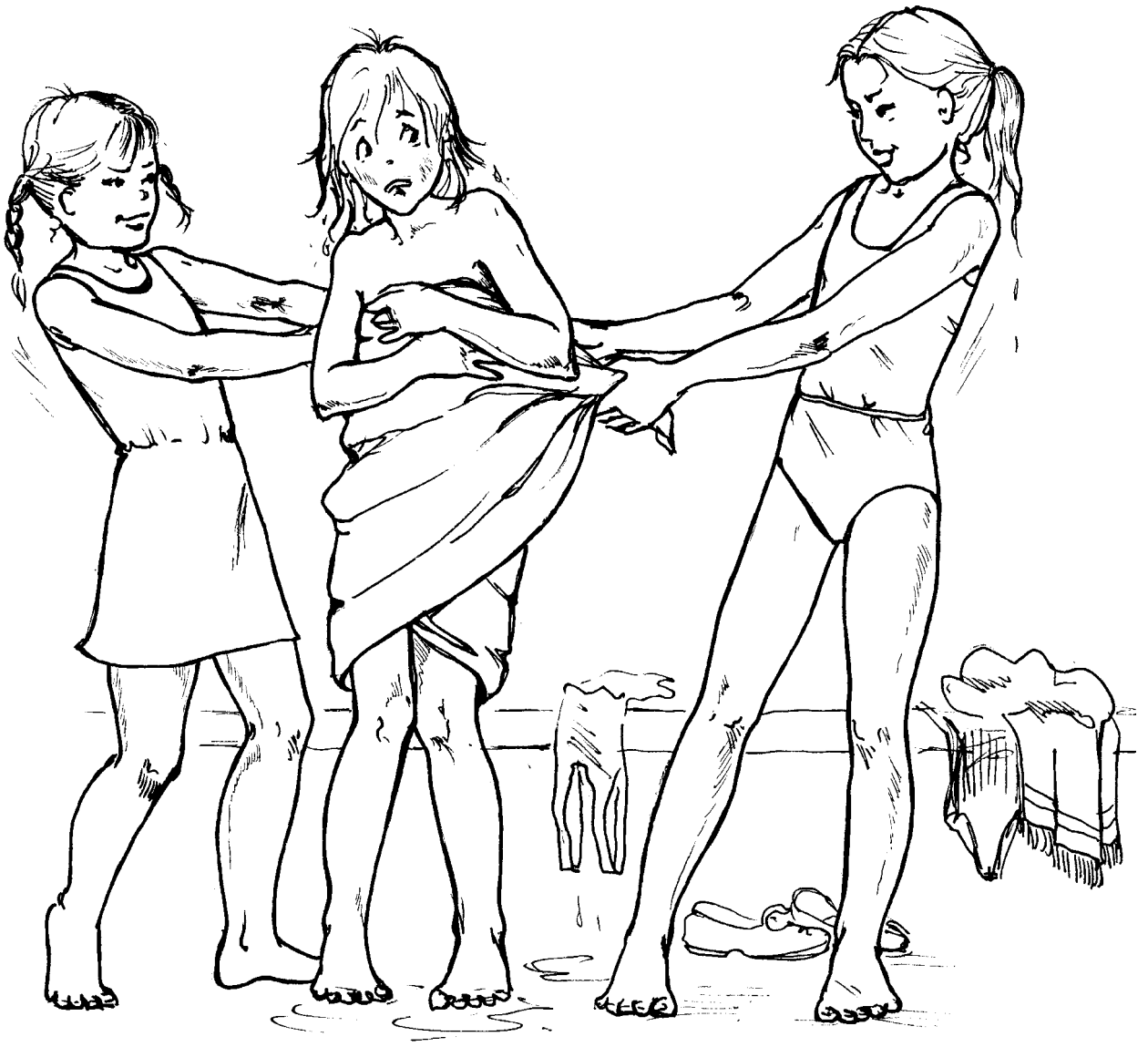
WORKSHEET

No-one is allowed to mess around with the private parts of our bodies.

Is this girl getting a good touch or a wrong touch?
What could this girl say?
What could she do?

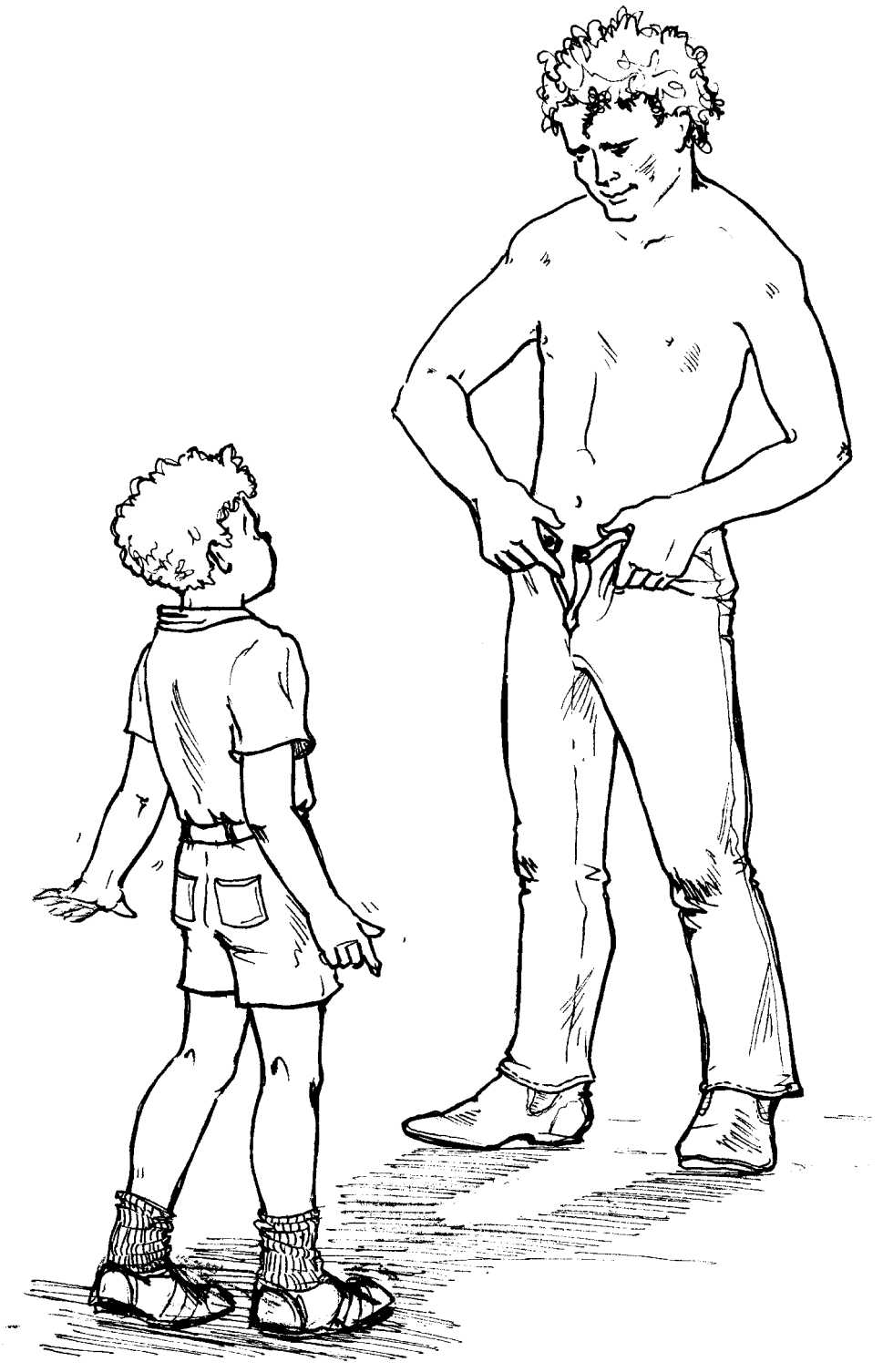
WORKSHEET

No-one is allowed to peep at our private places just for fun. They're private. That's why we cover them up with clothes.



