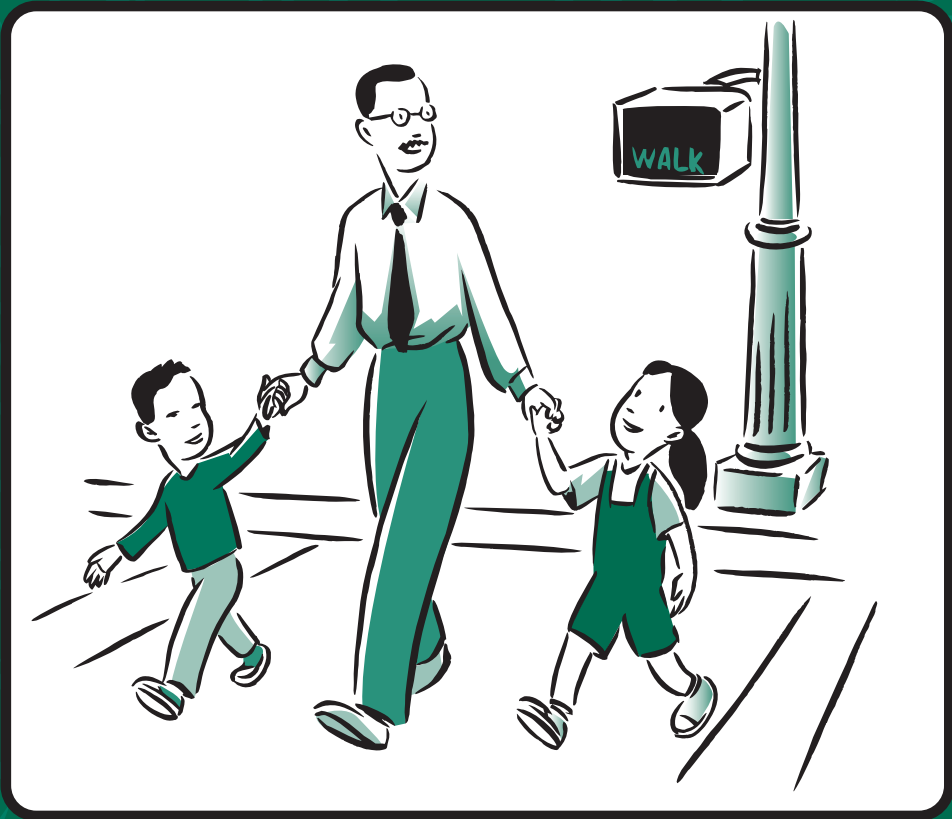


Teach & Talk

Safety & Risks



ETR Associates

William M. Kane, PhD, CHES

Marcia Quackenbush, MS, MFT, CHES

Teach & Talk: Safety & Risks

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William M. Kane

PhD, CHES

Marcia Quackenbush

MS, MFT, CHES



Santa Cruz, California

ETR Associates (Education, Training and Research) is a nonprofit organization committed to fostering the health, well-being and cultural diversity of individuals, families, schools and communities. ETR Associates is a leading producer of comprehensive health education curricula and resources that empower students in grades K–12 with the information and skills to make positive health choices. Learn more about our high-quality materials by contacting us at 1-800-321-4407 or visiting our website at www.etr.org/pub.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

William M. Kane, PhD, CHES, is Professor of Health Education at the University of New Mexico and the author of many books and professional articles. He has 30 years of experience in health education, from the public school classroom to the university level. The founding secretary of the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, he has also served as Vice President of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD) and as Executive Director of the Association for the Advancement of Health Education (AAHE), the American Safety Association, and the American College of Preventive Medicine. He received the 1999 National Educator of the Year Award from the National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association.

Marcia Quackenbush, MS, MFT, CHES, is a licensed marriage and family therapist who has published numerous books and articles on child, adolescent and family health. She has presented at trainings and conferences around the country, speaking to teachers, mental health providers and others in the health care field about ways to support healthy choices among students and patients. As a social worker for 12 years with the University of California, San Francisco, she worked in a program specializing in HIV and mental health. She is currently a Patient Education Specialist at ETR Associates.

