

# STAY SAFE PROGRAMME

The Stay Safe Programme is a personal safety skills programme for primary schools – both mainstream and special. Its overall objective is to prevent child abuse, bullying and other forms of victimisation.

## WHAT DOES THE PROGRAMME DO?

The programme develops children's ability to recognise, resist and report risk situations or abusive encounters by teaching children:

- To identify for themselves unsafe or upsetting situations
- Simple rules to help them avoid abuse
- To respect and value the rights of others
- The language and skills they require to seek help.

The programme also informs parents and teachers about preventing bullying and child abuse, whilst seeking to create a greater public awareness about the problems children can and do experience.

## HOW IS THE PROGRAMME TAUGHT?

Ideally, children are taught the content of the Stay Safe lessons in the classroom

by their usual class teacher, and then discuss the lessons at home with their parents. Teachers and parents work together to ensure that children learn the skills they need to keep safe.

The programme consists of four sets of lessons, as outlined here:

Class	No. of Lessons	Lesson Duration
Senior Infants	9	20 minutes
1st/2nd	9	30 minutes
3rd/4th	9	30 minutes
5th/6th	5	30 minutes

It's recommended that lessons are taught at the rate of one per week.

Additional/supplementary lessons are available for children with special needs. This programme, entitled 'Personal Safety Skills for Children with Learning Difficulties', was introduced in 1996 and was designed for use with children who have visual impairment, cognitive learning difficulties, hearing impairment, physical disability or emotional and behavioural difficulties. See section 'Children with Special Needs', page 14.



### WHAT WILL CHILDREN LEARN?

The lessons teach children about what to do if they're frightened or upset. One of the central messages children learn is that if they ever have a problem, they should tell an adult they know and trust.

### HOW ARE PARENTS/GUARDIANS INVOLVED IN THE PROGRAMME?

It's essential that you're involved in the programme because parents/guardians are the most important people in a child's life, and your child is most likely to turn to you for help when upset or worried. It's been shown that programmes like Stay Safe are most effective when parents/guardians are actively involved in the process.

Before the programme is introduced into your child's school, you may be invited to a parent meeting where the programme will be explained and where you'll have an opportunity to ask questions.

Worksheets to accompany the lessons may be given as homework to your child or may be brought home for you to sign. (The illustrations throughout this booklet are taken from the children's worksheets.) It's important that you use these to discuss the content of the lesson with your child. Doing so will give you an insight into what your child is learning, and present an opportunity to discuss the issues involved in a way more personal than is possible in the classroom situation. It also gives you an opportunity to discuss

personal safety issues with your child and to explain the safety rules that exist in your family. Children have sometimes used the worksheets to tell their parents/guardians about problems.

Before the programme starts:

- Make sure you're familiar with the lesson topics as outlined in the following section
- Talk to your child about the programme. Explain that the programme will teach them how to keep safe
- Decide on a time to set aside for discussion of the worksheets.

## THE LESSON TOPICS

*There are five topics discussed in the Stay Safe Programme:*

*Feeling Safe/Unsafe*

*Bullying*

*Touches*

*Secrets and Telling*

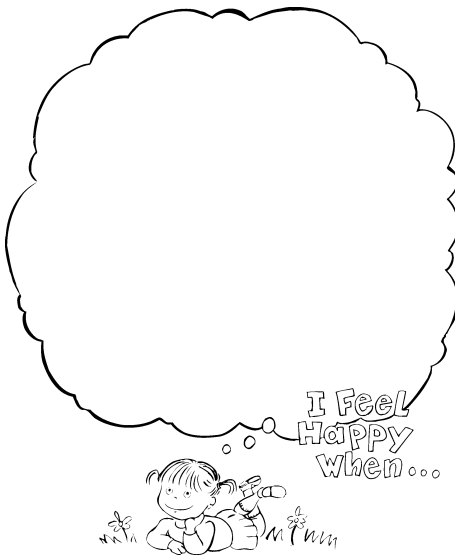
*Strangers.*

Each topic is dealt with in a way that emphasises positive experiences while acknowledging that there are times when children may feel unsafe, threatened or frightened.

Through classroom discussion, role-play and repetition, children learn simple safety strategies for dealing with problems. Children learn that they should always tell an adult who can help. The overall message is that children will learn to:

- Say 'No'
- Get away and tell.

The content of each topic is outlined on the following pages, accompanied by suggestions that may help when you're discussing the topic with your child.





### FEELING SAFE AND UNSAFE

In this section children learn:

- To recognise and describe when they feel safe/unsafe (safe and unsafe feelings are sometimes referred to as 'yes' and 'no' feelings)
- To anticipate potentially dangerous situations
- Ways of dealing with common situations where they may feel unsafe, such as getting lost
- That they should always tell an adult (parent/guardian/carer) about any situation they consider unsafe, upsetting or threatening.

