Protective behaviours

Parent resource

Schools and parents working together to help keep children safe

Department of
Education

Quote by

Peg Flandreau West

Developer of the first protective behaviours program

November 1988

I continue to be astounded at how many children and adults are telling us how they're using Protective Behaviours to change their lives and cherish themselves. I have enhanced my own creativity, increased my life energy and sharpened my sense of adventure. How strange it was at first, to realize that work involving something as painful as violence could involve laughter and joy. For as we move beyond reaction to violence, we are moving into the alternatives of empowerment, we are finding new ways to get through painful times. We are finding, even in the midst of it all, excitement, creativity, laughter and adventure for ourselves.

Protective behaviours

Parent resource

Schools and parents working together to help keep children safe

This resource is designed as a guide to protective behaviours for parents and carers.

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About the protective behaviours parent resource

Although every child has the right to feel safe at all times, each year thousands of children across Australia experience abuse. It is estimated that 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 7 boys will be subject to some form of unwanted sexual activity before the age of 18 (*Australian Institute of Criminology*, 1993).

The protective behaviours program is based on two themes:

We all have the right to feel safe at all times

We can talk with someone about anything, no matter what it is

By sharing protective behaviours with your child, you will be helping to develop lifelong skills of assertiveness, self-confidence, problem solving, communication, resilience and help seeking.

You will find that the activities and discussions in this handbook are simple and presented in a fun, child-friendly way, designed not to frighten children but inform them of some of the vital skills of personal safety.

How to use this resource

Pencil icon

Complete this activity with your child

Light bulb bubble

Provides further ideas and discussion topics for you and your child

Speech bubble

Reinforce the two themes with your child in everyday life

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Types of abuse

In Western Australia, under the *Children and Community Services Act 2004,* a child is a person under the age of 18 years.

There are generally four types of child abuse and neglect, which may co-exist:

Physical abuse occurs when a child is severely and/or persistently hurt or injured by an adult or a child's caregiver. It may also be the result of putting a child at risk of being injured.

Some examples are: hitting, shaking, punching; burning and scolding; excessive physical punishment or discipline; attempted suffocation; shaking a baby.

Child sexual abuse occurs when a child is exposed to, or involved in, sexual activity that is inappropriate to the child's age and developmental level. It includes circumstances where the child has less power than another person involved, is exploited or where the child has been bribed, threatened, or coerced. It also includes situations where there is a significant difference between the developmental or maturity level of the child and another person involved.

Some examples are: letting a child watch or read pornography; allowing a child to watch sexual acts; fondling the child's genitals; having oral sex with a child; vaginal or anal penetration; using the internet to find a child for sexual exploitation.

Emotional abuse occurs when an adult harms a child's development by repeatedly treating and speaking to a child in ways that damage the child's ability to feel and express their feelings.

Some examples are: constantly putting a child down; humiliating or shaming a child; not showing love, support or guidance; continually ignoring or rejecting the child; exposing the child to family violence; threatening abuse or bullying a child; threats to harm loved ones, property or pets.

Emotional abuse also includes psychological abuse and exposure to family and domestic violence.

The term family violence most commonly refers to violence and abuse against an intimate partner (including same sex relationships and ex-partners) but can also occur between siblings, from adolescents to parents, or from family carers to a relative. It can include the abuse of children and young people, older people, people with a disability, and other family members.

Neglect is when a child is not provided with adequate food or shelter, effective medical, therapeutic or remedial treatment, and/or care, nurturance or supervision to a severe and/or persistent extent where the health or development of the child is significantly impaired or placed at serious risk.

Some examples are: leaving a child alone without appropriate supervision; not ensuring the child attends school, or not enrolling the child at school; infection because of poor hygiene or lack of medication; not giving a child affection or emotional support; not getting medical help when required.

SOURCE: *Department of Communities, Child Protection and Family Support*

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Theme one: We all have the right to feel safe

A human right that we are all ***born with*** cannot be taken away and does not have to be earned

All of us
you, me, friends, family, strangers… everyone

Physical and emotional safety
It's a personal, individual experience

24 hours a day
In the morning, during the day, at night time, at home, at school, at grandma's, at after school care

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Rights and responsibilities

What can I do?

Read about children's rights.
(https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/childrens-rights/about-childrens-rights)

- Explain to your child that with every right comes a responsibility.

  For example:

  You have the right to a good education
  You have the responsibility to do your best at school

  You have the right to voice your opinion
  You have the responsibility to respect the opinions of others

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Feelings

Our bodies give us lots of different feelings. It is an important part of personal safety to show your child how to recognise, understand and express their feelings.

Being in charge of our feelings is important in developing self-confidence and responsibility.

What can I do?