WORKSHEET

No-one should deliberately show their private body parts to you.



What could this boy do? What could he say? Who could he tell?

THEME 4

STAYING SAFE WITH STRANGERS

AIM

- To improve children's general safety skills, especially in relation to staying safe with strangers.

Note to teachers

Problem-solving techniques should be used in the group and in the home to help children to consider different potentially dangerous situations and safe solutions. Children who lack the advantage of a comprehensive child protection program tend to give up and accept helplessness if their first attempt to protect themselves fails. Parents should be encouraged to reinforce safety skills at home, as described in Chapter 2.

HOME ACTIVITY FOR PARENTS AND CHILDREN

These tips can greatly improve the safety skills of your child(ren) but, of course, we can't guarantee safety.

Take the time to discuss these tips with your child(ren) and change them as required.

1) Check that your children know and can give their full names, address and telephone number.
2) Teach children how to use a range of telephones such as dial, push-button, mobile, public phones with cards and money.
3) Teach children to tell you if an older person shows them dirty pictures, magazines or videos.
4) Teach children how to use the emergency number to dial police, fire or ambulance. Pretend to be the person who asks for details: 'Which service do you want? Police, Fire or Ambulance?' Give your name, address and telephone number.
5) Ensure that childen know that emergency numbers must only be used for real emergencies.

Tell stories with implications for safety such as *Red Riding Hood, The Three Little Pigs* and *The Three Bears*. Discuss the safety angles in these stories. For example:

Red Riding Hood

Should Red Riding Hood have walked through the woods alone to visit her grandmother? Why?
Should Red Riding Hood have talked to the wolf? Why?
What could Red Riding Hood have done when she had the feeling that there was something wrong at her grandmother's house?
Let's suppose that Red Riding Hood's grandmother had a telephone in her kitchen. What could she have done?
What could she have said?

The Three Bears

Was it safe for Goldilocks to go out for a walk by herself? Why?
Was it safe to walk into someone else's house? Why?
What happens to people who walk into other people's homes and damage their things?
Did Goldilocks have the right to eat the bears' porridge? Why?
Did Goldilocks have the right to break the bears' furniture? Why?
Did Goldilocks have the right to break Baby Bear's bed? Why?

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS

Dear [Parent/Parents' name]

As a continuing part of our child protection program, during the next few weeks we will be helping your child to recognise tricks and stay safe with strangers.

As you probably know, only a small proportion of child sexual abuse cases involve strangers. They reach the headlines because they often involve kidnapping and violence. Unfortunately, young children are afraid of strangers but have no real understanding of what a stranger is. They believe that strangers are evil looking male monsters and that people who look or seem kind are trustworthy. And, of course, strangers manage to seduce children, not because they are monsters but because they are often charming and manipulative . . . befriending them and their parents.

Because it is difficult for a 5-year-old to work out who is a dangerous stranger, we shall concentrate on helping children to learn how to stay safe in what could be *dangerous situations*.

We need your help in this task and hope that you will provide opportunities for practice at home. It is important that your child knows the following information:

Name

House number and street

Suburb

Town or city

Telephone number

Mummy's name

Daddy's name

Name of school

Emergency contact

Please help your child to write the details. Please help your child to memorise the information. Make it into a memory game.

Revise the information regularly until you are sure that it has been learned.

Give your child a copy of the information with some mistakes to see if they can spot them and correct them.

Yours sincerely,

Class Teacher.

What should the bears have done when they returned home and found that someone had gone into their house, eaten their food and broken their furniture? Why?

How do you think the bear family felt when they found that someone had been in their home?

Let's suppose that Mr and Mrs Bear carried a mobile phone or had a telephone in the kitchen. What should they have done when they came into the house and found that someone had eaten their food and damaged their chairs?

What number would they use to telephone the police? What would they have said to the person who answered the telephone?

The Three Little Pigs

Should the little pigs have opened their doors to the Big Bad Wolf when they were in the house alone?
The wolf pretended to be a poor little sheep with no place to sleep. Should the pigs have opened the door? Why?
What would be the safest thing for you to do if someone knocked on your door or rang your bell when you were in the house alone?
Suppose that the little pig had a telephone in the house. What could the pig have done? Who should the pig have phoned? What number should he have used to get help? What should the pig say on the phone?

Two of the little pigs didn't obey the safety rules when they built their houses. They built them as fast as they could without any plans. They used sticks and straw instead of safe building materials such as bricks and concrete. What happened when they broke the safety rules?
Which pig was the safest? Why?

HOW TO STAY SAFE IF LOST IN A CROWDED PLACE

Most children get lost in crowded places before they reach the age of eight.

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS

Dear [Parent/Parents' Names]

As part of our child protection program, we aim to help your child to stay safe in situations where no protective adult is present.

It would help if, while driving or shopping, you ask your children what they could do to stay safe if they became separated from you at:

- the supermarket;
- a big shopping centre;
- a show;
- the beach;
- a Christmas pageant or parade;
- a sports event (if you go to sports).

Please draw your child's attention to the use of public address systems for lost child announcements.

If your children make unsafe suggestions, it is important to thank them for 'trying hard' and add, 'Would it be really safe? What do you think could happen? Can you think of something safer?' Encourage children to suggest as many safe options as possible.

This request is made because we have found that few parents prepare children for these emergencies until after they have already happened.

Yours sincerely,

Class Teacher

Scenarios to discuss

- Suppose that a boy is in a big shop with his mum. He gets tired of waiting and wanders off to look at toys while mum is being served at the counter. When he turns around, she's not there. What would be the safest thing to do? What else could he do?
- Suppose that a girl is in a big supermarket. Her mum leaves her holding the trolley while she looks for things on the shelves. When the little girl looks around, her mother isn't there and she feels unsafe. What is the safest thing to do? What else could she do?
- Suppose that some children are playing in the sea. The grown-ups are sitting at the top of the beach near the road. When the children look around, they can't see their parents. What would be the safest thing to do? What else could they do?
- Let's pretend that a boy and girl are at a Christmas pageant. There are lots of people and it's difficult to see what's happening. An adult says, 'Let them stand in front of me.' The children move forward to the front row and watch all the floats going past. They have a really good view. When it's over, the children turn around to look for mum or dad and can't see them. What is the safest thing to do? What else could they do to stay safe?
- A boy and girl are on the beach. It's a hot day and they ask mum for an ice-cream. She gives them money and points to the kiosk

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS

Dear [Parent/Parents' names]

Very occasionally, children are approached by a stranger who hopes to kidnap and/or abuse them. The stranger may pretend to be a friend of yours, a police officer needing help or someone seeking directions.

It is damaging to make children afraid of all strangers. It is also unhelpful given that most young children don't understand what a stranger is. It is better to help them to work out what they could do to stay safe in a variety of potentially dangerous situations, solving hypothetical problems for themselves. We find that it's helpful to ask them questions starting with 'What if . . .' and ending with 'What could you do to stay safe?' We suggest that you make this into a game while doing the dishes or driving the car.

'What if I couldn't pick you up from school? What would be the safest thing to do?'

'What if it was raining and a neighbour said ''I'll take you home''. Would that be a safe thing to do? Why? Would I know where you were?'

People who try to kidnap children close to schools are usually spotted by many different people. They could be arrested quickly if children (or parents) noted vehicle registration numbers and description. Observation skills are useful to have and we suggest that you develop your children's skills by playing games such as 'I spy', number spotting and car spotting when driving.

Ask children to work out how they could write a vehicle number if they didn't have a pencil or pen. What could they do to stay safe if someone tried to pull them into a car? Where could they go for help?

If children offer unsafe answers, ask them to think of something safer and try again.

Please contact me if you need help.

Yours sincerely,

Class Teacher

by the road. They run off and buy it, but when they try to find their parent again, they can't see her. What would be the safest thing to do? Would that be really safe? Why? Can you think of anything safer? What else could they do?