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How to Use This Book

There is a considerable amount of material available on injury prevention, including:

- ◆ Resources that review basic strategies to keep children safe
- ◆ Safety rules and lists of things to do or not do around pools, poisons, playgrounds, and many other situations and hazards
- ◆ Policy recommendations from government agencies
- ◆ Suggested manufacturing guidelines for industry

This is all great information to have. But teachers need to know how to best share injury prevention information with children. That's why this book is designed to help you plan and organize effective and meaningful teaching in the classroom. You can use the information provided as an adjunct to an already existing safety curriculum or to create your own program.

The approach of this book is to help children learn general principles for assessing *any* risky situation, and practice transferring that learning to specific situations. This means the emphasis is placed more on how to judge the risks of any potentially dangerous situation and less on knowing the facts of water safety or safe bicycle riding, for example. The child who has these generic safety skills can make better decisions, whether the risk encountered is playing in the drainage after a storm or being around an unsupervised teenager handling a firearm.

This book gives you the following tools and support:

- ◆ **What are the dangers?**—a review of current research to show where the greatest dangers to elementary school students are found; suggested ways to draw attention to these dangers

within the school and community; and rationales for why it is so important to address injury prevention with children.

- ♦ **Developmental perspectives**—answers to questions such as: What do kids think and know about safety, and when? How accurately can they perceive risks? What kinds of decisions can we reasonably expect them to make in risky situations? How do they feel about rules and guidelines for safety?
- ♦ **Ways to reach kids**—ideas for engaging students in an ongoing discussion about injury prevention. How can you respond to their questions? How can you stimulate their thinking when they *aren't* asking you questions? What are the broad goals to keep in mind no matter what the specific focus of your lesson is?
- ♦ **Using the power of peers**—strategies for building a community of students who share a strong commitment to keeping themselves and others safe. Peers have a huge influence on the choices children make concerning safe behaviors.
- ♦ **Practical guidelines**—ways to achieve safety education goals that work with the ongoing demands of elementary school teaching and learning; and reviews of the content that will be most effective in teaching injury prevention.
- ♦ **Ways to join with families**—ideas and activities for family and parent involvement that capitalize on parents' interest in keeping their children safe; and suggestions for what to do about families that may not provide a safe environment for their children.
- ♦ **Curriculum integration**—ways to reinforce important health concepts about safety and injury prevention in other subject areas.
- ♦ **Resources**—where you can go for more ideas, information and support.
- ♦ **Classroom activities**—a collection of interactive activities that can be used to develop your own teaching plan or enhance an existing curriculum.

1 Keeping Kids Safe

Everyone wants kids to be safe. Teachers, parents, the community at large, and children themselves all agree. Yet one of the most difficult realities of our complex world is that we adults are not able to protect children from every painful or harmful experience.

If you keep up with the news, you've probably heard a report about a tragedy striking children—a school shooting, an abduction, an act of terrorism or war—just within the past few days. Such news reports can be disheartening to say the least. But it's important not to let the disappointment, fear or even anger you may feel at your inability to stop such tragedies distract you from one of the most important facts for every teacher to remember: *you have the power to teach your students to protect themselves and save their own lives.*

There are specific tools your students can use to stay safe, smart and confident in the situations that pose the greatest threat to their safety. Knowing how to use these skills will give them greater resilience in an uncertain world. There indeed are situations where little can be done to avoid a tragedy. But these are the exceptions. In most cases, planning, prevention and practice can keep children safe and injury free.

Injury prevention has a special place in the field of health education because it focuses on behaviors that have immediate positive outcomes—keeping children safe in the here and now. It also aims for significant long-term benefits. It can help children establish personal standards for safety that will serve them well the rest of their lives.

Why Talk About “Injury Prevention”?

In the past, people often talked about injuries being a result of “accidents.” Today, safety specialists use the terms “unintentional injuries” and “injury prevention.” The language used is important because it has a real impact on the ways we think about safety.

An “accident” is an event thought of as unforeseen, unintentional, and therefore unavoidable. People say that “accidents happen.” Such comments are often intended to help someone move on after a painful event without being overly burdened by guilt, fear or blame. An accident can be viewed as being “out of our hands,” a random or chance event about which nothing could be done.

But speaking of injuries as the result of “accidents” can ignore and even undermine people’s ability to think ahead, anticipate consequences and keep themselves safe. Accidents usually involve more than bad luck. They are often the result of ignorance, poor planning, isolation, impulsivity or errors in judgment.