- Help your child to expand their feelings vocabulary. Help your child to name and trust their feelings when they do not feel safe.
- Help develop their ability to recognise, understand and express their feelings appropriately.
- Be understanding and accepting of your child expressing a range of feelings. When your child expresses or shows unhappy or sad feelings ask, “How would you like to feel? What could you do so that you feel happy/safe?”
- Assist your child to recognise others’ feelings.
- Be a role model by owning your own feelings using the “I feel… when…” format.
- Role play using their toys and puppets to explore feelings further.
- Use a mirror to help your child see their facial expressions and physical body reactions for each feeling.

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How are you feeling today? Today I feel ...
Happy
Sad
Angry
Surprised
Shy
Proud
Embarrassed
Safe
Tired
Confused
Hurt
Unsafe

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Early warning signs

Early warning signs are the involuntary physical sensations that take place in our bodies in reaction to potentially unsafe situations.

Our early warning signs alert us to danger or threats to our safety. Early warning signs may differ from one person to another, but we all have them.

Children can learn to identify their early warning signs. Early warning signs can be fun and enjoyable when we have choice and control over what's happening to us.

What our bodies say:

- 'My heart is beating really fast!'
- 'There are butterflies in my tummy!'
- 'My legs feel weak and I have jelly knees!'
- 'My mouth is so dry!'

Other early warning signs can include:

- tight shoulders
- sweaty palms
- red cheeks
- goose bumps

What can I do?

- Talk with your child about what happens in their bodies when they start to feel scared or worried. What early warning signs (physical sensations) do they feel? Use examples from your own experiences, e.g. when you're running late for an appointment.

- Watch for times when you think your child may be feeling scared or worried (examples are, high swings, going somewhere new, first day in a new class). Ask them to identify where in their body they can feel their early warning signs. Encourage your child to pay attention to their early warning signs and tell you when and where they happen.

- Avoid telling your child not to feel scared, or that they are silly to feel scared. Instead, provide understanding, reassurance and encouragement to problem-solve the situation.

- Try some fun, enjoyable activities or games where there is a build-up of anticipation to assist your child to describe their own early warning signs. Some examples are jack-in-the-box, pop up pirate, tower of blocks, snapping crocodile, egg and spoon race, 'What's the time Mr Wolf?'.

- Encourage them to practise taking slow breaths when they start to feel scared. Explain that this helps them think clearly and decide what to do.

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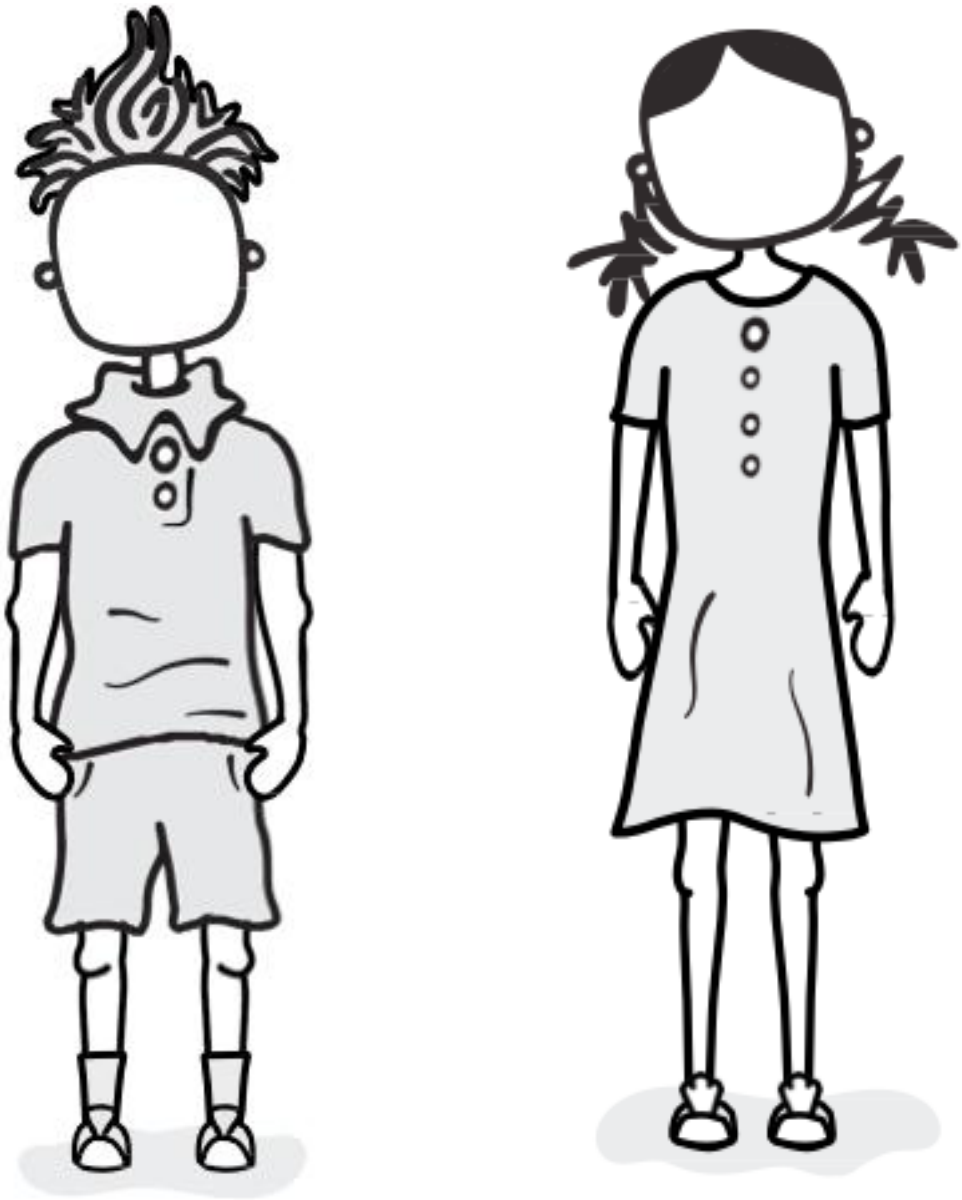
Early warning signs