If children give unsafe responses, please ask them, 'Would that be really safe? What might happen? Can you think of something safer?' Whenever appropriate, ask 'What else could you do?' to ensure that children think of more than one solution to the problem. Discussion enables them to judge which option might be the safest and least safe.

DEVELOP OBSERVATION SKILLS

Everyone can benefit from having good, accurate observation skills. Two of the most useful skills for children to learn are:

- to describe people;
- to note the licence numbers of vehicles.

Observation and recording skills can be taught very easily as a fun activity.

- Produce a tray of various items. After a short period of time, remove the tray and ask children (individually or in small groups) to describe and/or write down the items on the tray.
- Encourage individuals or small groups of children to collect the registration numbers and descriptions of vehicles in the staff car park (after discussing road safety); check daily to see if the same cars use the car park repeatedly. Findings can be used in maths for making histograms or pictorial charts.
- Observe traffic from the school gate for a fixed period of time each day and note the vehicle numbers which pass in each direction. How many of the vehicles pass daily?
- Discuss what someone could do if they saw an accident in which a child was knocked down on the way to school. The driver failed to stop. Suppose that you didn't have a pencil to write down the number of the vehicle. What would be the best thing to do?
- Invite older children or adults to come into the classroom for a brief visit. When they have left, invite children to describe them.
- Play 'I spy'.
- Working in pairs, ask children to describe each other in detail.

In a survey of New Zealand rural children aged 10–12 years, both boys and girls reported that they were sometimes accosted or followed by male hooligans in cars as well as lone adult drivers. Many reported being stopped while riding bikes on country lanes. After participating in the program *Keeping Ourselves Safe*, children consistently took descriptions of vehicles, drivers and passengers and sought help from the nearest house or shop. Although they could not always remember the full registration number, they recorded part of it using pebbles on footpaths or writing on the backs of their hands. The trauma associated with the experience was reduced by praise from parents, school principals and police (Briggs and Hawkins 1995a).

Scenarios to discuss

- Suppose that a boy and girl are walking home from a friend's house and a car stops alongside them. Big boys and girls lean out of the open window and shout 'Come here'. They have beer cans in their hands and are laughing. How would the children feel? What would be the safest thing to do? What else could they do?
- A child goes alone to the kids' toilets at school and a man he's never seen before follows him in. What would be the safest thing to do? What else could he do? Suppose that the man was already in the school toilet when the child walked in?
- A boy has been kicking a ball around with his friends when a man comes up to him and asks if he can take his photograph. He says, 'I was watching you. You have a great kick. I'm a photographer for a newspaper. I'd like to take your photo. Come with me to my studio. You'll get paid a lot of money for it.' Should the boy go with him? Why? What would be the safest thing to do? What else could he do?
- Children are playing on the swings in the park when a man comes up to them and says that he works for a TV station and needs to video children for a new show. He asks them to get in the back of his van to put on different clothes. What could they do to stay safe? Would that be the safest thing to do? What else could they do?

Three vital questions

To stay safe, children need to be able to identify high-risk situations. Sometimes, they may not know whether to accompany an adult or not. In general, it is useful to teach children to ask themselves three questions:

'If I go with this person, will mummy or daddy know where I am?'
'Do I have a good feeling about it?'
'If I need help, will I be able to get it if I go with this person?'

If children cannot answer yes to all three questions, they need to get away quickly and tell a parent, teachers or someone they know will help.

Please note that it is far better to invite children to think through a wide range of potentially unsafe situations than restrict them to negative rules that they may forget. Unfortunately, when children are abused, it is often on the one occasion when they ignored or forgot the rule.

STORY: MATTHEW GOES HOME FROM SCHOOL*

When Matthew comes out of school, his mum is usually waiting for him. She waves to him as he walks across the playground. She parks her car in the same place every day. However, one day Matthew's mum wasn't there. He looked in the school yard and he looked in the street but there was no sign of her or her little red car.

Matthew waited and waited until nearly everyone had gone home.

How do you think he felt?

Matthew didn't know what to do. He didn't want to go back to the classroom because he knew that it was empty. He hated being in there when all the chairs were placed upside down on top of the tables.

What do you think he could do?

Well, Matthew decided to walk home. It wasn't far and he knew the way.

Do you think that was the safest thing to do? Why?

He had only walked a short way when a car pulled up beside him. He had never seen either the driver or the passenger before.

'Hello, Matthew,' the woman passenger said. 'Can we give you a lift home?'

Matthew remembered that he wasn't supposed to accept lifts from strangers and he moved away from the car.

'No thank you,' he said quickly and walked on.

'Oh, come on Matthew,' the driver said. 'You know me. I live near you. Your mum and dad know me. Come on, jump in the back. It's OK.'

Matthew took a closer look at the driver and saw two young children sitting on the back seat. He felt happier and thought that it might be alright to accept the lift.

What do you think?
Why?

Matthew remembered what his mother said. 'No thank you,' he replied politely and walked on. The car followed him slowly.

'Come on! Don't be silly! It's raining and you're getting wet. I'll have you home in no time at all.'

Matthew *was* getting wet. The rain was trickling off the end of his nose.

What do you think he could do? If he knew the driver, should he get into the car? Why?
If there were other children in the car, does that mean that it would be safe to get in with them? Why?

Matthew asked himself three important questions: Do I have a good feeling about this? If I go in this car, will mummy know where I am? If I go with this person, can I get help if I need it?

Would his mummy know where he was?
Did Matthew have a good feeling about this?
If he went in the car, could he get help if he needed it?

Matthew answered no to all three questions. He said, 'No thanks! My mum is coming to pick me up.'

* Note to teachers and care-givers: The South Australian Education Department video resource, *Feeling safe, staying safe*, provides situations such as this for problem-solving.

'OK,' said the driver, 'just as you like' and drove away.

Did Matthew do the safest thing?
Suppose that the driver was a woman: should he have gone with her?
Why?

Just as Matthew was getting really wet, his mum drove up.

'Sorry I'm so late, Matthew,' she said. 'Jump in. I had a flat tyre and had to change the wheel. My goodness, I just came in time. You're wet through.'

'A man stopped and asked me to get in his car,' Matthew said. 'The driver said it was alright because he knows you.'

Mum sounded upset when she said, 'Oh dear! That must have been worrying! What did you do?'

'I told him no thanks and I said that you were going to pick me up.'

'That was very sensible and very safe,' said Matthew's mum. 'I'm proud of you.'

'I asked myself the three questions,' said Matthew proudly.

Can *you* remember what they were?

INDECENT EXPOSURE

In a study involving 10–12-year-old children, all of the girls in some classes reported being sexually molested by male peers (Briggs and Hawkins 1995a). This included indecent exposure in the classroom, toilets and school playground. Exhibitionism, often referred to as flashing, is an all too common phenomenon involving predominantly males from pre-adolescence to old age. In their national child protection curriculum, New Zealand authorities included discussion cards which asked questions such as 'What could someone do to stay safe if a man unzipped his pants and showed his penis?' or 'a man unzipped his pants and asked you to touch his penis?' Initially, the teachers felt embarrassed by these questions but found that children were not.

Please note that it is important to report 'flashers' to police, given that exhibitionism is just one of many offences committed by child molesters and rapists (Abel *et al.* 1987). The seriousness of this offence should not be underestimated.

Things to say: indecent exposure

Unfortunately, some people do wrong things to children.
Some kids do things that are not allowed, too.
Some kids touch others in their private places.
Some boys and sometimes girls, some men and some women show their private places to anyone who happens to be around. It isn't allowed because private places are special and have to be looked after. Adults know that it isn't allowed but they do it just the same.
It may happen in the classroom when the teacher isn't there.
It may happen in school toilets or the playground. In fact, it can happen anywhere.
Some people show the private parts of their bodies because they like to shock other kids.
They know it's not allowed. They just like to scare kids because it makes them feel powerful when they're really just bullies and cowards.
And if nobody stops them, they carry on doing it until they're grown-up.
They really need to be reported because they need help. They've got a big problem.