This is good news! It means there are steps people can take to prevent the events that lead to injury. Both adults and children can become better educated. They can learn to plan ahead, think carefully in risky situations and share their ideas and solutions with others. They can learn to make good judgments about risks, and take actions to keep themselves and others injury free.

The fact that most unintentional injury can be prevented has implications beyond school and the family. Manufacturers can design products that protect against injury. Legislators can establish laws and regulations that prevent injury. Community organizations can set rules that help children and adults stay safe.

Talking about injury prevention is exciting. It can lead to empowerment and action!

What's Our Focus? Hot Topics or Mundane Risks?

Where is the best area to focus injury prevention efforts? What do we need to teach to help keep kids safe?

If you did a survey of parents, teachers, politicians, community members and students themselves, you would probably hear a lot of concern about minimizing school violence, preventing shootings and assaults, keeping kids safe from stranger abductions and sexual molestation, and stopping random acts of violence that hurt children. These are the kinds of things that are most compelling and disturbing to the human imagination. And these are the “hot topics” we hear about in the news and other media.

But there are other kinds of dangers that are even more important, if less compelling. Statistics on injury show that the events most likely to cause serious harm to children are not the hot topics in the news, but the quieter areas of risk.

How Serious Is Unintentional Injury?

- Each year, 20–25% of all children will sustain an injury that requires medical attention, missed school, or bed rest. This works out to about 39,000 children a day, and over 14 million children each year.
- Unintentional injuries are the leading cause of death in children and teenagers (51% of all deaths). In 1996, this included over 6,000 deaths of children age 14 and under.
- For every childhood death caused by injury, there are approximately 34 hospitalizations, 1,000 emergency department visits, and many more visits to school nurses or private doctors.
- 90% of unintentional injuries can probably be prevented.

The greatest danger to children is not school shootings, but automobile crashes. The risk of drowning is far greater for a young child than the risk of being abducted by a stranger. It is more likely a child will suffer a life-changing head injury from an automobile-bicycle collision than that a deranged driver will deliberately crash into a school classroom.

The Big-Time Threats to Children's Safety

More energy, effort and funding is usually funneled into “hot topic” areas than into the more mundane areas of safety education. Hot topics generate press coverage and reflect genuine anxieties felt by children, parents and others. The result may be that less attention is given to other areas of risk. This is especially troubling because there are clear, cost-effective steps that can significantly improve children's safety in these quieter areas, while it is more difficult to effectively address random violence.

For example, schools can set policies that require every child riding a bicycle to wear a helmet. They can sponsor purchasing programs that provide helmets to children who cannot afford them. These steps will save lives and prevent head injury. This is a scientific fact. But many schools simply do not have the funds or leadership to make such a program happen.

Your Own Fears

- What are your greatest fears for your students? for your own children?
- How are these similar to or different from the fears you had growing up? than the fears your parents had for you?
- Are your greatest fears hot topics (e.g., school shootings), the more common risks for children (e.g., auto crashes), or a mix of both?

Cause of Childhood Injury (age 14 and younger)	Number of Injuries Per Year	Number of Deaths
	280,000	
Motor vehicle collisions	—	1,800
Drownings	24,000	1,000
Pedestrian injuries	47,000	900
Residential fires	350,000	800
Bicycle injuries	1,500	200
Firearms	(10,000 more from BB or pellet guns)	140

What Is a Safe Kid?

Safety is linked to the whole child. It cannot be separated from a child’s psychology, family life and school experience. **A focus on three areas can give children the skills and support they need to stay safe.**

- ◆ **Physical safety.** Children who are physically safe minimize their risk of bodily injury. They plan ahead and make smart choices about risky situations. Their communities, schools and families help keep them out of dangerous situations. They use appropriate safety equipment such as safety belts and bicycle helmets.
- ◆ **Emotional safety.** Emotionally safe children have the opportunity to make connections and explore relationships with others. They experiment with ideas. They can identify their feelings and express them appropriately. Peers, teachers and family members treat them with respect. Safe children do not fear ridicule when they reveal their thoughts or feelings. They turn to friends or family for support on a regular basis. They play and have fun.

