

Take A Stand:

Preventing Bullying,
Interpersonal Conflict and Violence

Kindergarten

Teacher Guide

Developed and written by

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“What we do to children
they will do to society...”

Karl Menninger

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INTRODUCTION FOR TEACHERS

The **Take A Stand** Program has been created to teach specific interpersonal skills to children and their parents. Reflecting the direct experience and concerns of children and their families, it has its roots in who children are, what they can do and what they need to know to grow up feeling safe and valued.

YOU PLAY AN ESSENTIAL PART. As one of the most important and trusted adults in their lives, children will look to you for understanding and support in handling these issues. To assist you in this process, this manual walks you through what to say, what responses to expect, what role-plays to use and how to follow up. Each day's lesson plan includes a statement of the objectives for the day, discussion outlines, role-plays and follow-up activities.

This guide, however, is only a tool. You should feel free to use the curriculum in a way that is consistent with your own style and comfort level, and the needs of the children in your group. For example, you may break the presentation down into smaller parts, adapt the role-plays to your community, or change some of the language to make it more appropriate to the developmental level of your group.

Children are directly affected by their perception of their own well being in their environment. If we talk to them in a way that makes them feel fearful or insecure, we heighten their sense of vulnerability. Understanding this is central. Children who are frightened have fewer options and less self-confidence to handle life events effectively. On the other hand, when we talk to children in a way that makes them feel confident, capable and informed, they can actually be more effective in protecting themselves.

Teacher's Guide

To make the process of teaching the **Take A Stand** Program as easy as possible, the manual walks you through what to say, what responses to expect, what role-plays to use and how to follow up. It covers all the common - and some not so common - concerns children express, with the accompanying explanations.

The actual manual is divided into a number of sections to minimize preparation time and maximize your ability to work with the children on the day's objectives.

- Objectives: serve to crystallize the lesson's purpose. These will help you determine the children's readiness to move ahead to the next concept.
- Lesson Plan: the layout of each day's lesson is designed to make the successful presentation of this material as effortless as possible so that you can give your full attention to the children. You may use these as a script.
- **Teacher statements to children appear in bold.**
- Expected comments appear in normal typeface.
- *Notes about what to look for or coaching comments appear in italic.*

Once again, this curriculum guide should be used as a tool. You are the teacher. Your instincts and knowledge of the children in your group is as important as the curriculum guide in shaping the learning process. You should feel free to use the curriculum guide in a way that is consistent with their own style and comfort level and the needs of the children in their group. Feel free to break the presentation down into smaller parts, adapt the role-plays to the community or change some of the language to make it more appropriate to the developmental level of your group.

The Program is most effective when the five sessions are presented about once a week. This allows time for the children to utilize the skills and begin to see changes. Change over time is the goal, and the Program should be conducted on an annual basis. This allows the children to learn new skills as they mature and keeps the concepts fresh for all age levels every year.

Parental Involvement

Parents who are informed about the content and approach of The Take A Stand Program will be more supportive and parental support is a key element in making a difference in the lives of children. The techniques taught in the program will be much more powerful if parents understand and support their use at home and in the community.

A Parent Seminar is one powerful way to make parents aware of the Program. However, most schools will have a maximum attendance of 25% of parents at any parent meeting. Other ways to let parents know about the Program is and how they can support it include the Parent Handbook and take-home activities. The Parent Handbook should be duplicated and sent home with all children prior to beginning the Program. Take home activities area as much for the parents as for the children and should not be skipped.

Parents who have questions should be invited to come and see a session of the Program, or to review the teacher materials. They can also be referred to the Coalition for Children website to learn more about the Program. www.safechild.org

Adult Role in Prevention of Bullying

As soon as children begin to interact with others, we can begin to teach them not to be bullies and not to be bullied. We can give them words for their feelings, limit and change their behavior, and teach them better ways to express their feelings and wishes. **Children do not learn to solve these kinds of problems and get along by themselves. We need to teach them.**

When preschoolers begin to call people names or use unkind words, intervene immediately and consistently. In kindergarten, children learn the power of exclusion. We begin to hear things like, "She's not my friend and she can't come to my party." Respond with, "You don't have to be friends with her today, but it's not all right to make her feel bad by telling her she can't come to your party."