STORY: THE GIRLS WHO WENT TO THE PARK

Farida and Maria had only been going to school for a week when they decided that they didn't want to go to school any more. They thought that there were more interesting things to do. So, when their dads left them in the playground, they walked across the yard and went out of the gate at the back. A short walk along the road and they were in the park. They felt very daring and a little bit scared to be in the park without a grown-up.

First, they went to the adventure playground.

They couldn't quite reach the flying fox but they tried everything else. Farida went on the big slide lots of times. They both went on the see-saw and the roundabout and the swings. Then, they ate their lunches. It was while she was eating her apple that Maria began to get a bit worried. What would her mummy say when she found out that she wasn't at school? How would they know when it was home time? And how would they get home?

Farida was beginning to worry too.

'Let's go in the tunnel and then we'll go to school,' Farida said. 'It's creepy when mum isn't here and there are no other kids to play with.'

Maria agreed.

They both saw the man at the same time. He was standing by the toilets waving and calling to them to go over to him. They couldn't believe their eyes because, although it was winter, the man was wearing no clothes. Farida and Maria were shocked.

'He's calling us over to the toilets,' said Maria in a scared voice. 'And he hasn't any clothes on, has he?'

Farida felt scared. 'Come on, let's go to school,' she said.

They ran out of the park as fast as their legs could go.

Farida said, 'We can't tell anyone because we'll get into trouble. My mum always tells me that I must never go in the park without her. She'll be really mad.'

Maria said, 'We have to tell an adult who can be trusted to help. We have to tell the police. That man isn't allowed to go around frightening people like that. It's not allowed. He won't stop if he isn't caught. I think we have to go straight to the school office and report it.'

What should the girls do?

Who do you think was right, Farida who wanted to keep it a secret because she was afraid that she'd get into trouble for being in the park, or Maria, who wanted to report the man so that the police would stop him from misbehaving?

Why do you think that?

What could Maria say to the person in the school office?

Suppose that there was a public phone in the street as they left the park. What could the girls do? What number should they ring? What should they say?

Some people show children the private parts of their bodies to shock and frighten them. They know that it isn't allowed. What could these children do to stay safe?

If they reported it, what should they say?

IDENTIFYING TRICKS, BRIBES, THREATS AND BLACKMAIL

Children encounter threats and trickery in their everyday lives with peers, but they seldom expect adults to trick them. Unfortunately, tricks, coercion, bribes and blackmail are commonly used by child molesters because they realise that children will not cooperate if they know the truth. This part of the program is designed to sensitise children to the different kinds of tricks used by sex offenders. It also aims to teach them that children are never to blame when someone tricks them into doing something wrong.

Tricks

Tricks commonly used by paedophile strangers include:

- asking children to show them the way to school, etc., forcing or persuading them to get into the vehicle;
- pretending to be a police officer who is looking for a lost dog in a park or behind bushes; the child is flattered to be invited to help;
- offering to show or give children something that is likely to be of interest if they accompany the adult, e.g. 'Come and look, a baby bird has fallen from its nest in the bushes'; 'Would you like to see a fairy? There's one in that shelter over there'; 'My cat has had kittens. Would you like one?'; 'I have a budgie that talks. Would you like to hear it?'

Tricks commonly used by paedophiles include:

- persuading victims that 'This is what people do when they love each other';
- persuading victims that what is happening is for educational purposes: 'I'm teaching you what girls are for'; 'This is what boys' bodies are for';
- persuading boys that what is happening is 'only sex', that sex is fun and that homosexual abuse is a very masculine and normal thing to do;

- pretending to offer children some worthwhile experience such as sports coaching, music lessons, access to a model railway, stamp collecting, pets, computer games or other attractive inducements when the primary motive is to groom them for sex;
- pretending that victims' parents know and approve of what is happening;
- inviting the child or children to look at pornographic videos or magazines to observe their response;
- touching a child in the genital area, making it appear as an accident to assess reactions; if the child does not protest, the abuse proceeds and the child is deemed to be a willing participant;
- telling the child that God told him to do it; this is commonly used by men in religious orders as well as 'religious' incestuous fathers.

Bribes

Strangers and trusted adults commonly use bribes to seduce children. Choosing lonely and sad children, they use flattery and personal attention to break down resistance. Bribes may be extended to parents, e.g. free child-minding services, taking boys on camps and boating trips and buying gifts that parents cannot afford. An impoverished widow received a new kitchen for herself and a bike for her son from a Salvation Army bandsman who victimised the boy in the guise of providing music lessons. Bribes make victims feel loved and special. When sexual abuse is introduced, they find it difficult to protest for fear of losing the emotional and material advantages of the relationship. When, in adolescence, they begin to realise that they were being used, they suffer enormous guilt and self-recrimination, viewing themselves as prostitutes who sold their bodies for material gifts.

Threats and blackmail

Blackmail commonly includes threats that bad things will happen to children if they tell anyone about what is happening. Threats are commonly used by relatives and parent figures to maintain victims' secrecy.

> 'If you tell, I'll go to jail and it will be your fault when your mum hasn't any money. You'll have to leave the house. You won't have any food.'
> 'If you tell, the police (or social worker) will come and put you in a home for bad kids. That's because it's your fault. You should have said no at the beginning and you didn't.'
> 'If you tell, your mum will go mad.'

The roles are reversed as the victim is given responsibility for protecting the offender and keeping the family together. This is psychologically damaging to the child.

Children know that people in general tell lies, especially when they have done something wrong and want to stay out of trouble. It is sadly necessary to help children to become aware of insincerity so that they can question whether they are being tricked by older children or adults. This is one of the most difficult aspects of child protection and you may have to return to it many times using videos, problem-solving situations, puppets and stories.

TRICKS

Aims

- To make children aware that some people use tricks to make us believe something that is a lie.
- To help children to distinguish between fun tricks and bad tricks.

Things to say: Tricks

Today we're going to talk about the tricks that people play on each other.
Some tricks are fun tricks that make us laugh.

> Has anyone played a fun trick on you that made you laugh?
> Have you played a fun trick on someone else that they enjoyed?
> What happened?

Some tricks are not funny. They are wrong. The person playing the trick might think it's fun but the person who is being tricked doesn't think so.
Tricks can be upsetting. It isn't a good trick if it upsets someone. It is a bad, mean trick if it makes someone unhappy.

> Has anyone played a trick on you that made you upset?
> Have you played a trick on someone else that made them upset?

Sometimes, children play fun tricks on grown-ups.

Can you tell me about some fun tricks you've seen? Did the grown-ups laugh or get angry?

Fun tricks are good if the person being tricked thinks it's funny and they get a good feeling.

What are bad tricks?

It's a bad trick if someone tells you that you'll be safe when it isn't safe.
It's a bad trick if someone tells you that something is OK when it's wrong.
Bad tricks are lies which people use when they know they will get into big trouble if they tell you the truth.

Why do people play bad tricks?

Bad tricks are used to make us believe something when it isn't true.
Bad tricks are lies that people tell when they want kids to do something that they know is wrong.
Bad tricks are used when people know that we wouldn't cooperate if they told the truth. So they tell a lie to trick us.
Suppose that a man came up to you and said, 'Come with me and I'll take you away from your mummy and daddy and you'll never see them again.' You wouldn't go, would you? You would run away as fast as you could and you would tell a grown-up and the police.
People know that they have to trick children to make them do things that are wrong. So they offer presents that children might like. They say, 'Come and look at my cartoon videos' or ' I'll give you some money if you play a new game with me.'
Some bigger people might try to trick children into taking their clothes off, pretending it's a new secret game. They might trick kids into touching their private parts.
If you think that someone is tricking you and it's a bad trick, say 'No' and get away as fast as you can. Don't stop. Get away and tell someone who can help. Tell your mum, your teacher or phone the police.
When people play bad tricks it gives a bad feeling that keeps kids awake at night. And if someone manages to trick you, it's not your fault.
Bigger kids sometimes trick little kids to get them to do something they know is wrong.
Even adults sometimes trick kids into doing things that are wrong.
Bad tricks are bad. Say 'No', get away and tell someone who can help.