What early warning signs does your body give you when you are feeling unsafe or doing something that is fun or scary?

Draw or write your early warning signs



If I get my early warnings signs and I feel unsafe,
it is important to tell an adult who I trust.

I can keep telling until my early warning signs go away
and I feel safe again.

Safety

Safety is a physical state. The protective behaviours program stresses the need to 'feel' safe, as well as 'be' safe, recognising the importance of psychological or emotional safety.

Safety involves having informed choice and control over any situation in which we find ourselves.

Safety = Choice + Control + A Time Limit

Feeling safe and adventurous go hand in hand when we maintain our choice and control. Each of us has experienced feeling safe and unsafe and these situations may be quite unique to the individual. Examples are feeling safe or unsafe around a dog, or feeling safe or unsafe in the dark.

Recognising the difference between feeling safe and unsafe is a crucial part of the protective behaviours program. As a parent, you cannot define a safe or unsafe situation for your child. You can, however, help your child to recognise when they may be feeling unsafe by identifying their early warning signs and help them choose strategies that assist them to have choice and control in any particular situation.

When children feel safe, they talk about feeling: loved, warm, secure, noticed, happy, in control, trusted…

Some common feelings associated with feeling unsafe are awful, stupid, stuck, left out, powerless, stressed, shaky…

What can I do?

- Encourage your child to draw a picture of a place where they feel safe – this is referred to as their 'safe place'. Discuss with your child what their 'safe place' looks like, smells like, how they feel when they are there, what they can hear in their 'safe place'. A child may have several 'safe places'.

- Talk about ways that someone who is feeling unsafe could help themselves feel safe again.

One step removed problem solving

A good way to help children practise the skills to keep themselves safe is to play problem solving games. It is often less frightening for a child to pretend that someone else has the problem – like a puppet or character in a story.

By using 'teachable moments' in your everyday lives and planned activities, your child can learn everyday strategies and understand that they have the right to feel safe **at all times**.

What can I do?

- Share some of your experiences with your child, acknowledging that we all have times when we don't feel safe.
- Continue to practise problem solving with your child. The objective is for your child to practise thinking and using a number of safe actions which they can use when faced with unsafe or difficult situations.
- Discuss with your child how unsafe risks could become safe risks if we increase our choice and control for example, being willing to enjoy the thrill of riding their bike down a hill at speed as long as they know the brakes work, they're wearing a helmet and there are no cars or rocks in the way.

"How could someone feel safe even if…"

They got lost at the shopping centre?

A dog was barking at them?

A stranger asked them to get into their car?

Their parents were fighting and shouting at each other?

They felt unsafe when a grown up touched them?

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Body awareness and ownership

Teach your child that they are ***the boss of their body***.

Talk with your child about the names and functions of both the private and public parts of their bodies. As soon as a child is old enough to begin to understand their feelings and name their body parts, they are old enough to have conversations about keeping safe. As they grow older, the protective behaviours conversations become more detailed as appropriate to their age level and understanding.

It is important to use the correct anatomical names for private parts of the body.

Using the correct anatomical names:

- promotes positive body image
- increases self confidence
- improves parent-child communication
- discourages people from touching children inappropriately; and
- in the possible event of abuse, helps children tell adults what has happened to them.

If anyone ever touches any part of their body and they **feel** uncomfortable, your child can tell that person to stop, **move away** (regain their personal safety) and tell someone on their **network**.