In the early elementary grades, cliques and little groups develop which can be quite exclusionary and cruel. Children need to hear clearly from us, "It's not all right to treat other people this way. How do you think she feels being told she can't play with you?" Kids don't have to play with everyone or even like everyone, but they can't be cruel about excluding others.

Boys who are physically small or weak are more prone to victimization. Making fun, picking on and other forms of bullying need to be identified in their earliest stages. The message needs to be crystal clear. "This is not okay. Think about how he must feel. How could you include him and let other kids know it's not all right to treat others this way?"

Children who are not bullies or victims have a powerful role to play in shaping the behavior of other children. **Teach children to speak up on behalf of children being bullied.** "Don't treat her that way, it's not nice." "Hitting is not a good way to solve problems, let's find a teacher and talk about what happened."

While the Take A Stand Program methodically introduces concepts and skills that are age appropriate and can be used daily as children learn to address interpersonal conflict more effectively, adult intervention and guidance is a necessary part of that proves.

RP Role-Play

Children learn by doing. Role-play is what makes prevention of bullying and interpersonal conflict real for children. There is a fundamental difference between a “concept” and a “skill.” This is important for parents and schools to understand because stories, videotapes, coloring books, etc. only teach concepts. Concepts don’t change the nature of interpersonal conflict.

Role-playing takes concepts and turns them into skills. Actually walking through situations and having the children practice different responses is what takes the information from the level of a concept – or an idea – to a skill that is learned in the “muscles” and will never be forgotten.

It is like the difference between understanding how to ride a bicycle and actually being able to ride a bicycle. Classroom role-play, merged with discussion and activities, enables the children to learn the skills in their muscles. This is what allows them to actually intervene on behalf of themselves or others in real life situations.

The process of teaching role-playing is one of discussion first and then actually walking through a scenario, applying the concepts to real situations and learning how to implement the concepts with skill. This is usually a process of successive approximations based on your coaching.

Most children begin a role-play not being able to implement the very thing they were just talking about. As you act out a situation, you want to coach the participants to communicate effectively, utilizing eye contact, clear and straightforward language and consistent body language. Each time they role-play, the children will improve and feel more comfortable taking action. This comfort level – advance preparation for life – is what will enable them to use the skills in their peer group and community.

Most people are uneasy about role-play in the beginning. But it is really what we do every day. We walk through how to handle a business meeting or a conflict with a family member. We think through how to handle getting the baby and the dog and the groceries into the house. The difference in the classroom is that we act out solutions rather than just thinking about them.

The role-play suggestions in this Program are just that. You should feel free to modify scenarios or create new ones that work for your group of kids. The point is only to create opportunities to practice for life in such a way that kids are really prepared to be effective advocates for themselves and others.

Intervention With Bullies

Children who are bullies need to be dealt with consistently and effectively. Bullying should not be overlooked or excused. We know bullying behavior only escalates as children get older and the ramifications for bullies and the group as a whole are significant.

DO NOT BLAME. Do not get into a discussion about the "whys" of what happened. Your discussion with a bullying child should focus on several key points:

- Bullying is not acceptable in our school, family or in society.
- If you are feeling frustrated or angry or aggressive, here are some things you can do. Then provide concrete examples based on the current situation.
- Role-play or act out the new behaviors so your teaching is experiential. Remember that role-play is the key to changing behavior!
- Ask, how can I help you with this? Who could you go to in school if you see yourself getting into this type of situation again?
- Specify concretely the consequences if the aggression or bullying continue.
- Your objective is to stop the behavior, understand the child's feelings, then teach and reward more appropriate behavior.

No More Secrets Rule

The No More Secrets Rule taught at the younger age levels is particularly important because intimidation and secrecy keep young children from telling about bullying and other abusive behavior, particularly at the hands of older children or adults. This rule is central to protecting younger children and the rule should be applied in the classroom as well as at home.