STORY: THE NEW PURSE

When I was six, my aunt gave me a purse for my birthday present. It was white leather with a painted jungle picture on it and the fastener was shaped like an elephant. I was so pleased, I took it to school for Show and Tell. The teacher asked me to pass it round the class and I felt very proud of it when the others said that they liked it.

At lunchtime, a new girl came up to me and said, 'I like your purse. Can I hold it?' I was pleased that she liked it and I put it in her hand.

When the bell rang, I asked her to return my purse but she held onto it.

'I know what I'll do. I'll swap it for an American dollar,' she said. 'I've got one at home.'

I was afraid that she might keep my purse and that I'd never see it again. So I agreed.

Do you think that she brought me that dollar?
Do you think that this was a trick?
Was it a bad trick or a good trick? Why?
Why did she need to use a trick to get the purse? Would I have given my new purse away?

By using a trick, the girl made me do something that I didn't want to do. Every day, I asked her for my purse or the dollar and every day she said, 'I forgot. I'll bring it tomorrow.' I was very upset that I'd lost my purse, but I was too scared to tell my mum because I thought she might be cross with me for losing the new purse.

Was it really my fault?
What could I have done?
Could I have told my mum? Why? What could she have done?
Could I have told the teacher? Why? What could the teacher have done?

Sometimes, it's hard to tell that someone is lying and trying to trick you. When kids are tricked into doing something that they don't really want to do, it isn't their fault.

If someone tricks you in a bad way, tell someone about it to help you to stay safe. You might be able to stop that person from playing bad tricks and upsetting other children.

STORY: THANH GOES SHOPPING

Mummy asked Thanh to go to the corner shop for some milk. It wasn't far and he'd been to the shop by himself before. He didn't mind going because there were lots of interesting things to see on the way. First, there was a dead bird lying in the gutter. Its eyes were closed but he found a stick and prodded the bird to make sure it was dead. It was very small and it didn't have any feathers. Thanh climbed on the church wall and looked up in the tree to see if there was a nest. Then he walked along the wall. He had a lovely view. He felt as tall as the trees and as light as a feather. Everything looked different when he was up high. He could see things he'd never seen before.

Suddenly, he stumbled and dropped his mum's money. Thanh had a bad feeling inside him as he saw it fall into the long grass. He jumped down from the wall and looked for the coins. He knew his mum would be cross with him for losing the money. He was getting very upset and near to tears when a man came up to Thanh and asked, 'What have you lost?'

Thanh told him that he was on his way to the shop to buy milk when he dropped his mother's milk money in the long grass and he couldn't find it.

'Oh dear! I'll help you to look for it,' said the man.

Thanh thought that the man was kind and, if anyone could find the money, he could.

The man put his hands down into the grass but he found nothing.

'Your mum will be very cross with you,' he said.

Thanh began to cry. The man put his arm

around Thanh's shoulder and said, 'I know what we'll do. Come with me. I'll take you to the shop and buy you some milk. My car is just over there.' He pointed to a big new white car across the road.

Thanh felt a bit confused. His mum had told him not to go in strangers' cars.

'And I'll buy you an ice-cream as well,' said the man, holding out his hand to lift Thanh over the wall. 'Do you like ice-cream?'

Thanh didn't know what to do. His mum had told him not to talk to strangers but this man had been kind. He had helped Thanh to look for the money and he was going to buy milk and an ice-cream. Thanh loved ice-cream but he was very confused.

Do you think he should go with the man? Why? What are the questions Thanh could ask himself? Would his mum know where he was if he went with the man? Did he have a good feeling? Could he get help if he needed it?
Why do you think a stranger would offer to pay for Thanh's milk and ice-cream?
Will Thanh be safe if he goes with the man?
If Thanh went in the car, do you really think he would stop at the shop and buy milk? What do you think could happen?

Thanh suddenly remembered that some people trick kids. He decided not to take any risks. He said, 'No thank you. I'm going home to tell my mum.'

Thanh ran home as fast as his legs would go. He ran so fast that he had a pain in his side when he got to his house. He burst in and said, 'Mum, come quick. I dropped the money on the way to the shop and a man wanted me to go with him in his car. He said I'd get into trouble if I came home without the milk and that he'd buy me an ice-cream.'

Thanh's mum was so upset that this had happened to her little boy that she wasn't cross that he'd lost the money; she was proud of Thanh because he had said 'No' to the man and he'd come straight home to tell her about it.

'You were right to come home,' she said. 'It could have been a trick. It's best to stay safe. Now, get an ice-cream from the freezer then we'll ring the police and tell them.'

What number did they ring?
What do you think Thanh's mum said to the police?

Two police officers, a man and a woman, came around in a police car and asked Thanh if he could describe the man and his car.

'Yes, I can,' he said proudly. 'The man was about as old and as tall as my grandad but he had white hair and a reddish face and a grey suit.'

'Well done!' said Thanh's mum.

'Well done,' said the policeman, writing this down.

'It was an Alfa Romeo Spider car,' said Thanh. 'It looked new and it had blue seats. It was just like my uncle's. I didn't see what the letters were but the registration number was 123.'

'I'm really proud of you,' said Mum. 'Grown-ups know they are not supposed to take children in their cars without their parents' permission. That man may have tricked other kids into going with him. He may have hurt them. And it doesn't matter about the milk. We'll get some later.'

STORY: THE KIND LADY

When Ann came out of school, she stopped at the school gate to look for her mother. She was nowhere in sight. Ann felt a little bit worried because her mum was always outside school before the bell went. She stood there for a few minutes wondering what to do.

What do you think she should do?

Ann was just going to walk home when a woman came up to her and said, 'Ann, hi! Your mum sent me to pick you up. She had to go to hospital because she's sick. She asked me to take you to her.'

The woman opened the front door of the car and signalled to Ann to get into the passenger seat. 'Come on, get in. Quickly.'

Ann felt uncomfortable. She was worried to hear that her mum was sick. She was worried that she didn't know the woman who was asking her to get into the car. She was puzzled that the woman knew her name.

How do you think the woman could have known Ann's name?
Should Ann get into the car? Why do you think so?
What would be the safest thing to do?
If the person who usually meets you from school is prevented from turning up, what would they do?
If Ann's mum was in hospital, do you think that someone would have phoned the school to tell the principal?
Do you think that Ann's mum would send a stranger to collect Ann from school?
Do you think this could be a bad trick to get Ann to go with her in the car?
Bad people may use tricks and lies to get kids to go with them because they know that children won't go with strangers. They pretend to be friends or use the child's name. How do you think that someone might know a child's name?
Maybe they heard someone else call your name. Maybe they saw the name on a school bag. If someone says that he or she knows your mum or your dad, it doesn't mean that they are safe people. It doesn't even mean that they are telling the truth.
Some people use bad tricks to persuade children to go with them.

Ann is worried that her mum might be in hospital but she doesn't feel safe getting into the car.

What could she do to stay safe?
Should Ann go back into school to tell a teacher what had happened? Why?
What could a teacher do to help?

While Ann was wondering what to do, her mum arrived.

'Sorry I'm late, poppet,' she said. 'I bet you thought I wasn't coming.'

'But I thought you were in hospital,' Ann said, both delighted and surprised.

'Whatever gave you that idea?' mum asked.

'A lady told me. She was here. She said you'd sent her to collect me because you were sick, you were in hospital.' Ann looked for the woman but the car had gone. 'She was right here,' Ann repeated.

Ann's mum looked very worried.

'I didn't send anyone,' she said. 'There was an accident and I was held up in the traffic jam. I'm really glad that you didn't go with the woman, Ann. What did she look like? What kind of a car did she have?'

Ann's mum drove straight to the police station. The policewoman took them into the interview room and asked questions. Then she smiled warmly at Ann and said, 'Congratulations Ann. You've given us such a good description of this woman that we'll be able to trace the car. We've been looking for her for a long time because she's tried to take other kids away from their mummies.'