- ♦ **Spiritual safety.** Safe children also need to develop positive self-esteem and a sense of belonging to family and community. They benefit from believing that they are special and have unique contributions to make. This is called “spiritual safety.” Children often gain some of these qualities through their family’s spiritual or religious affiliations. They also build this essential sense of having a place in the world by being part of a peer community, such as a classroom. They give and receive care and respect, experience success as a member of a group, practice leadership, and learn skills in conflict resolution.

Motor Vehicle Injuries

- More than 280,000 children are injured while riding in motor vehicles each year.
- In a recent year, more than 1,800 children died.
- 63% of those killed are not wearing safety belts.
- 75% of vehicle crashes occur within 25 miles of home; 60% occur on roads with posted speed limits of 40 mph or less.
- Over 20% of traffic deaths among children involve alcohol. In most, the child was in the drunken driver’s car.
- Use of child safety seats is lower in rural areas and among low-income families. But when low-income families are able to acquire safety seats, use is high—90% of low-income families who own child safety seats use them.
- Children ages 4–8 are safest in booster seats because adult-sized restraint systems do not protect them well. However, only 5% of children these ages ride in proper seats.
- Native-American children have a death rate from motor vehicle injury twice as high as that of Anglo children.

How Do We Do It?

The steps that keep kids safe are pretty straightforward.

- ◆ **Prevent the event.** Prevention efforts are important at every level—among individual students, within the classroom, throughout the school, within the family, and in the community at large. Prevention efforts include:
 - Making the environment safer (e.g., providing a crossing guard at a busy intersection).
 - Teaching children safety rules and skills that help them avoid risks (e.g., safe bicycling clinics).
 - Teaching children to assess risky situations and choose to avoid them (e.g., don't go swimming alone).
 - Helping parents and other adults give children the support they need to stay safe.
- ◆ **Prevent injury when the event occurs.** Planning ahead can prevent or minimize injury.
 - Protective equipment (e.g., safety belts, bicycle helmets) reduces the chance of injury during a collision.
 - Practice drills (e.g., fire, earthquake) prepare children to deal appropriately with dangerous situations.
 - School policies can limit the scope of such events (e.g., adults supervising the playground during recess and intervening quickly in schoolyard fights or when children are taking risks on playground equipment).
- ◆ **Prevent disability and promote healing when injury occurs.** Children who are injured or see peers injured can get support from adults.
 - Medical care and physical therapy can help heal the physical body.
 - Expressive arts such as writing and drawing can give children a chance to work through their emotional reactions.

- Classroom discussions and the opportunity to help others can strengthen children in the spiritual realm—building their sense of connectedness and belonging within their community.

To help all kids be safe kids, injury prevention education must provide a foundation for children that enables them to make smart, safe choices when they face risky situations. Activities and projects that build a sense of community and belonging are among the most important. A connected community protects its own, speaks up to get help when needed, and knows that every individual in the community is important. This is a powerful perspective to have when assessing risky situations or thinking about ways to support friends.

Drowning

- In a recent year, nearly 1,000 children drowned. Almost half of these deaths were among children age 4 and under.
- Near drownings are very dangerous. 15% of children hospitalized for near-drowning will die, and 20% will suffer severe, permanent neurological damage.
- Children ages 5–14 drown most often in pools and open-water sites.
- Most children who drown in swimming pools were last seen in the home, had been out of sight for less than 5 minutes, and were under the care of a parent at the time.
- The drowning rate for male children is 2–4 times that of female children.
- African-American children have a drowning rate twice as great as that of Anglo children.
- Drownings of infants and toddlers often occur in bathtubs, buckets, hot tubs and toilets.

The classroom also offers an excellent venue for guiding children in the development of self-esteem, self-respect and assertiveness skills. Confident children are much less likely to become victims of bullies or molesters, to make careless choices about their safety, or to stand by when a peer is being threatened or harassed.

Some steps to help kids be safe:

- ◆ **Help students feel connected** to their peers.
- ◆ **Facilitate each child experiencing himself or herself as unique** and important to the community, with worthwhile contributions to make.
- ◆ **Give students opportunities to excel** in some activity in the eyes of their peers and build their sense of self-esteem.
- ◆ **Find ways to publicly and genuinely value and validate differences** in culture, ethnicity, family structure and history.
- ◆ **Help children share values** of respect and compassion among peers.
- ◆ **Build students' commitment** to promote a bully-free school and community.
- ◆ **Teach children to notice and trust their feelings**, build a vocabulary to describe their feelings, and speak up.
- ◆ **Provide practice in speaking assertively** to peers and adults if they don't like the way something feels.
- ◆ **Help students develop the ability to decide** when help from others is needed.
- ◆ **Encourage students to identify friends and adults** who can assist when they are troubled.
- ◆ **Provide lots of opportunities to practice** all of these skills.