The No More Secrets rule is an agreement you make with your family that you won't keep secrets anymore (not even in the family) and if asked to keep a secret, your children will say "No, we don't keep secrets in our family and I'm going to tell." Younger children can simply say, "No, I'm going to tell."

Surprises are okay. Surprises are things that make people happy that get told sooner or later, whereas secrets are never told. Children quickly learn the difference, and by age four can respond to a request for secrecy about a birthday gift with "That's not a secret, it's a surprise."

Young children often confuse secrecy with whispering. Explain to them that telling something you only want one person to hear is different from keeping a secret. A secret is when they promise not to tell anyone else.

By age five or six, children can learn that there are many ways to be asked to keep a secret. They enjoy making a game of trying to trick Mom and Dad into keeping a secret without using the word secret. For example, what if someone says any of the following: "This is just between you and me." "Do you promise not to tell anyone else." "You don't need to tell your mom and dad, I'll tell them later." "We won't tell them about our little game." Your children should respond to all of these requests by saying, "No, I don't keep secrets and I'm going to tell."

By age seven or eight, secrecy is such an integral part of children's lives with their friends that they are reluctant to give it up. This includes friendship clubs, secret bonds, oaths, pacts, etc. Essentially, we're allowing and expecting secrecy with peers and discouraging it with anyone older.

If a request for secrecy, whether or not the word secret is actually used, seems confusing or odd or compromising, one option open to older children is to say "I really don't like keeping secrets and I don't want to start now," or "I don't like this idea, let's do something else," or "I'd like to go home now."

Privacy is not the same as secrecy. Privacy means you can be by yourself or keep something to yourself. Secrecy means you're bound not to tell. **Privacy respects individual needs. Secrecy creates shame and keeps children from getting help when they need it. It's important that children know the difference.**

Recommended Materials

Flip Chart

Markers

Tape or Tacks to post lists

Family Handbook duplicated

Activity Handouts

KINDERGARTEN OVERVIEW

Day 1

Objectives

To identify bullying behavior
To identify feelings associated with bullying
Notice bullying at school and at home

Day 2

Objectives

Discuss what they observed about bullying at home and at school
To recognize bullying when they see it.
To recognize their feelings as an observer
Notice bullying at school and at home and in cartoons

Day 3

Objectives

To discuss what they observed about bullying at school and at home and in cartoons
To introduce concept of advocate and role-play intervention

Day 4

Objectives

To teach three elements of communication
To role-play communicating effectively
To introduce "I'm going to tell."
To role-play telling effectively

DAY 5

Objectives

To teach the No More Secrets Rule
To clearly distinguish between secrets and surprises
To role-play and practice application of the No More Secrets Rule
To practice group advocacy

KINDERGARTEN

DAY 1

OBJECTIVES

To identify bullying behavior
To identify feelings associated with bullying
Notice bullying at school and at home

Teacher-Directed Discussion and Role-play

Who can tell me what a bully is?

What are some things that bullies do? How do they treat other people?

Post a chart with these headings. Begin to fill in the types of behaviors as the children list them. Keep adding to the list throughout the program.

Physical	Verbal	Emotional
Hitting	Name-calling	Exclusion
Pushing	Teasing	Talking about
Kicking	Being mean	
Shoving	Making fun	
Pinching		

What bullying hurts your feelings? Can you think of any examples?

Have you ever been around a bully ? No names – just talk about the behavior.

What are some things you've done when someone tried to bully you?

Possible responses,
Hide
Run or walk away
Tell someone
“Don't do that.”
“I'm going to tell if you do that again.”
Go play with someone else

Role-Playing

We're going to act out some stories about bullies and see what we can learn. I'm going to have two or three of you come up here with me. I'm going to give you a part to play. You'll pretend to be that person and act the way that person would act.

[RP] I need two people to help me.

One will be a bully and one will be the child being bullied.

First child: I'd like you to be the bully, to act out pushing the other child while you're standing in line. Remember we're acting, pretending, so don't push hard.