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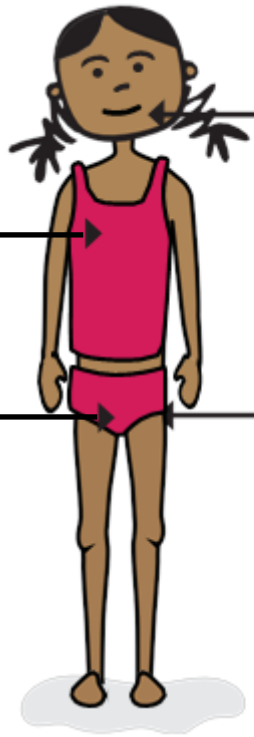
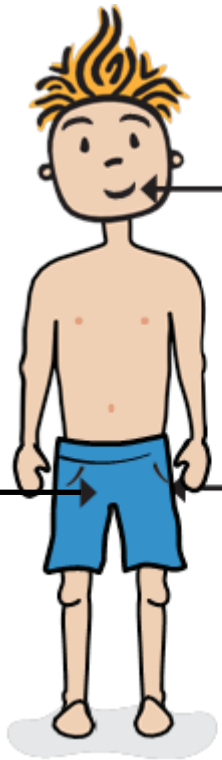
Label the pictures with words for the private parts of their body

The words for a girl's private parts are ***breasts, vagina/vulva, bottom*** and ***mouth***



The words for a boy's private parts are ***penis, testicles, bottom*** and ***mouth***



Your body is special and it belongs to you.
You are the boss of your body.

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Public or private

The public parts of your body, e.g. your head, hands and feet can be seen by other people.

The private parts of your body are the parts of your body covered by your bathers. Your mouth is also a private zone. This means only you get to choose what goes in your mouth.

Discuss with your child whether examples of clothing, places, behaviours or information would be classified as private or public.

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Body safety songs

My body is my body
And it belongs to me

No-one can touch it
No-one but me! ← ***(Point to self)***

And if they try
I'm going to yell, "Stop!" ← ***(Hand comes out to show 'stop')***

And run, run, run
As fast as I can
And yell and tell
Again and again ← ***(Running motion with arms)***

Written by Jayneen Sanders and Debra Byrne
Sung to the tune of *Twinkle twinkle little star*
www.somesecrets.info/body-safety-song

My body belongs to me, me, me
My body belongs to me
From my head down to my feet, feet, feet
My body belongs to me
My body feels like jelly, jelly, jelly
My heart beats like a drum (BOOM BOOM)
I've a feeling in my belly, belly, belly
I'll go and tell someone! (TALK TALK TALK)

Written by Jane Heskett
Sung to the tune of *A sailor went to sea*

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Safe and unsafe touch

Safe touching is important in our children's lives. Children need to know that there are many different types of touch and learn to recognise whether a touch is safe or unsafe and unwanted.

Encourage your child that it is okay to say 'NO' or 'STOP' if they feel uncomfortable or confused about a touch.

Discuss these statements with your child

No one is allowed to touch or kiss you without your permission.

Safe and appropriate touches can change to unsafe or worrying touches. You have the right to say 'Stop' or 'No'.

If someone touches you and it gives you early warning signs and makes you feel unsafe, it isn't your fault. Talk with someone on your network.

No-one should ask you to keep a touch, kiss or hug a secret. If anyone tells or asks you to keep a touch, kiss or hug a secret, you should tell a trusted adult. Even if the person doing the asking is someone you know, it is important to tell.

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Personal space

1 Personal space bubble

This is your personal and private space. No one is allowed to touch you unless you want to be touched and you feel comfortable and safe. No one is allowed to touch the private parts of your body. You should not touch someone else's private parts. We don't keep secrets about touching. If someone touches you and it's a secret tell someone on your network or an adult who can help. Sometimes, a doctor might need to check your private parts or a dentist might need to check inside your mouth. They should explain why they need to do this and there should always be a trusted adult with you.

2 Kiss, cuddle and squeeze bubble

People (like close family members or carers) who you love, are close to you and you know really well can come into this bubble IF YOU WANT THEM TO. Any time you don't feel like a kiss, cuddle or squeeze, it is OK to say 'NO thanks' even if they are your mum or dad or carer.

3 Hug bubble

Other family members and friends who you know well and like to be around can come into this bubble for a hug IF YOU WANT THEM TO. Any time you don't feel like a hug it's OK to say 'NO thanks', even if it is someone from your family or a friend.

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4 High five bubble

Other people you know, but not as well as people in your hug bubble, could be in your high five bubble. They might be people that help you, like teachers and coaches. You might feel comfortable and safe to give them a high five, a side hug or a handshake. If you don't want them to touch you, say 'NO thanks' and move away.

5 Wave bubble

Other people you know, but not as well as people in your hug bubble or high five bubble could be in your wave bubble. They might be people like a neighbour or community member you don't know very well. You might wave and say 'Hello' to these people but you don't usually give them a hug or touch them.