### *Suggestions for Parents/Guardians*

Discuss with your child times when they feel safe and unsafe and ask him or her to give you examples from the lessons.

Talk to your child about the rules he or she should follow if lost or if a stranger calls to the door or on the phone.

Encourage your child to tell an adult about any situation in which he or she feels unsafe, upset, confused or worried.

### BULLYING

In this section children learn:

- To value friendship
- Skills for making and keeping friends
- To understand about the different types of bullying and the effects of bullying
- That there are no innocent bystanders when it comes to bullying
- How to cope if they're bullied - that they should seek help from an adult if they have a problem with bullying
- That it's not acceptable to bully others.

### *Suggestions for Parents/Guardians*

Talk to your child about the importance of friendship.

Discuss bullying with your child. Talk to your child about why he or she should always respect and never bully others.

Ask your child if he or she has ever been bullied and remind your child of the Stay Safe rules: say 'No' – Get Away and Tell. Talk about times when it is safe to say 'No' to a bully, and get your child to practise saying 'No'. Stress that your child should never be ashamed or afraid to tell an adult, even if he or she has done something wrong.

See page 17 for additional information on bullying.

## TOUCHES

In this section children learn:

- To value and enjoy normal affection
- To understand the meaning of personal and private
- What to do if someone touches them in a way that is unwanted or feels like an unsafe touch
- Never to touch anyone else in a way that they don't like
- To respect the rights of others
- That it's alright to say 'No' to anyone who asks them to do something that is wrong or dangerous – even if asked by an adult
- Never to keep secrets about touches.

From 1st class onwards, children are taught that some parts of their bodies get touched a lot – people might shake their hand, pat them on the head or put their arms around them. Children also learn that other parts of their bodies are private and are not often touched, except when the child is being washed or examined by a doctor or nurse. If the doctor examines them, does she ask them to keep it a secret? Of course not!

It's explained to the children that private parts are those parts of their bodies that are covered by their underwear or swimsuit. Children are taught that it's okay to say 'No' to an adult if the adult asks them to do something that is wrong or unsafe. They're encouraged to tell an adult if anyone asks them to keep a touch a secret.

## *Suggestions for Parents/Guardians*

Talk with your child about the types of touches he or she likes and dislikes.

Tell your child it's okay to say 'No' if an adult asks him or her to do something the child feels is dangerous or unsafe. Remind your child that it's okay to say 'No' if an adult touches him or her in a way that the child doesn't like – for example, some children don't like being tickled, hugged or kissed by some adults.

Discuss with your child safe and unsafe touches and the rules he or she has learned in class: say 'No' – get away and tell. Tell your child never to keep any touch a secret and that he or she should always tell an adult.

## SECRETS AND TELLING

In this section children learn:

- To distinguish between good and bad secrets
- That they should never keep a bad secret
- To identify who they should tell if they have a problem
- The difficulties in telling when bribery or threats are involved
- How to tell – and to keep telling until they get help.

## *Suggestions for Parents/Guardians*

Talk to your child about secrets. Explain the difference between a good and a bad secret. Good secrets are like surprises. Bad secrets make children feel afraid, upset or unsafe, and may involve a threat or a bribe.

Talk to your child about what they should do if somebody asks them to keep a bad secret. Emphasise that nobody has the right to make anyone keep a touch a secret, and that they should always tell an adult about a bad secret.

Make sure that your child knows to come to you if he or she has a problem or is upset about something. Setting aside time to listen to your child is very important. Your child is more likely to come to you when they're worried or concerned about something if they know they'll be listened to. Listening and responding to children shows them you're interested in what they have to say and in their opinions.

Discuss the importance of telling, and ensure your child knows that he or she should never be ashamed or afraid to tell if he or she has a problem. Help your child draw up a list of adults who could be approached for help. These should be people both you and your child trust and your child can easily contact. Explain that adults can be busy and sometimes may not properly 'hear' what's being said. Discuss what your child should do if the adult doesn't listen or understand.



## STRANGERS

In this section children learn:

- That a stranger is anyone they don't know
- That most strangers are nice people
- Never to go anywhere with a stranger or take anything from a stranger.

## Suggestions for Parents/Guardians

Discuss with your child the meaning of the word 'stranger'. It's important to stress that most strangers are nice people and that we sometimes rely on strangers in times of trouble but that, at the same time, there are rules children should always use with strangers.

Ask your child what he or she would do in different situations with strangers, such as if a stranger asks your child for directions or offers your child a lift. Stress that it's not rude to refuse to talk to strangers if your child feels unsafe. Discuss with your child the general rules: say 'No' – Get Away and Tell.