Second child: I'd like you to be the child being bullied. First, show us getting mad and pushing back.

Have them act this situation out.

Discussion: Was that a good way to handle this situation? Why not?

Thank the role-playing children and have them return to their seats.

[RP] I need two more people now.

First child: Now let's pretend you are the bully and you take the second child's toy and won't give it back.

Second child: I want you to whine and try to get the toy back by pulling it out of the first child's hands.

Have them act this out, encourage really getting into the acting part so all the children can see how this escalates a situation.

Discussion: Was this a good way to handle this problem? Why not?

[RP] Let's try one more. I need four people.

First three children: You are going to get together and point at _____. You are going to call her stupid and tell her she can't play with you.

Fourth child: You are going to cry and go and sit in the corner.

Have them act this out.

Discussion: Did this solve the problem? How did child four feel? Did she get help?

If you were bullied in our role-play situations, how did it make you feel?

Make three columns on flip chart. Write down feelings identified by the children in the appropriate columns

Bully	Bullied/Victim	Observer
Strong	Afraid	Fearful
Powerful	Angry	Glad it's not you

How did it feel to be the bully?

List feelings.

If you saw someone else being bullied, how did you feel?

List them.

Raise your hands if someone else has ever bullied you.

Raise your hands if you think you might have been a bully at some time.

Raise your hands if you don't like how being a bully (or being bullied by someone else) made you feel.

Raise your hands if you would like to find a way to not have this kind of behavior in our school.

We're going to spend some time learning about bullies, ways to not be a bully, ways not to have people bully you and ways that you can stand up for each other when you see someone being a bully.

For now, I want you to start noticing bullying behaviors here at school and at home. Notice how it makes you feel or how it makes other people feel.

I'll have some booklets for you to take home to help you start talking to your family about bullies after school.

Activity

1. Send home Family Handbook

DAY 2

OBJECTIVES

Discuss what they observed about bullying at home and at school
To recognize bullying when they see it.
To recognize their feelings as an observer
Notice bullying at school and at home and in cartoons

Teacher-Directed Discussion and Role-play

What kinds of bullying did you notice at school?

Add them to list from Day One. (Coach to get examples of emotional or verbal as well as physical bullying: pushing, punching, starting a fight, sticking tongue out, teasing, excluding, name-calling).

Did you notice any examples of bullying at home?

Siblings are a common response.

Let's learn some ways you can respond to bullying.

RP I need two people to help me.

First child: **You will be a bully who hits to get what he wants. Remember, we are pretending, acting, so don't really hit hard.**

Second child: **You are going to speak up for yourself. When he hits you I want you to stand up tall, look him in the eye and say, "Don't do that." Speak in a clear voice, like you really mean it.**

Act out this situation.

Teacher: coach the second child to speak clearly and assertively, loud enough to be heard and in a firm voice.

RP Repeat this role-play with several more children varying the bullying behavior to include pushing, poking and pulling hair.

Emphasize responding clearly, with eye contact, and saying things such as:
"That wasn't nice."
"I don't like that, please stop it."
"I'm going to tell if you do that again."

RP Some bullying hurts your feelings. I need two more people to help me with this one.

First child: I want you to say “You’re so stupid, you’ll never get out of kindergarten!”

Second child: I want you to look right at the person, use a strong voice and say, “That really hurts my feelings,” then walk away.

How did that feel?

Now reverse roles. This time try saying, “That’s not a very nice thing to say,” and walk away. How did it feel to be playing the other person this time?

RP I need two more people to help me.

First child: I want you to say, “I don’t want you to play with me.”

Second child: I want you to look right at the person, use a strong voice and say, “Okay, maybe next time,” then walk away.

How did that feel?

Now reverse roles. This time try saying, “That’s a mean thing to say.”

How did it feel to be playing the other person this time?

RP Now who wants to come up and role-play? I need two people.

First child: Take this box of crayons away from the other person.

Second child say, “I’ll share with you, but please don’t take my things.”

Would that work?

What if the first child says, “I don’t want to share.”