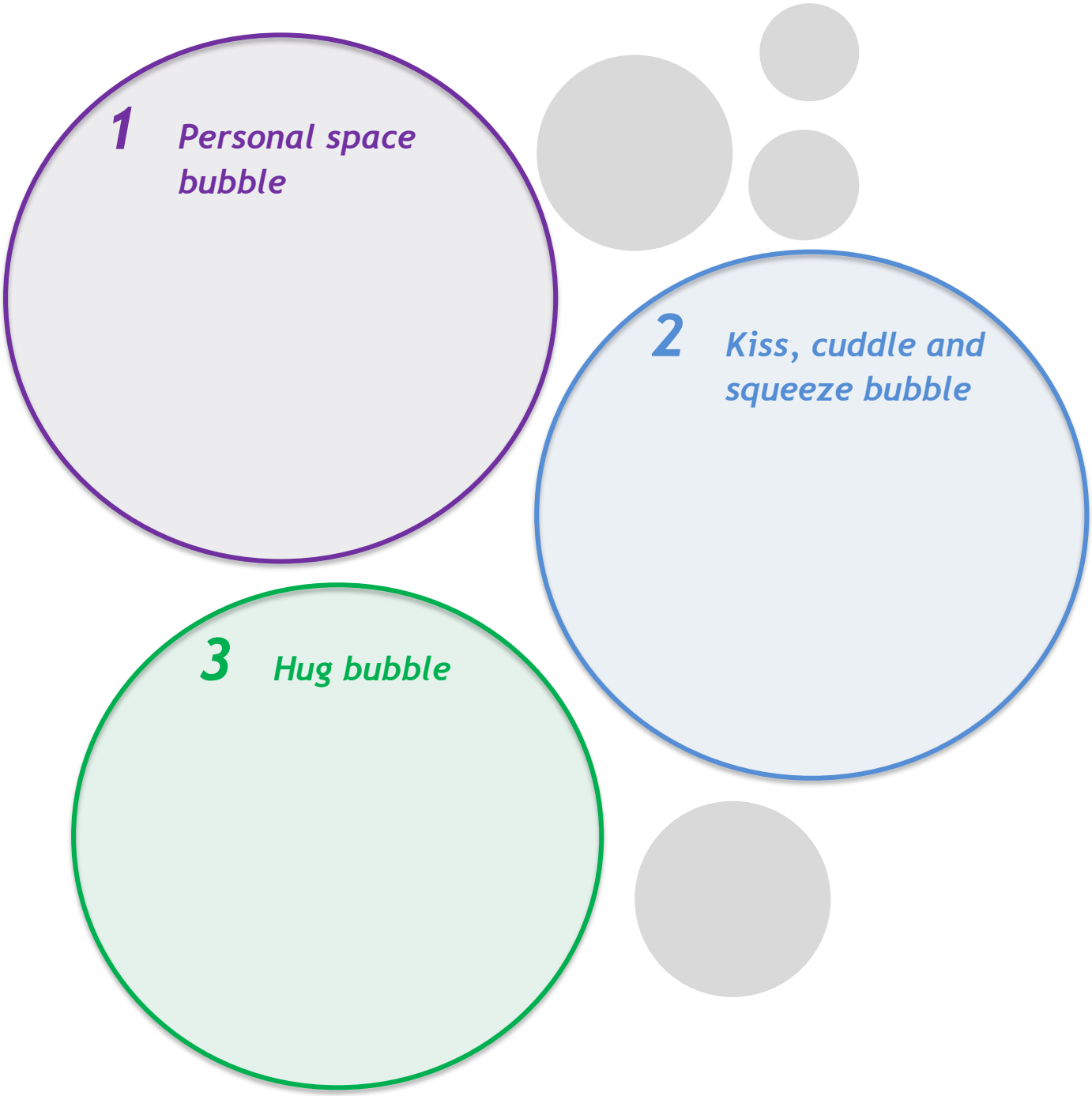
6 Stranger bubble

Strangers are people you have never met before. You wouldn't usually kiss, cuddle, squeeze or hug someone you have never met before. Sometimes you might need to ask a stranger in a uniform for help (like a police officer, nurse or shop assistant).

©iStock

Who is in your personal space bubbles?

- Make your own personal space plan, draw a picture of yourself.
- I am in charge of my personal space. I will respect other people's personal space.
- Who do you like to give a hug to and who do you like to high five with?
- Write the names or draw a picture of the people that are in each of your personal space bubbles.



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4 *High five bubble*

5 *Wave bubble*

6 *Stranger bubble*

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Theme two: We can talk with someone about anything, no matter what it is

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Safe and unsafe secrets

Help your child to be able to identify the difference.
(use small icon - thumb up or thumb down)

Safe secrets usually have a happy outcome, are kept for a short time and are always told eventually. Several people usually know about the secret, e.g. a surprise birthday party or the arrival of a surprise visitor.