Ann was very pleased. Her teacher was pleased too. She was so pleased that Ann was asked to tell the whole school at assembly.

'If someone wants you to go with them, ask yourself three questions,' Ann told the school. 'Will your mum or dad know where you are if you go? Do you have good feelings about it? Will you be able to get help if you need it? If you don't say yes to all three questions, don't go. Tell someone about what happened. Stay safe.'

Many children have seen pornography before they reach the age of ten. Studies confirm that pornography is widely used by child abusers in the seduction process. Pornography is dangerous because it is used to desensitise children to sexual activity prior to abusing them.

It is important to teach children to avoid bigger kids and adults who show rude pictures, books or videos to them. Emphasise that 'Adults know that they are not allowed to behave rudely to children'.

STORY: THE MAN NEXT DOOR

Sometimes, adults play tricks on parents as well as on children. When Troy's next-door neighbour Mr Smith invited him to watch Disney videos, he asked Troy's mum first.

'Do you want to go?' she asked.

'Oh yes!' Troy said eagerly.

'OK, but be a good boy and do as you're told,' said mum. She always said that when she left Troy with other people.

Troy went to the neighbour's house and Mr Smith told him to help himself to potato chips from a big packet on the table.

'Get yourself a Coke from the fridge,' he said. Troy did as he was told.

Mr Smith pointed to a pile of videos on the coffee table by the TV set.

'You choose,' said Mr Smith.

Troy recognised his favourite cartoon and Mr Smith put it in and switched it on.

Troy enjoyed watching the video and he ate lots of chips and drank lots of Coke. He felt very special. It was a great treat.

When the film finished, Mr Smith said, 'Now it's my turn'.

When Mr Smith put on the next video, Troy had a big surprise. There were men in it and they had no clothes on.

'Oh! That's rude,' said Troy. 'That's not allowed.'

Mr Smith laughed.

'Haven't you seen blue movies before? Everyone watches them. They're fun! But if you don't have them at your house, you'd better not tell your mother.'

Troy was curious because he had certainly never seen anything like that before. At the same time, he felt uncomfortable. He felt sure that it was wrong for a grown-up person to show rude films to kids.

Why do you think the man wanted to show rude videos to a boy?
Is it safe for Troy to stay and watch rude movies with his neighbour? Why?
What could Troy do?

'I'd better go home,' said Troy, moving towards the door.

'Don't go so soon,' said Mr Smith. 'It's OK. Your mum knows where you are.'

Yes, Troy's mum did know where he was but she thought he was watching Disney cartoons for kids. Would she have allowed Troy to go to Mr Smith's house if she'd known that he watched rude movies?

'No thanks Mr Smith, I want to go home. And thankyou for the chips and the drink.'

Troy ran home.

What do you think he said to his mum?
What do you think happened next?

Rejecting bribes

Sometimes, grown-ups and bigger children offer to show something to children. They may offer to give them something that they would like.

'Come to my house and I'll show you some new computer games,' a man said to children passing his house on the way to school.

'I've got some puppies in my house. Come and I'll give you one.'

'I'll give you some money if you come in my car.'

Some children go. There are no computer games, no puppies and no money. It can be a trick to get children into the house. Then, they can't get help if they need it and their mummies don't know where they are.

If you get a bad, unsafe feeling, always say no and get away as fast as you can. If someone

stops you on your way to school, tell a teacher or the person in the school office. If there is a telephone nearby, you can phone the police. Can you remember the number that you have to use?

Adults know that they aren't allowed to invite children into their houses without parents' permission.

Even if you would like a pet, that isn't the right way to get one.

Your mum or your dad would need to know and give their permission. They would want to talk to the owner before they took a pet home.

Some people trick kids to make them do something that they don't really want to do.

Some people offer bribes to make kids do what they don't really want to do.

A bribe is when someone gives or offers or promises you something that you would really like, in order to persuade you to do something that you don't really want to do.

A bribe is offered to make you change no to yes.

It isn't a present.

If you get a present, it's because it's your birthday or Christmas.

If someone offers you a bribe, it isn't because they want to please you: it's to make you do something that you don't really want to do.

STORY: THE BRIBE

Su-Lee was playing computer games. Su-Lee has a big brother called Phuong. He often bullies her. Phuong was in his room playing CDs with his mates. Their parents were at work.

Su-Lee's brother shouted, telling her to get him a packet of corn chips from the kitchen. Su-Lee went to the kitchen but found that there were no corn chips in the cupboard.

'Hey, Su-Lee, go round to the shop and buy some more corn chips,' ordered her brother. 'Here, come and get some money.'

Su-Lee protested that she was in the middle of a computer game and didn't want to go out because it was almost dark. It was also cold outside.

'I don't want to go out. I don't want any corn chips,' said Su-Lee. 'You'll have to get them yourself.'

Su-Lee's brother knew that she didn't want to go out. He didn't want to go out either. 'I'll give you some money if you go,' he said.

Su-Lee took no notice. She didn't want his money. She wanted to play on her computer.

'If you go to the shop, I'll buy you an ice-cream,' he said.

Su-Lee loved ice-cream but she knew that this was a bribe to make her do something that she didn't really want to do. It wasn't a birthday present. It wasn't a Christmas present. Her brother wasn't really being kind. He only offered her an ice-cream to make her do something for him.

'No thanks! There's ice-cream in the freezer,' she said and continued playing her computer game.

Su-Lee's brother offered an ice-cream as a bribe because he knew that she liked ice-cream and he knew that she didn't want to go out to the shop.

Sometimes, people bribe children with money to persuade them to do something that the adults know to be wrong. If someone says, 'I'll give you ten dollars to take your clothes off', the money isn't a present. They don't offer the money because they like children. They offer it to tempt kids to do something that the grown-ups know is wrong, or something that they don't want to do.

Blackmail

We know that people use lots of different tricks to persuade us to do things that we don't really want to do. Sometimes, people use bad tricks to make kids do things that are not allowed. One of those tricks is called blackmail.

Blackmailers are people who get children to do things that they don't want to do by frightening them. We've all met blackmailers. They say things like:

'Give me your lunch or I'll bash you.'
'If you tell the teacher, I'll beat you up on the way home.'
'I'll send my big brother round to thump you if you don't give me your ball.'

You don't want to give your ball away but you don't want to be bashed either. If you give your ball away, it's because you are frightened. Some even say, 'If you tell the teacher, I'll get you at playtime.' Blackmail is bullying. Blackmail isn't allowed. It makes kids scared and unhappy. It has to be stopped!

When people do something wrong, they might try to use blackmail to keep themselves out of trouble. They blame everyone else for what they did. They say things such as:

'You are a bad kid. It's your fault.'
'You'll get into big trouble if you tell.'
'If you tell anyone, you'll be taken away by

the police (or 'welfare') and put in a home for bad kids.'

They say those things because they know that they've done something wrong and they are afraid of getting into trouble.

When grown-ups and older children do bad things, it is never a child's fault.

We've talked a lot about bad things that happen but lots of good things happen too.

Can you tell me about some of them?

THEME 5

SECRETS

AIM

- To arm children with information and skills to neutralise the power of secrecy in relation to sexual offences.

SAFE AND UNSAFE SECRETS

Children love secrets. It can be difficult for them to understand that there are 'safe' and 'unsafe' secrets.

Not all offenders demand that their behaviour should be kept secret. Many use threats such as, 'Don't tell anyone about this or else . . .' or, 'If you tell anyone about this you'll get into big trouble and the police/welfare will take you away'.

In cases of incest, there is often a prediction that terrible things will happen to the child and/or the family if the children 'tell'; for example, 'If you tell anyone, Dad will go to jail and Mum will have no money and nowhere to live.' The secret then places responsibility on the child for keeping the family together.

Recent research in Scotland concerning childhood secrets (Moran *et al.* 1995) showed that young children (six years old) were more likely to keep secrets than older children (up to 11 years of age). Children are also most likely to keep a secret imposed by an adult they like.