Second child say, “Give that back or I’ll tell the teacher.”

What if the first child says, “Go ahead and tell, I don’t care.”

Now what would you do?

Now you need to get an adult to help.

Discussion: If you were bullied in our role-playing, how did it make you feel?

Add to list from previous day.

If you saw someone else being bullied, how did you feel?

Add to list from previous day.

How did it feel to be the bully?

Add to list from previous day.

I want you to think about how you're handling things that happen here at school and at home and to watch for bullying in cartoons.

Activity

Draw a picture of your favorite cartoon bully.

DAY 3

OBJECTIVES

To discuss what they observed about bullying at school and at home and in cartoons
To introduce concept of advocate and role-play intervention

Teacher-Directed Discussion and Role-play

Who can tell me about bullying behaviors that they observed at home or at school or in cartoons?

Discuss – remember, no names.

Let's talk about some other ways we've learned to respond to bullies.

Ways to respond to bullies
"Don't do that."
"I'm going to tell if you do that again."
"That really hurts my feelings."
"That's not a very nice thing to say."
"That's mean."
"Give that back or I'll tell the teacher."
Tell someone
Stay away from bullies
Make a joke – "Whatever" "No kidding" "So what"
Go play with another group of kids

Being An Advocate

When you stand up for someone else you are being an ADVOCATE. Being an advocate is:

- **Being a friend.**
- **Being a good leader.**
- **Helping our school to be a place where people are treated with respect and kindness.**
- **Making sure people are treated fairly.**

RP I need three people to help me.

First child: **Take this basketball away from second child.**

Second child: **You don't really know what to do.**

Third child: **You saw the bigger kid take the basketball away from one of your friends, what would you do to help your friend?**

Being an advocate means speaking up for someone else. Here are some ways to do that:

Say to third child: **Walk up to the bully, look him in the eye, stand up tall and say clearly and firmly: "Don't do that, that's not nice." Then take your friend's hand and walk away.**

Now change roles and have the advocate say: **"Let's all play basketball together. It will be more fun."**

How do you think your friend feels if you are an advocate?

RP Now I need four people. Assign roles. Three of the children are friends, the fourth is a new kid in school.

What if your friends are telling a new kid that she can't play with them. You know this is wrong and makes the new kid feel bad. What could you do?

Possible responses:

"That's not very nice, let's invite her to play."

"I think we hurt her feelings. I'm going to play with her."

Discussion: How does it feel to be left out, to be excluded?

How does it make you feel when you see someone else being excluded?

How does it make you feel to stand up for what you know is right, to be an advocate for someone else?

RP I need six people to help me. Assign roles: bully, victim, 4 advocates.

What if you see one kid saying to another kid something like, “Fatso!”

What could the advocates do?

Possible responses:

Gather around the bully and make him or her feel less powerful.

Say, “Stop that, that’s not nice.”

“That’s mean, don’t say that.”

Walk away with the child being bullied, leaving the bully alone.

How does this make the kid being bullied feel?

How does the kid saying “Fatso” feel when you all stand up for the other kid?

How does it feel to be an advocate?

Discussion: How many of you can think of a time when you were a bully, or made someone feel bad with your words?

Discuss specific instances including feelings of bully and bullied.

Did anyone tell you your behavior wasn’t nice?

How did that make you feel?

Did you apologize or do something else to make the other person feel better?

How did that make you feel?

I’d like you to pay attention to how you treat other people and practice making up after you’ve hurt someone else.

Activity

Think of one person in this room you want to apologize to for something you did. Take three minutes to let people walk around and apologize for past behaviors.

DAY 4

OBJECTIVES

To teach three elements of communication
To discuss resources for getting help
To teach children how to tell effectively
To encourage children to tell and list resources for telling

Teacher-Directed Discussion and Role-play

We've been talking about speaking up for yourself and being an advocate when you see other kids in trouble, but who do you go to for help when you have a problem?

Who loves you and cares about you?

List people.

Who else could you talk to if you were having a problem?

Add to list of people.

[RP] I need two people to help me.

