It's OK to Tell!
What Every Kid Should Know About Abuse!

Village Counseling Center
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It's about PREVENTING ABUSE!

As you read through the pages and complete the activities in this book, you will learn about child abuse and how to keep yourself safe from it.

Child abuse is anything that people do, or forget to do, that endangers a child's physical or emotional health and development.

There are four major forms of child abuse:

1. **Physical Abuse**: Injuring a child on purpose by hitting, kicking, shaking, throwing, shoving, burning, pinching, pulling hair, or whipping.

2. **Sexual Abuse**: Any sexual act between a person and a child, such as making a child look at or touch private parts of the body, or touching or taking pictures of a child's private parts. (Private parts are any part of the body normally covered by a swimsuit.)

3. **Neglect**: Not taking care of a child's physical needs, such as failing to give a child clean clothes; enough food; medical care; or a safe, clean place to live.

4. **Emotional Abuse**: Screaming and yelling, and telling a child things like he or she is bad or worthless.

IT'S ABOUT YOU!

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Illustrated by Len Boro
Item #KCB-439
You need to know that ALL PEOPLE have a right to feel safe ALL THE TIME!

ALL PEOPLE doesn’t mean just girls or just boys or just adults. It means ALL PEOPLE. It means YOU!

ALL THE TIME doesn’t mean just at school, or just at home, or just at your grandparents’ house, or just with friends. It means ALL THE TIME. It means wherever you are and whomever you are with.

You have a right to feel safe all the time!

ACTIVITY  Write about one of your favorite SAFE PLACES or draw a picture of it.
Did you know that there are many children in the United States who don’t feel safe all the time? It is estimated that thousands of children are being abused in the United States every day.

Many of these children are abused by people they know, including family members, neighbors, babysitters, friends, and sometimes even coaches, pastors, and teachers.

**A person who abuses children may be:**
- male or female
- rich or poor
- of any race
- of any religion
- of any kind of background
- unemployed, or may have an important, high-paying job.

**ABUSE IS NEVER OK.**

**YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO BE TREATED WITH RESPECT.**

**CHILD ABUSE IS AGAINST THE LAW.**

**NO ONE EVER HAS PERMISSION TO ABUSE YOU.**

**YOU NEVER DO ANYTHING TO DESERVE ABUSE!**
You can learn to protect yourself. The first thing to learn is to listen to your body and your feelings. Your body has an “internal warning system” similar to a building’s fire alarm system. When you are feeling anxious about something, your internal warning system turns on.

When your internal warning system turns on, you may have:

1. Sweaty hands
2. “Butterflies” in your stomach
3. Dizziness or light-headedness
4. Pounding heart
5. Shaking legs

Trust your body and your feelings when they tell you that something isn’t right!

**Activity**

Write down what happens to your body when you feel nervous or uncomfortable:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
The first thing you need to decide when your internal warning system goes on is whether you are in the middle of a **POSITIVE EXPERIENCE** or in the middle of **DANGER**.

Your internal warning system may go on when you try to do something for the very first time, like ride a new bike or join a new club. It may also turn on when you have to do something in front of a lot of people, like perform a dance.

These things are **POSITIVE EXPERIENCES**. They cause you to feel a good kind of nervousness that can actually help you do better.
DANGER is when you or somebody else is being hurt or could get hurt in some way. This includes when you or somebody you know is being abused.

One kind of danger is when somebody else touches your body in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable. There are different ways that people can touch other people. Some of the ways are appropriate and some are not. You NEVER have to let anyone touch you in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable.

Remember, your body is yours!

**Inappropriate Touches**

- A hug or a kiss that makes you feel uncomfortable
- A pat on the behind
- Touching a person's private parts
- Hitting, kicking, pulling hair

**Appropriate Touches**

- A high five
- A hug or kiss from someone you love and trust
- A handshake
- A pat on the shoulder or back
- Treatment by a doctor, nurse, or parents when you have a rash or something hurts
Put a P for POSITIVE EXPERIENCE or a D for DANGER next to the following events that could make your internal warning system come on:

1. _____ Going to a school dance
2. _____ Singing in a talent show
3. _____ Taking a chapter test
4. _____ Being offered a cigarette
5. _____ Riding on a roller coaster
6. _____ Getting hit by an adult
7. _____ Getting in a car with someone who has been drinking
8. _____ Being challenged to shoplift something
9. _____ Reading out loud in class
10. _____ Getting called on in class

(see answers on page 16)

**ACTIVITY**

Do you remember some times when your warning system came on?

Write about a time when you had a positive experience:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Write about a time when you experienced danger:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
It's about TRUSTING YOURSELF!

If you are in the middle of DANGER, don’t forget that you can still THINK. Also, remember that you have the RIGHT to feel SAFE all the time. If you don’t feel safe, you can do something about it. TRUST your body when your internal warning system goes on.

To Take When You Don’t Feel Safe:
1. SAY “NO” AND GET AWAY
2. TELL SOMEONE AND GET HELP, EVEN IF YOU ARE THREATENED, OR BRIBED, OR MADE TO FEEL GUILTY
It’s about SAYING “NO!”

Whenever anybody tries to get you to do something that puts you in danger, you have the right to say “NO!” To really get your point across, you need to say “NO” with both your words and your body. Sometimes body language—the way you act—is even more important than what you say.

**ACTIVITY**

Look at how this young person is saying “NO” to someone. List four things she is doing that make you think she really means “NO”!

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

(see answers on page 16)
The most important thing about saying "NO" is getting away from the situation that makes you feel uncomfortable. Go as fast as you can to a safe place. Never enter a car or a building, including your own house, with somebody you don't feel safe around.