Unsafe secrets are usually about actions or behaviours that are unsafe or dangerous, e.g. when someone is being bullied or hurt. They may make us feel afraid, upset, confused, embarrassed, anxious or unsafe. They are secrets where someone says, 'You must not tell'; they last a long time, sometimes forever. Unsafe secrets can involve a threat that something bad will happen if you tell.

If your child tells you that they have a secret, you may find the following questions helpful as a guide:

Do you want to tell me about the secret?

If the answer is 'no', try some of the following questions:

- Is it a safe secret or unsafe secret?
- Who told you the secret?
- Who else knows the secret?
- How do you feel about the secret?
- Do you have any early warning signs?
- Is there someone you can talk with about it?

What can I do?

- Talk with your child about secrets. Discuss whether the following examples would be safe or unsafe secrets: a birthday present for your dad or a friend's surprise party, the hiding place for the spare house key or someone is being bullied at school.

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Networks

A network is a group of adults, chosen by the child, who can provide them with support, assistance and, if necessary, protection.

The most important factor when discussing safety with your child is keeping the communication channels open, letting your child know they can talk with you about **anything**.

It is also vital that you help your child identify a 'safety network' of trusted adults with whom they can talk.

Discussing an 'emergency network' is also important, identifying who your child could go to if they felt unsafe in a place where their usual network of people may not be available. This may be someone who works in a shop, someone in a uniform or a mum with small children. It can be helpful to do a 'practice run' with your child and coach her or him on what to say to the emergency network person if they are lost.

It is important to understand that as children grow older, the situations in which they become involved will change, but their right to feel safe will never change. By using 'teachable moments' in your everyday lives and planned activities, children understand that they have **the right to feel safe at all times**.

What can I do?

- Talk with your child about other adults in their lives. Who do they like talking with? Who could they talk with if they needed help?

- It is best if the child can identify an adult to talk with in all the different places they spend time, e.g. school, sports, dance class, church.

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My helping hand checklist

Use this checklist to help your child identify people they may choose for their network.

	Name of network person	Adult (over 18)	Accessible	Listen to me	Believe me	Take action
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						

What can I do?

- Display your child's network in their bedroom, with names, phone contacts and addresses so that they know how to access their network people.

- Encourage your child to share both good and bad news with those on their network, e.g. your child has lost their favourite toy or they received a merit certificate at school. It is helpful for children to practise talking with their network people as much as possible.

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My helping hand

Have your child write the names of network people on the hand below

My network people will:

- be available
- listen to me
- believe me
- take action to help me, if necessary

Kids Helpline

1800 551 800

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Invitation

Having selected some 'network people' it is important to invite them to be a network person and explain their role. Network letters invite a person to be on the child's network but also provide the opportunity for the network person to decline if they feel they could not be helpful.

A letter to my network person

A letter to my network person

Dear .....

I have been learning that we all have the right to feel safe all the time and that we can talk with someone about anything.

I would like you to be on my Network so that I can talk with you about any worries I might have and good things that happen to me. You can talk with my parents or my teacher if you need more information. If you can be on my Network please put your name and phone number at the bottom.

Thanks

.....

Name : .....

Phone : .....

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Keep asking people on your network until you get the help you need.

Not everyone is available all the time or sometimes the message does not get through to the people on a network. Encourage your child to persist if they have their early warning signs and need to talk with someone.

It can be really hard to keep persisting and you might feel like giving up. Encourage your child to keep asking for help until they speak with someone, get the help they need and their Early Warning Signs go away.

Wibbly the Wombat

Written by Jayne Heskett (2003)

Chorus:
Wibbly the wombat was feeling grim,
His unsafe feelings were worrying him,
So he knew just what to do,

He'd tell his friend the cockatoo,
Who said:
"I'm too busy flying to talk to you"
(Chorus)
He'd tell his friend the kangaroo
Who said:
"I'm too busy jumping to talk to you"
(Chorus)
He'd tell his friend the platypus too,
Who said:
"I'm too busy playing to talk to you"
(Chorus)
He'd tell his friend the koala too,
Who said:
"I'm never too busy to talk to you"

Wibbly the wombat was happy at last
His unsafe feelings all were past,
Keep on asking and telling too,
And you'll discover it works for you and you!!!

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Assertiveness

If someone is hurting you, doing something that makes you feel unsafe or breaking the rules about private parts, you can:

No	*Say* _____
Tell	*Then* _____
Go	*And find a trusted adult from your network to* _____

If someone wants to

Touch my private parts
Look at my private parts
Take photos of my private parts
or
Show me their private parts

Be assertive say NO, yell, scream or shout

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Practise your assertiveness skills

1. Playful No	*Is a laughing no* *"No way"*
2. Polite No	*Is a manners no* *"No thanks"*
3. Assertive No	*Is a firm assertive no* *"No you can't"*
4. Angry No	*Is an angry no* *"NO I don't want to"*
5. Emergency No	*Is an emergency danger no* *"NO leave me alone"*

What can I do?