First child: **You are a bully. You are the big brother of child # 2's best friend.**

Second child: **Your friend's big brother is bullying you.**

[RP] I need two people to help me.

First child: **You go over to your friend's house and his big brother (second child) hits you.** (Pretend to do that)

First child: **You tell him to stop. He doesn't listen.**

You tell him you're going to tell if he doesn't stop. He calls you a baby.

What do you need to do next?

Answer: Tell someone

Who would you tell?

What if you wanted to tell your mom or dad? How would you get their attention?

How would you know they are listening?

Let “bully” sit down and have remaining child stay with you to demonstrate following discussion.

Three elements of communication

When you have something to say you need to do three things:

- **Use your words – say exactly what is happening**
- **Use your body – stand up so the person knows you’re talking to them**
- **Use your eyes – look at the person so you know they are listening**

RP Now, let’s try telling your mom about the big brother bully.

I’ll be your mom. I’m reading a magazine. Look at me, ask me to stop reading and look at you. Then tell me exactly what is happening.

Practice this until the child has the sequence correct and is using all three parts of communication.

RP I need two more people to role-play with me.

First Child: You are a sitter who is a bully.

Second Child: The sitter is pushing you around.

Sitter, you push the child.

Child, you say, “ Don’t do that. I’ll tell my grandmother.

Sitter, you reply, “ Go ahead and tell them, I’ll tell them you were bad.”

Child, what do you need to do?

**Answer: Tell grown-up when they come home or the next morning.
Role-play telling. Grown-up (teacher) says, “Oh, she’s just kidding around.
Don’t take her too seriously.**

Discussion: What if you try to tell your mom or dad about a problem, but they don't listen or don't understand what you were trying to say?

Can the school help with problems at home?

Can your mom or dad help with problems at school or at the neighbors?

Whenever you have something you need to talk about, a problem that you need help with, if the first person you tell doesn't believe you, you need to keep telling until someone does.

[RP] Let's practice with a few situations. I'll be the adult you're going to tell. (The following role-plays can be done with one child. Set up the story and then have the child practice telling you about what happened.)

[RP] What if someone who is taking care of you is always mean to you? They pinch you and twist your ears to make you do what they want you to do. You want to tell your mom. What would you say and do if she was reading a book?

Role-play getting attention and telling.

[RP] What if someone at school constantly says mean things to you such as, "You're an idiot." "You can't do anything right." Does that hurt? Who would you tell?

Very good, so if anyone hurts you, or makes you feel bad, or does stuff with you that they shouldn't do, you're going to tell a grownup that can help you.

Activity

1. Helping Tree

Duplicate the tree and apples. Have the children draw a picture or write the name of each person who could help if they had a problem. Paste the apples onto the tree and color.

Helping Tree
May be duplicated

Apples
May be duplicated

DAY 5

OBJECTIVES

To teach the No More Secrets Rule
To clearly distinguish between secrets and surprises
To role-play and practice application of the No More Secrets Rule
To practice group advocacy

Teacher-Directed Discussion and Role-play

No More Secrets Rule

Do kids have lots of rules? Tell me some of your rules.

I have a new rule: it is called the No More Secrets Rule.

The new rule says: we're not going to have Secrets anymore!

If someone asks you to keep a secret, you're going to say, "No, I'm going to tell."

Surprises are okay! Surprises are things that get told pretty soon and usually make people happy.

Do you get surprises for your birthday, holidays, and dessert?

The rule is: If someone asks you to keep a secret, you say, "No, I'm going to tell. I don't keep secrets."

Let's Practice:

RP (1 child) **What if your aunt brings a present for your dad and wants to show it to you if you'll keep it a secret?**

Is that a secret or a surprise?

It's a surprise. You should say, "That's not a secret, it's a surprise."

RP (1 child) What if your sitter wants you to stay up and watch a scary movie, but she tells you that you have to keep it a secret?

Is that a secret or a surprise?

It's a secret, and the child should say " No, I don't keep secrets."

RP (1 child) What if a grown-up wants you to come to their house to play a game, but you can't tell anyone about it?