Here are some ways you could distract somebody and get away:

1. Scream and make a lot of noise.
2. Kick something or spill something.
3. Pretend you are going to throw up.
4. If all else fails, bite or kick the person who is hurting you.

Activity: Write down something else you could do to get away.
After you escape from a dangerous situation, get help by finding people you trust to talk to.

Create your own HELPING HAND of people around you that you know and trust. These people are usually adults you feel safe with and who will listen to you when you need to talk to them. Each finger of your hand represents a different person in your life.

**MY HELPING HAND**

1. __________________________
   A person from school

2. __________________________
   A person from your neighborhood or community

3. __________________________
   A person you live with

4. __________________________
   A relative who doesn’t live with you

5. __________________________
   Someone from your church, team, club, or the police.

**ACTIVITY**

In the fingers, write the names of the people who are part of your Helping Hand.
Remember, nothing is so awful that you can’t talk about it! If you are being forced into doing something that you don’t want to do, and if you know that you are in danger, activate your **HELPING HAND and TELL** somebody! Don’t let anybody scare you into keeping a bad secret by using threats or telling you that nobody will believe you or that it’s your fault.

How do you know when you have told enough people? **When somebody listens to you and you feel safe again.** If your mother is busy, tell your teacher. If your teacher is absent, tell your aunt. If your aunt doesn’t believe you, tell the police! Keep telling until someone believes you and does something about it!

**DON’T BE FOOLDED**

Abusers may say things to keep you from telling others. Don’t fall for their tricks! Here are some things an abuser might say to you to keep you quiet:

* “What we do together is our special secret.”
* “I’ll buy you something nice if you don’t tell.”
* “Nobody will believe you if you tell.”
* “You’ll make people mad at me if you tell.”
* “If you tell anyone, I’ll hurt you or someone you love.”

No matter what the abuser says, it’s important that you **TELL**. It’s the only way to be safe. Remember: abusing a child is against the law. It is not your fault, no matter what the abuser says.
CALL FOR HELP!

If you're not sure what to do or whom to talk to, you can call the Childhelp USA National Child Abuse Hotline 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

- The number is 1-800-422-4453 or 1-800-4-A-CHILD.
- Push 1 to talk to a hotline counselor.
- You don't have to tell the counselor who you are.
- The call is free, even from a pay phone, and won't show up on a regular phone bill. (If you use a cell phone or mobile phone, a charge may show up on the phone bill.)
- You can call this number if you live in the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico, Guam, or the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Does your community have places that children can call to report that they are being abused? Look up "Child Abuse Services" in the yellow pages of the phone book. Write down the name and address of one or two places to call in your community.

1. 

2. 
It’s about HELPING!

Someday a friend might tell you that he or she is being abused. Or, you might be worried that a friend may be in a dangerous situation. Here are some ways you can help.

* Never promise to keep a secret when a person tells you that he or she is being hurt or wants to hurt himself or herself in any way. Keeping that kind of secret is very dangerous. Your friend may be in serious danger and need help immediately. Tell an adult right away!

* Never try to help your friend fix a problem or confront an abuser alone. Tell an adult who can get a professional to talk to the abuser. Abusers are people who are breaking the law.

COMMON SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF CHILD ABUSE

1. Unexplained burns, cuts, or bruises
2. Problems in school
3. Fear of all adults or of a particular person
4. Lack of concentration
5. Depression
6. Inappropriate interest in or knowledge of sexual acts
BE PREPARED!

It's always best to stay away from situations that could lead to danger, but you may find yourself in the middle of danger unexpectedly. Think ahead about what you might do.

**ACTIVITY**

Write what you would do if you were in the following situations:

1. You and your Mom and Dad are visiting your relatives. You always get a little nervous when you go see them because your uncle is there and he puts his arm around you and leaves it there a long time. You don't like it when he does that, but you don't want to hurt his feelings or make anybody mad. What do you do?

2. Someone starts chatting with you online. At first you think it's fun to have somebody to talk to, but now this person starts asking all kinds of questions about you and where you live. He or she wants to meet with you. What do you do?

3. A stranger comes up to you and asks for help to look for his lost pet. He is very sad and upset and says he really needs your help finding his dog before it gets hit by a car. What do you do?
It's about YOU!

If somebody is abusing you or someone you know, tell a person you trust today! Activate your HELPING HAND and tell until somebody listens to you. Your feelings are real and you don’t deserve to be abused.

Remember the people on your HELPING HAND

1. A person from school
2. A person from your neighborhood or community
3. A person you live with
4. A relative who doesn’t live with you
5. Someone from your church, team, club, or the police.

Don’t keep secrets that hurt you and don’t stay quiet because of mean threats. Never forget that YOU have a RIGHT to feel SAFE all the TIME!

Talking about what happened will be scary and hard to do, but you will feel better after you share your feelings. More than likely, people will believe you. If they don’t, keep telling until someone does believe you and gets help.

YOU ARE WORTH IT!
TELL SOMEBODY TODAY!

ANSWERS
Page 7: 1-P, 2-P, 3-P, 4-D, 5-P, 6-D, 7-D, 8-D, 9-P, 10-P
Page 9: The girl is standing up straight and tall, has one hand on her hip and the other in a "stop" gesture, has a serious expression on her face, and is speaking loudly.
A Note to Children and Teens

Do you know what child abuse is? Do you know anyone who is being mistreated? Do you know how to protect yourself from abuse?

This book can help you understand the different kinds of child abuse. It tells you what you can do if you or someone you know is being abused.

It's About KNOWING
It's About LEARNING
It's About TRUSTING YOURSELF
It's About SAYING "NO"
It's About TELLING
It's About HELPING
It's About YOU!

All children have a right to feel safe wherever they are and whomever they are with. Child abuse is against the law.

You need to know that...

It's OK to Tell!