- Practise using all five NOs with your child – demonstrate how body language and tone is different each time. To say "NO" assertively it is helpful to stand up straight, keep your head up, shoulders back, look into the person's eyes and use a loud voice.
- Discuss different situations and decided which "NO" would be most appropriate.
- Role play the NO, GO, TELL strategy using your child's puppets or toys.
- Encourage and let your child practise their "EMERGENCY NO" at home.

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Make your own family safety plan

Talking with your child about safety, their bodies and how to protect themselves from an early age is an important part of keeping them safe.

Children who are confident, have good support networks and assertiveness skills are less like to be targeted. It is important to educate children from an early age about simple safety messages.

1. We all have the right to feel safe at all times. Reinforce this verbally, visually and by example.

2. When we do not feel safe we also have the right to do what we need to do until we feel safe again. Part of our right to feel safe includes the responsibility to see that others are safe with us. In other words, treat others the way we want to be treated ourselves.

3. Early warning signs are the involuntary, physical response, which we feel in our bodies when we do not feel safe or when we are in an exciting or challenging situation. When we feel unsafe, our bodies may tell us through physical sensations that something is wrong; for example, our heart beats faster or we have butterflies in our tummy.

4. When things are safe for us we have choice, feel comfortable and are in control.

5. We can talk with someone about anything, no matter what it is. Reinforce this verbally, visually and by example.

6. We can use our helping hand network to decide who the best person to talk with is and who will help us.

7. We may need to keep on asking for help until someone listens and believes us and we feel safe again.

8. 'Your body belongs to you'. Know the correct vocabulary for your body parts, including the penis or vagina/vulva. Understand that your breasts, buttocks, mouth and genitals are private.

9. No one is allowed to touch the private parts of our body unless they have our permission. A doctor may need to check our private parts for medical reasons but they must have our permission and we must be with a trusted adult. We are not allowed to touch other people's private parts.

10. Safety rules can help to keep us safe. If we are in an unsafe situation we need to say 'NO' and to GO if we can and to TELL someone about it.

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Additional information for parents

- Keeping children safe online
- Grooming
- Telephone helplines

BY NC ND

Keeping children safe online

SOURCE: T*he eSafety Commissioner, www.esafety.gov.au*

The Office of the eSafety Commissioner has information for parents about the digital environment and keeping updated on their children's technology use.

You can find guidance for using safety settings on your family's web-connected devices, tips for choosing movies and games and strategies for keeping young people safe online.

The eSafety website includes information on helping your child to stay safe online including:

- Protecting personal information
- Tips for taking photos and videos and sharing them online
- Balancing time online
- Choosing movies and games
- How to be safe and secure with the connected devices
- Online gaming and social networking

If you feel your child is in a potentially unsafe situation or if technology use is becoming an issue:

- seek help and advice early
- be supportive of your child and keep communication open – avoid blaming or removing their access and instead help them learn how to use the internet properly and safely
- if the situation involves your child being the target of inappropriate behaviour via a social media provider (e.g. Facebook), report the issue directly to the provider
- record as much information as you can – keep screenshots, recordings or anything else that could be used to support a complaint. Always record the time and date that you collected the information and, if possible, when it was shared.
- when the information involves private images of people under 18, copy the url or web address (not the image) and report it to eSafety using the online report form.

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Grooming

What is grooming?
A person who intends to sexually abuse a child usually takes the time to gain the trust of the child's parents or carers, then gain the trust of the child. The grooming behaviour involves getting the child to keep the abuse a secret. This process is subtle and deliberate and is called '**grooming**'.

Who sexually abuses children?
Most children who experience sexual abuse know the person who is inflicting the abuse. It is usually someone who is part of the child's family or community – perhaps the child's father, mother, grandfather, uncle, step-parent, sibling, neighbour, coach, teacher or friend.

There is no 'profile' for a person who abuses children. It is therefore important that we are open to the possibility that someone could be abusing a child even though they are 'a nice guy', 'really great with children' or 'do so much for the community'.

Rather than rely on our judgement of a person, it is much more helpful to consider *how they behave* when they are with children or with a particular child.

The process of grooming the community, parent or carer
A person who wants to gain access to a child with the intent to abuse, usually exhibits some or all of these behaviours toward a community/parent/carer:

- takes on a job or role in which they are expected to be trustworthy with children, e.g. coach, teacher, supervisor, tutor, babysitter, step-father
- offers to assist the community/parent/carer with child-related activities, e.g. coaching, tutoring, day-care or babysitting that is free or easily available
- becomes someone that the community/parent/carer relies on and trusts
- prefers the company of children over people their own age
- seeks ways to be alone with a child/children and, if questioned about concerning or inappropriate behaviours, provides plausible explanations.