The School's Role

Schools can choose a variety of avenues to support safety and injury prevention. By taking a proactive leadership role, principals and other administrators can have a significant effect on the level and extent of risk their students are exposed to.

Policies

Schools can establish thoughtful, effective, practical policies that support injury prevention. **These might include:**

- ◆ **Policies about learning**, such as implementing a quality injury prevention curriculum throughout the school or supporting learning programs where older students serve as role models for younger children.
- ◆ **Policies about community behavior**, such as guidelines for intervening in playground altercations, how the school deals with verbal harassment, or ways students and teachers are expected to respond to incidents of bullying or injury.
- ◆ **Policies about individual behavior**, such as asking teachers to serve as positive role models by wearing safety belts

How Safe Are Schools?

- Fewer than 1% of all violent deaths of children occur on school grounds.
- Children are far more likely to be killed in the community or in their homes than in schools.
- Some trends, however, suggest increasing risks for serious violence within schools, including a greater presence of firearms and other weapons on campuses.
- This is an opportune time to take effective, research-proven steps to keep schools safe.

when they arrive at or leave school grounds, or requiring children who ride bikes to school to wear helmets.

- ◆ **Policies about the environment**, such as setting the hours when students are allowed on campus to coincide with hours when adults are present to supervise them; not allowing younger students to play on the high jungle gym; scheduling regular maintenance and safety checks of playground equipment; or setting a rule that students are never allowed near the creek that passes by the school unless they are with a teacher.

Family Involvement

Schools can take an active role in bringing parents and families into the injury prevention curriculum. **There are two goals here:**

- ◆ **Help the family** reinforce classroom learning.
- ◆ **Promote steps** to make every student’s home a safe place.

For example, schools might select a school safety curriculum that involves parents in family activities. The school could also provide a

Pedestrian Injuries

- About 24,000 children are injured in pedestrian-vehicle incidents each year. Nearly 900 die from these injuries.
- 83% of child pedestrian deaths occur among children who are not crossing at intersections.
- For all ages, the death rate from pedestrian-vehicle incidents is twice as high in urban areas as in rural areas. The risk is also higher in areas where there is high household density, low socioeconomic status, higher numbers of children, poor supervision and no safe play environments.
- Children of color are twice as likely to die from pedestrian-vehicle incidents as Anglo children.

resource library of fact sheets or other materials on injury prevention for parents. Parent assemblies or PTA meetings could address common areas of risks, perhaps with a knowledgeable guest speaker like a pediatrician or emergency department nurse.

Schools might develop funding to provide smoke detectors for families that cannot afford them. Newsletters could include tips on things to check for in the home (especially being sure smoke alarms are present and operating).

Community Collaboration

Schools can also encourage active collaboration on injury prevention with the broader community. This could involve having a

Residential Fires

- Every year, nearly 47,000 children are injured in residential fires. In a recent year, almost 800 children died.
- The leading cause where a child is injured or dies is children playing with fire.
- 75% of deaths are from smoke inhalation; 25% are from flames and burns.
- In 2/3 of residential fires in which a child was injured or killed, there was no working smoke alarm in the home. Fires are more than twice as likely to occur in homes without working smoke alarms.
- The rate of fire-related death is 30% higher in the South than in other parts of the United States.
- Death rates for children are significantly higher among rural residents and families with incomes below the poverty level.
- The risk of death is higher for male children than female.
- The risk of death is three times greater for African-American children and twice as great for Native-American children compared with Anglo children.

presence at community health and safety fairs, inviting the fire department to give a demonstration on campus, or arranging an essay contest on safety issues with a local newspaper.

It can also be effective to establish a liaison with government representatives. For example, a city council meeting might focus on community injury prevention, addressing ways to make a busy street safer for children walking to school. A good contact at the health department might be able to intervene quickly if there are difficulties with a local business, such as a gas station leaving solvents or oils out where children have access to them on their way to school.