When children fail to report the first abusive incident, abusers apportion blame to them. As a result, they become trapped in secrecy. The longer the abuse continues, the harder it is for victims to report what happened. They are controlled by statements such as: 'You didn't say "No" the first time. You were a bad kid. It's your fault. You will be in big trouble if you tell.'

Children are unlikely to be believed if they wait several months or several years to make a report of sexual abuse. Mothers commonly say, 'It can't be true! I would have known if it was happening. You would have told me long ago if it were true. You're making it up. What a dreadful thing to say about ——. If I hear you tell such lies again I will punish you.'

When a victim of abuse by a father-figure expresses anger by behaving badly, the mother is likely to think, 'The child is making this up to punish us for being strict.' Adults who have never been victimised find it difficult to understand why children do not report the first incident of sexual misbehaviour to them. They underestimate the pressures on children to remain silent, especially if the perpetrator is someone known and trusted by family members. It is harder for children to report offences involving someone their parents know and trust. It is harder still for children to report to parents who have never given them permission to talk about sexual things.

If children do not disclose the first offences, offenders view them as equal partners, however young they may be. Offences increase in frequency and become more degrading and more violent. The secret becomes as worrying as the abuse itself. That is why some victims draw their self-portraits without mouths or, sometimes, without faces.

A note for educators and parents

Teaching children about safe and unsafe secrets is dealing with a complex issue. After teaching this module of work, it may be necessary to revisit the concepts of safe and unsafe secrets for any children who have not successfully

This little boy lies awake at night worrying about a bad secret. What could he do?

achieved the learning outcomes or who may forget some of the messages over time.

There are also issues for different groups of children such as girls, boys and those with disabilities. For some girls their vulnerability can be increased due to their desire to please, particularly adults they like. Children with disabilities are often very reliant on a wide range of adults where touching contact is required. They seek adult approval and find it difficult to discriminate between appropriate and inappropriate touching.

Due to their curiosity about their bodies, boys are particularly vulnerable to sex talk and to sexual touching that is initially non-penetrative.

The following activities are designed for teaching children in the 6–12-year-old age group and can also be used by parents at home. They have been written with teachers as the main audience. It is also important to teach secrecy within the context of a comprehensive personal safety program such as *Child Protection Education* (NSW), *Protective Behaviours* (Australia) and *Keeping Ourselves Safe* (New Zealand) rather than as an isolated and unrelated group of activities.

It is very important to provide opportunities for parents to participate in this section of the program. Without involvement, parents may unwittingly counter all that is taught, i.e. by reinforcing the message that all secrets must be kept, especially family secrets.

SECTION 1—INTRODUCTION TO SECRETS

Learning activities

Please remind children about the strategy of 'One step removed', i.e. make statements that are impersonal, referring to 'someone' rather than 'I'. Also remind children not to make personal disclosures during group sessions; if they have something to tell you, you would like to hear about it in private at the end of the session.

1. The teacher and children brainstorm examples of secrets and responses and record them under the headings of 'Safe' and 'Unsafe'. Responses should be kept for learning activity 3 in Section 2.
2. Children are presented with overhead transparencies to consolidate their understanding of different secrets. Teachers and children discuss the sequence and content of the 'overheads'.
3. Each child talks to two other children and they create their own examples of safe secrets. Then these are shared as a whole class.
4. Children discuss and record the range of feelings associated with secrets.
5. Children record their findings for future reference.
6. There are many stories with elements of secrecy that could be used to facilitate children learning about the range of secrets, e.g. *No More Secrets*, *What's Wrong with Bottoms?*, *Zing and Zip*, *The Troggs of Wongo-Wong Wood*, *Nolly and Groogle*, *The Gillows of Crimpley Creek*, and *The Surprise*. Talk to your librarian.

Outcomes

As a result of these learning activities the children will be able to explain and talk about safe and unsafe secrets and the possible feelings that go with keeping secrets.

Assessment

All children have shared their understanding of a range of types of secrets either verbally, with illustrations or in writing.

SECTION 2—SAFE AND UNSAFE SECRETS

Learning activities

1. The teacher introduces the lesson, explaining that by the end of this session the children will be able to classify secrets (using child-developed criteria) as safe or unsafe.
2. The teacher explains to children that they are going to develop a set of rules to test whether a particular secret is safe to keep or unsafe to keep.
3. Teacher and children recapitulate the introduction to secrets. The teacher then expands the notion of secrets by using a problem-solving approach. Introduce the notion that there are two types of secrets by brainstorming secrets into those which are safe and those which are unsafe and record using two lists on the board (or some other suitable way). Using the examples in the two lists, ask the children to imagine they are helpers or scientists who need to discover the test for working out whether a secret is safe or unsafe. Using their own criteria, have the children test their lists of safe and unsafe secrets to see if they are correctly categorised.

Note for educators

Encourage children to provide the criteria using their own language. The following examples were developed by 5–7-year-old children and are considered to be the basic minimum criteria. If any of these are not on your children's list, please include them as a teaching point.

Children's definitions

'Safe secrets' are those which . . .

- can be kept for a short time and are safe.
- are usually short term.
- usually have a happy outcome.
- are always told . . . eventually.
- do not involve touching your body.
- do not involve you doing things to someone else's body.

Children's definitions

'Secrets are unsafe when . . .

- someone says, 'you mustn't tell'.
- they last a long time . . . sometimes for ever.
- they make you feel uncomfortable or unsafe, e.g., butterflies in the tummy.
- they can involve a threat that something bad will happen if you tell, e.g.:
  Your mum will leave home if she finds out.
  Your mum and dad won't love you any more.
  I'll kill your dog/pet bird/hamster etc. if you tell.
  I will go to gaol and it will be all your fault.
  I'll bash you/kill you if you tell.
  I will go to gaol and you will have nowhere to live and it will be your fault.
  The police will take you away if you tell.

Encourage children to discuss whether the secrets presented are safe secrets that can be kept or unsafe secrets that need to be told. Discuss with children the variety of threats that might be used to make people keep an unsafe secret.

SECTION 2—SAFE AND UNSAFE SECRETS (continued)

Learning activities

It is recommended that you read a suitable short story and, at appropriate places, explore key issues about secrets using the following questions:

- Which secrets could someone tell?
- Would someone really get into trouble for telling an unsafe secret? (N.B. ensure children explore both 'yes' and 'no' possibilities.)
- What might happen if an unsafe secret is kept secret?
- Is anybody allowed to show or do rude/yucky things to kids and tell them to keep it a secret?
- Suppose that an adult that someone really likes asks a child to keep a secret about something yucky or rude. What could the child do?
- Sometimes an adult, even someone who is liked a lot, may threaten children to make them keep a secret. What can children do to keep safe?
- Why do you think a grown-up or bigger person might want a child to keep something secret?

ASSESSMENT SHEET

What type of secrets are these (a) safe or (b) unsafe? Should they be told or kept?

TYPE OF SECRET	Safe	Unsafe
1. A secret about Grandad's birthday present.		
2. A secret that someone is being harassed/bullied.		
3. The secret place where your house key is hidden.		
4. A surprise birthday party.		
5. Someone is being hurt at home but they told you not to tell.		
6. A friend is upset about a large bruise.		
7. A secret about what someone will be wearing to a fancy dress party.		
8. Someone has had an accident doing something naughty and is injured.		
9. A big boy tried to pull a child's pants down to look at the private parts of their body and said, 'Don't tell the teacher or I'll bash you on the way home'.		

Suggest two or more other safe and unsafe secrets. Try them out on someone else to see if they can correctly name them as safe or unsafe!

ACTIVITY SHEET

Which surprises can we keep? Which secrets must we tell?

Put a ring around 'Tell' if you think the secret should be told. Put a ring around 'Don't tell' if you think it is a good surprise.