Is that a secret or a surprise?

It's a secret, and you should say "No. I don't keep secrets."

RP (1 child) What if your dad's boss comes to visit and gives you a gift then tells you to keep it a secret? What would you say and do?

Say, "no" and tell your dad about what his boss wanted you to do.

RP (1 child) What if I give you a special toy and ask you to keep it a secret?
What would you do? Will you keep it a secret?

What if I give you \$5, \$10 or a new bike?

Is there anything I could give you to get you to keep a secret?

(To group) If someone tries to get you to keep a secret by offering to give you special treats, are you going to tell?

RP (1 child) What if a bully threatens to do something to you if you tell about his behavior?

Is that a secret?

What would you do?

Would it be hard to tell?

Would you tell anyway?

GROUP ADVOCACY

Who remembers what an advocate is?

Could a whole group of kids be advocates?

RP I need 9 children (4 older bullies) (1 victim) (4 advocates)

What if a group of older kids makes a circle around 1 child? They are teasing her. (Have them act this out.)

What could the advocates do when they see this happening?

RP I need 7 children (2 bullies) (1 new kid) (4 advocates)

What if you see some of your friends being mean to a new kid? (Act this out.)

What would you do as a group of advocates?

RP I need 7 children (3 bullies) (1 victim) (3 advocates)

What if three kids in the class were beating up another kid. A group of you try to break it up but can't. (Act this out – remind then it is just pretend)

Who would you tell?

Make a list of the people the children could tell in the school: teacher, principal, nurse, social worker, and secretary.

Show me how you would tell me using your words, body language and eye contact.

Review

This is the end of our lessons for this year about standing up for yourself and being an advocate.

I want all of us to work at using these things in our classroom, in the school and at home.

We need to remember to treat each other with respect and to stand up for one another.

If someone tries really hard to get you to keep a secret you should always tell.

I want each of you to tell your families about the "No More Secrets Rule" so they can decide if they want to have that rule at home.

Activity

1. Hand out "Is this a secret or a surprise" activity sheet.
2. Send home handout "No More Secrets."

Is this a secret or a surprise?
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No More Secrets Rule

The No More Secrets rule is an agreement you can make with your family stating that you won't keep secrets anymore (not even in the family) and if asked to keep a secret, your children will say "No, we don't keep secrets in our family and I'm going to tell." Younger children can simply say, "No, I'm going to tell."

Surprises are okay. Surprises are things that make people happy that get told sooner or later, whereas secrets are never told. Children quickly learn the difference, and by age four can respond to a request for secrecy about a birthday gift with "That's not a secret, it's a surprise."

Young children often confuse secrecy with whispering. Explain to them that telling something you only want one person to hear is different from keeping a secret. A secret is when they promise not to tell anyone else.

The No More Secrets rule does not say everyone must know everything. It says your children will not agree to keep something in particular from anyone else in particular.

By age five or six, children can learn that there are many ways to be asked to keep a secret. They enjoy making a game of trying to trick Mom and Dad into keeping a secret without using the word secret. For example, what if someone says any of the following: "This is just between you and me." "Do you promise not to tell anyone else?" "You don't need to tell your mom and dad, I'll tell them later." "We won't tell them about our little game." Your children should respond to all of these requests by saying, "No, I don't keep secrets and I'm going to tell."

By age seven or eight, secrecy is such an integral part of children's lives with their friends that they are reluctant to give it up. This includes friendship clubs, secret bonds, oaths, pacts, etc. Essentially, we're allowing secrecy with peers and discouraging it with anyone older.

If a request for secrecy, whether or not the word secret is actually used, seems confusing or odd or compromising, one option open to older children is to say "I really don't like keeping secrets and I don't want to start now," or "I don't like this idea, let's do something else," or "I'd like to go home now."

Privacy is not the same as secrecy. Privacy means you can be by yourself or keep something to yourself. Secrecy means you're bound not to tell. **Privacy respects individual needs. Secrecy creates shame and keeps children from getting help when they need it. It's important that children know the difference.**

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