The school provides a positive role model for other organizations when it takes injury prevention seriously and works proactively to improve safety for children and the broader community.

Bicycle Injuries

- More than 350,000 children are treated in emergency rooms for bicycle injuries each year.
- In a recent year, 213 died.
- 75% of these deaths could be prevented by use of bicycle helmets.
- Most deaths occur on minor roads and within 1 mile of the child's home.
- Over 80% of deaths are related to the child's behavior, including riding into a street without stopping, swerving into traffic and riding against the flow of traffic.
- Riders without helmets are 14 times more likely to be involved in a fatal crash than those with helmets.
- Boys account for more than 80% of deaths and 75% of nonfatal bicycle injuries.

Prevention Works!

While the statistics on childhood injury are distressing, there is good news. Injury prevention efforts *are* making a difference. The overall childhood death rate from unintentional injury declined 30% between 1987 and 1996. This includes declines in deaths from motor vehicle collisions (7%), bicycle injuries (51%), pedestrian injuries (38%), drowning (35%), residential fires (43%) and firearms (50%).

Thoughtful planning and proven steps have had a lot to do with these improvements. More children are using appropriate restraints in motor vehicles. More children are wearing bicycle helmets, and at least 15 states have some form of mandatory helmet legislation. Promoting safe storage of firearms in the home and keeping them

The Dangers of Firearms

- An estimated 40% of American households have firearms, and 1 in 4 has a handgun.
- 40% of firearms owners cite protection and crime prevention as their main reason for owning firearms.
- The most common “protection” weapons are handguns, usually stored loaded and unlocked in the home. These weapons are 43 times more likely to kill a family member or friend than to be used in self-defense.
- 50% of unintentional firearm deaths among children occur in the victim’s home; 40% occur in the home of a friend or relative.
- Each year, about 1,500 children age 14 and under are treated in hospital emergency rooms for firearm injuries. In a recent year, 140 of these children died.
- More than 10,000 children are treated in emergency rooms for nonpowder gun injuries (BB guns, pellet guns) each year.

out of children's hands has reduced firearm injury. Smoke alarms are more widely used, and many states have legislated their use in rental properties, hotels, schools and childcare settings.

Individual teachers will do their best injury prevention work within a broader school and community that supports this effort. But even in the absence of such support, teachers can help students master essential skills for staying safe. Teachers do, in fact, powerfully influence children's safety.

You can teach skills that will give your students resilience and strength. You can welcome them to a safe and smart community of individuals who care about themselves and each other. These are entirely achievable objectives in the early elementary grades, and studies have shown that such steps can and do help protect children.

You have an important connection with your students. You are immensely valuable to them as a caring adult and a role model. Bring your creativity and professional experience along, and you'll have a great time helping your students:

- ◆ Build confidence and self esteem.
- ◆ Practice skills and gain competence in strategies to stay safe.
- ◆ Build a sense of belonging and responsibility to the class and school community.
- ◆ Express themselves with assurance and assertiveness.

Help your students develop the power to make smart choices for their own safety and you will be saving lives. The rewards of teaching don't get much better than that!

2 **Developmental Issues and Special Concerns**

Kids care about staying injury-free.

They don't want to be hurt. They don't want to be limited in their future activities. They don't want to get in trouble. Staying safe is a topic of intrinsic interest to elementary school students, and has plenty of here-and-now relevance for everyone who cares about them.

Understanding the ways children understand injury prevention will strengthen your teaching. Their approaches are somewhat different from adults'. Each child also has his or her unique perspective on the issue, influenced by personality; family and social experiences; and cognitive, social and physical development.

Taking Risks Is Part of Growing Up

Children have a natural desire to grow up. They want to act like older kids. They want to feel like older kids. They like to look good in front of their peers, which often means looking more grown up. This is a normal, healthy developmental process, and every child does it to some degree. One of the places this process is played out is through risk taking.

Imagine a third grader who wants to look and feel more grown up by taking the shortcut home over the railway trestle, just like the big kids. The impulse driving her to take this potentially dangerous risk is her wish to cultivate a more mature sense of herself. This is the same impulse that makes her want to be a good role model for younger children, which we see when she makes her little brother

stop and look both ways before they cross the street at the crosswalk, or when she shouts vehemently at him when he follows her out onto the trestle.