The process of grooming the child or adolescent
A person who wants to gain access to a child with the intent to abuse, usually exhibits some or all of these behaviours toward a child or group of children:

- shows an interest in a particular child or children. The child may have a vulnerability that the person exploits, e.g. the child spends time alone, does not have a strong male or female figure in their life, or has a disability
- creates a special and exclusive friendship with the child, e.g. is complimentary toward them; gives rewards, gifts or money; shares confidences
- allows the child to break rules and tests out whether the child will keep the rule-breaking a secret, e.g. offers lollies before dinner, provides alcohol
- if discovered, provides a plausible explanation or plays down the rule-breaking
- invades the child or young person's personal space, e.g. 'accidentally' walks in on the child using the bathroom or getting changed
- tests out the child's response to non-sexual touching, which may occur in the presence of the parent or carer and be explained as 'accidental'
- isolates the child or young person from their protective parent/carer, e.g. 'your parents don't understand you but I do'
- gradually sexualises the relationship, e.g. makes jokes, innuendo or gestures of a sexual nature, shows pornography, discusses sex
- drugs or alcohol may be used to lower the young person's inhibitions

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- coerces, manipulates or bribes the child or young person to perform sexual acts, e.g. says ‘other children do this’ or ‘this is how special friends show their love for each other’ or ‘if you do this I will buy you a special treat’
- blackmails the child or young person to ensure secrecy and to ensure that the abuse continues, e.g. threatens to tell parents, friends or police of their earlier rule-breaking; threatens to stop the special treats; tells the child that they are responsible for the abuse and that they won’t be believed; reassures the family and discredits the child if the child attempts to disclose the abuse.

It is important to note that responsibility for the abuse remains with the person who perpetrates the abuse.

What can I do, as a parent, to help prevent sexual abuse from occurring?

- **Be alert** to possible grooming behaviours in adults and other young people who have contact with your child.
- **Teach** your child about public and private parts, personal space, safe and unsafe touch and safe and unsafe secrets (all part of the protective behaviours program).
- **Check** that your child knows that they can talk with you about ANYTHING.
- **Know** your child’s teachers, care providers, coaches and any other adults in their lives. Seek reassurance that safety checks have been made of all of the employees, e.g. Working with Children Card, references, referrals. Seek reassurance that an endorsed personal safety program (such as protective behaviours) is being provided.
- **Seek help** and advice if you are unsure or concerned about the safety of your child or someone else’s child.

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Telephone helplines and websites

For adults:

Crisis Care Line - 9223 1111 or free call 1800 199 008

Lifeline -Adult service for crisis and suicide prevention.
t. 13 11 14 (24 hours, 7 days) Text: 0477 13 11 14 (6pm – midnight AEDT, 7 nights)
Chat online::lifeline.org.au/crisis-chat (7pm - midnight, 7 nights)

Ngala Parenting Helpline –supports families of children from birth to 18 in WA.8am – 8pm, 7 days a week t: 9368 9368 (metro) t: 1800 111 546 (regional) w:ngala.com.au/service/ngala-parenting-line

Relationships Australia - offers family and relationship counselling as well as a range of specialist counselling services.t. 1300 364 277 https://www.relationships.org.au/what-we-do

Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC) – services are available to: people of all genders; people 13 years of age and older; people affected by sexual assault, including rape; and sexual abuse; and provides:

- **Emergency services** including medical, forensic and counselling support, up to 2 weeks after a sexual assault –
- **Counselling services** for recent and past sexual assaults, rape and child sexual abuset.
    t. 6458 1828 or free call 1800 199 888

1800Respect – provides confidential information, counselling and support service. Open 24 hours to support people impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse
t: 1800 737 732 NRS: 1800 555 677 Interpreter: 13 14 50
w: 1800respect.org.au

QLife - provides anonymous and free LGBTI peer support and referral for people in Australia wanting to talk about sexuality, identity, gender, bodies, feelings or relationships. t: 1800 184 527 w:qlife.org.au

For children and young people:

Kids Helpline - provides a free, private and confidential 24/7 phone and online counselling service for people aged 5 to 25. t. 1800 551 800
w:kidshelpline.com.au

headspace - provides **c**ounselling for young people 12-25 years. 9am-1am (Melbourne time) 7 days a week. t: 1800 650 890 w: headspace.org.au/eheadspace

Beyond Blue - counselling for young people 12-25 years. Phone and online chat available 24/7 t: 1300 224 636 w: https://www.beyondblue.org.au/mental-health/youth

Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC) - details as above

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