Someone's mum is planning a party for her partner's birthday and she asks the children not to tell anyone about it. She wants it to be a surprise.	Tell	Don't tell
A big boy in the school yard wants to show others some rude/dirty pictures of naked adults. He says that it's fun but the children must not tell anyone or he'll get his mate to bash them.	Tell	Don't tell
Dad takes his children shopping and buys a present for mum. He asks the children to keep it a secret until Christmas.	Tell	Don't tell
A boy/girl is watching TV with an uncle. He puts his hand under their clothes and touches the private parts of their bodies. He then says, 'It's our special secret. Don't tell anyone or you'll get into big trouble.'	Tell	Don't tell
A boy shows his mates twenty dollars and says he had it given to him by a man who lives in the next street. He says the man will give them twenty dollars if they go to his house but they mustn't tell anyone or they will get into big trouble.	Tell	Don't tell
The children like their baby-sitter a lot until s/he asks them to play an undressing game and says they mustn't tell anyone.	Tell	Don't tell
A bigger boy next door asks a girl into his house when no-one is at home. He says he will show her some special videos if she promises not to tell anyone.	Tell	Don't tell

- How can someone tell their bad secret to someone else without getting into trouble?
- Ask the children to find other words that describe safe secrets and unsafe secrets by:
    - asking their parents/care-givers.
    - using a thesaurus.
    - working in a small group.
    - other methods.

Outcomes

As a result of these learning activities the children will be able to:

- classify a range of secrets as safe or unsafe, using common criteria;
- tell if any particular secret needs to be told to keep themselves safe.

Assessment

- Teacher observation of students' participation in whole group/small group discussions.
- Students complete the Assessment Sheet & Activity Sheet.
- Discuss each scenario once children have completed the sheets. Alternatively, the teacher can read out each scenario and discuss with the class whether to tell or not (and why). This task can be completed in small groups to elicit a range of responses to be shared with the whole class. Depending on how the children perceive each scenario, it may be that particular scenarios could be both a secret that is told immediately or one that can safely be kept for a short time.
- Present the following statement to your children with the underlined words omitted and have the children fill in the gaps.

'REMEMBER—BAD, UNSAFE SECRETS ALWAYS NEED TO BE TOLD AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO AN ADULT YOU TRUST'

READ THE FOLLOWING UNFINISHED STORY

Chris walks across a large park in which there is an adventure playground. There are lots of children on the fort and several are waiting a turn on the Flying Fox. Chris stops and leans on the fence to watch. An adult walks up to Chris and starts a conversation.

'Hi! What's your name?'

'Chris,' the child replied.

'Do you like puppies, Chris?'

'Oh yes!' replied Chris eagerly. 'I love patting puppies and tickling their bellies. We had puppies once at our house.'

'You could come and play with mine. I'll give you one if you like. They're just old enough to leave their mother. Come and choose one.'

'I'm not allowed to go anywhere without telling my mum,' said Chris.

'It's not worthwhile you going back home to tell her,' the person said. 'I only live just around the corner. I'll take you there. We'll keep it secret. Nobody will know.'

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1. Ask the children to finish the story in their own way (verbal, written, illustrated, acted out).
2. Ask some children to share their endings with the class. The teacher records their responses. The children analyse the endings for safe and unsafe consequences.
3. Ask children to recount (verbally, in writing, in pictures) the story putting in a safe ending of their choice.
4. Ask children to use the criteria from Section 2, Safe and Unsafe Secrets, to complete the task.

Learning activities

In the story Chris was asked to keep a secret.

- How might Chris have felt about keeping it?
- How could Chris tell whether it was a safe secret that could be kept or an unsafe secret that could be told?

Write about it and draw a picture.

Outcomes

As a result of these activities, children will be able to determine safe ways of responding to an adult's request to keep a secret.

Assessment

Children know 'safe' story endings about keeping a range of secrets.

SECTION 3: 'WHAT IFS . . .' FOR SECRETS

Learning activities

The following 'What if' situations can be explored using the problem-solving process below:

- IDENTIFY the problem
- FRAME the issue into a key question, i.e. What if someone . . . ?
- BRAINSTORM to generate a list of alternative strategies and possible solutions
- consider the CONSEQUENCES of the alternatives by asking, 'Is this a safe thing to do?'
- DECIDE which one/s might work
- IMPLEMENT
- EVALUATE—was it a good choice? What other choices could be made?
- PERSISTENCE—try to solve it in different ways

Suppose a person that someone knew and trusted behaved rudely (sexually) . . . and said, 'Don't ever tell anybody about this. If you do you'll get into big trouble. It's our special secret.'

What could a child do to stay safe? Could the secret be told or must it be kept?
What might happen if the child tells?

N.B. Ensure that children have a clear understanding of the words 'rude' and 'sexual'. Choose whichever word is most appropriate for your group.

Suppose a bigger girl tells younger children that her parents are out and, if they promise not to tell anyone, she will take them to her house to show them her dad's grown-up videos.

Should they go with her? Why?
Should the children keep this secret? Why?
Why might someone want to keep video watching a secret?

Discuss and analyse the Children's Code for Keeping Safe on page 148. Improve or modify the code and ensure that each child in the group receives a copy to take home to discuss with parents/care-givers.

Outcomes

As a result of these activities children will be able to:

- understand 'secrets' that are safe and 'secrets' that are unsafe;
- know a range of strategies to keep safe when faced with being asked to keep unsafe secrets.

Assessment

- Observation of child participation in the brainstorming and using the problem-solving process.
- Children are able to state which secrets in the learning activities are safe/unsafe.

CHILDREN'S CODE FOR KEEPING SAFE

1. TOUCHING

Hugs, kisses and touching should never, never be kept secret.

2. BODY

Your body belongs to you and you decide who can touch it, when and how.

3. NO

It's OK to say 'No' if someone tries to touch you and you don't want them to. It doesn't matter who they are even if it is a teacher, coach, priest, parent, relative, a bigger person or another child.

4. RUN

If someone is frightened they can run to a person they know and try to get help.

5. YELL

It's OK to yell out loud if you are scared and need help, just the same as if there was a fire, a car accident or any other emergency. Touching can be one sort of personal emergency where it is OK to yell and tell.

6. TELL

You must tell a grown-up if someone has told you to keep a touching secret. Never keep secrets about any sort of touch.

7. SECRETS

Safe, surprise secrets like birthday presents are fun and are always told eventually.

REVISION: PROBLEM-SOLVING EXERCISES

- Suppose that your parents go out and a friend comes round to keep you company. As he's leaving, he falls and can't move. He says he thinks that he's broken his leg. What can you do? What could you say?
- Suppose that a girl was separated from the rest of the class on a school excursion and had no money left. How could she stay safe? Suppose that a lady saw that there was a problem and offered to take the girl home. What could she say? Why? Would it be safe to go with her? What would be the safest thing to do?
- Suppose that a big boy offers someone some pills and says, 'They're great! If you take them, you'll be able to do anything that you want to do. You'll feel really good. Let me give you one to try.' What should the person do to keep safe? Why?
- Suppose that a boy is being picked on by a bigger boy at school. What could he do to stay safe?
- Suppose that a boy is out by himself and sees a gang of rough-looking big boys coming towards him. What could he do to stay safe?
- Suppose that someone comes to sit by a child on the bus and the child feels very uncomfortable. What could s/he do?
- Suppose that someone dares a boy/girl to drink beer (smoke marijuana, sniff powder, petrol or adhesives or steal something from a shop). What could the kid do? Why? Would that be safe? What else could s/he do?
- Suppose that a boy is in a cinema with a friend. An adult comes to sit in the next seat. When the lights go down, the adult—it could be a man or a woman—puts a hand on the boy's thigh. What could the boy do?
- Suppose that you get really scared when you are in the house (or bedroom) on your own in the dark. What could you do to make yourself feel safer?
- Suppose that a girl is out shopping and a man suddenly puts his hand up her dress (or down her pants). Is that allowed? What could she do?
- Suppose that the baby-sitter shows a boy some rude/dirty pictures. Should grown-ups do that? What should the boy do?

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