This urge to grow up and challenge herself also leads her to try out for a role in the class play, take on a difficult subject for a science report, or walk away from her family to explore during a visit downtown.

Risk taking is a thrill. Risky experiences affect the human organism at an emotional and even a biochemical level. And risks often bring rich rewards—admiration, feeling strong, getting something you wanted, or gaining a new skill.

How do teachers persuade children to make safe choices in the face of such compelling forces? You can appeal to that same drive to be grown up when presenting your injury prevention lessons. Tailor the content or form of lessons to serve children's desire to be mature, independent, confident and capable. Help them come to their own conclusions about the grown-up kind of independence it takes to say no to friends who are playing with matches. Point out that the commitment to always wear a safety belt represents a real maturity, for children and adults alike.

It is not our goal to eliminate risk taking among children—taking healthy risks is good! But we want to find ways to guide children's attraction to risk in safer directions.

Children need lots of chances to take risks that will serve their developmental needs. Encourage them to play sports, write poems, clean the mouse cage, lead a learning group, paint a new kind of picture, choose a new place to sit for a day. Praise their efforts, regardless of the outcome. Encourage kids who are skilled in one arena to try something new in another. The nature of the risk isn't as important as the reliable opportunity to take developmentally appropriate risks in their day-to-day classroom experience.

Understanding Children's Perceptions

There have been times and places in which children were treated as small, somewhat clumsy adults. In Renaissance Europe, for example, as soon as they could walk and talk, the children of commoners worked, drank ale, and often made their own way in the world—sometimes when they were as young as age 5 or 6.

Social historians can speculate on why such peculiar notions emerged at that particular place and time, but in most cultures throughout history, children have been treated differently from adults. Traditional cultures had rituals that initiated children into adulthood around the time of puberty. Long before the modern sciences of psychology and biology confirmed this, it was clear that some meaningful developmental phenomenon happened when children turned age 12 or 13.

One of the great changes experienced as children move into adulthood is a heightened ability to think in abstract terms. This is supported physiologically by increased perceptual acuity, more strength and greater agility. Adults actually see the physical world and its effects differently than children do. An adult knows that if you try to move a big boulder and it rolls back on you, it could cause a serious injury. A child may not see this so clearly.

This means that when we work with children on issues of safety, we need to bear in mind the ways they experience and anticipate the physical world. We also need to consider the particular ways they think about risks and injury.

There are many areas of elementary education where we want to give children as much freedom as possible to try new ideas and experiences. In injury prevention, however, it is important to take a more structured approach, because young children are not ready to make informed decisions about safety on their own.

Perceptions of the Physical World

The biggest reason elementary school children cannot be given full freedom to assess risky situations on their own is physical. Because children's perceptual abilities are not fully developed, they *cannot* make a secure assessment of physical risk.

For example:

- ♦ **Making safe decisions** on the street or in traffic requires the ability to judge speed, distance and mass. How fast is that car moving? How far away is it? How big a deal is it if I get in its way?
- ♦ **Taking safe action** requires the ability to use fine and gross motor skills at an advanced level. A person must be able to balance the bike, stop the momentum of the roller skates, or step completely back up on the curb after walking across the street.
- ♦ **Staying out of trouble** requires fast, sure reflexes. Do I see that car coming out of the driveway, that dog running toward my bicycle wheels, that baseball rolling toward my path? Do I know what to do to cross the storm drain grids safely? Can I turn or stop immediately?
- ♦ **Integrating all this information** to stay safe requires a well-balanced sense of the complete environment. Skilled adult bicyclists, for example, keep track of many cars at once. They assume nothing about the skill or attentiveness of the drivers. They are comfortable and steady on the bike, and don't have to think about when to shift gears, how to steer over a bump in the road, or how to turn right at the next corner.

These physical and perceptual abilities are not well developed in children. Children do not have a strong grasp of concepts such as deep, fast, hard or cold. They do not judge distances well. They do not have a good sense of the impact their own physical mass has on the world or vice versa.

Because of this, they may believe they can cross a busy intersection before the truck arrives. After all, they feel they are moving very

fast when they ride a bike. They assume that the truck driver will see them. They believe the truck could stop if it had to. Tragedy can occur if any of these assumptions are wrong.

A child will not understand the overwhelming power a familiar local creek can have during a flood, or realize the limited power of his or her own body's strength against such a force. If a child does not comprehend that there is more water, that the water flows harder and faster, that the current is deeper and stronger, or that there may be dangerous debris, we cannot expect the child to make safe decisions about going near the water. Hundreds of adults and teenagers die in circumstances much like these every year, and they have far more advanced perceptual skills.

These same limitations in perception play out in other circumstances as well. Children have trouble appreciating the danger of height (fences, open windows, roofs), weakness (thin ice, broken floorboards in old buildings), sharpness (broken glass, razors), slipperiness (ice, muddy banks of creeks or drainage ditches), decreased visibility (drivers at night, in rain or fog), or distance (from shore, from the family picnic table, from Dad at the grocery store).

Concepts of Risk, Death and Injury

Early elementary students (grades K–2) have some trouble truly understanding the concept of risk. This does not mean they cannot begin to incorporate these ideas; they will enjoy advancing their understanding of chance, uncertainty and hazard. But for the most effective results with children this age, a good decision about a risky situation will be based on a sound knowledge of safety rules and a commitment to follow them.

Older children (grades 3 and 4) are ready to look at the rationales behind laws and rules. They can understand concept of chance and are able to bring a more substantive analysis to classroom activities and real-life experience.

The *consequences* of risks may also be hard for young children to understand. For example, a risk of dying, while frightening to children, can also be confusing.

Children typically go through several stages of understanding about death between the ages of 5 and 10. By age 8 or 9, most children will have developed a fairly mature understanding. But along the way they may believe that death is avoidable or reversible, or that someone who has died will return at a future time. They may have difficulty accepting that death is permanent.

Less is known about children's attitudes toward injury, but children may engage in egocentric, magical thinking, or feel a sense of responsibility for others' or their own illness or injury. They may see illness or injury as punishment for bad thoughts or deeds. In addition, cause-and-effect relationships are not always clear to them (how germs cause illness; how planning ahead might have prevented the injury that caused the broken arm).

Children also see that most illnesses and injuries get better. This is an accurate concept, and an important one for them to have. However, it may make it difficult for them to grasp the risk of disability that accompanies certain kinds of injuries.

Understanding Death

The hallmarks of a mature appreciation of the meaning of death and dying are the recognition that:

- Death is permanent.
- Death is inevitable.
- Death is irreversible.
- Death involves the end of the body's physical processes, such as breathing, eating and consciousness.

Using Developmental Strategies to Teach Injury Prevention

Children are able to grasp different aspects of injury prevention at different ages and developmental stages.

Grades K–2

Younger children need a specific and focused, even directive, approach to safety education. They tend to be concrete thinkers and are very responsive to rules. This can be used to great advantage when teaching them to be safe and smart.

Here are some useful areas of focus:

- ◆ **Rules.** Rules can be stated clearly and simply (e.g., wear your safety belt and sit in the back seat).
- ◆ **Reasons for the rules.** Rules have a general purpose, which is to keep people safe. Specific rules have a specific purpose, such as preventing injury in the event of a car crash.
- ◆ **Consequences.** There are logical consequences for breaking safety rules, and children should understand what these are (e.g., if you run through the hallways instead of walking, you have to go to the end of the line).
- ◆ **Decision making.** Children can make decisions based on the rules they know (e.g., it is against the rules to cross the street without an adult, so it is not a good decision to cross the street right now).
- ◆ **Community, belonging and responsibility.** When children know they are important to their community they feel worth the effort it takes to stay safe. They also want to take steps to keep others in their community safe.
- ◆ **Self-assessment.** Young children can begin to develop skills at self-assessment by asking themselves questions: Am I safe? Do I feel OK? Do I need to ask someone for help? Who would that be?

Grades 3 and 4

Older children will benefit from a somewhat different approach. They are familiar with rules, but are also at a stage where they may be ready to challenge and test the rules in their lives. They need additional practice and information to stay safe as they pass through this period and continue to grow and develop. Skills they begin to build now will help protect them through their adolescent years.

Here are some useful areas of focus:

- ◆ **Smart choices.** Decisions can be made based on the *risks* of a situation, rather than just the rules. This is a more empowering and developmentally advanced position, so it will be more appealing.
- ◆ **Figuring it out.** Children need practice in risk assessment. What makes a situation risky? What can they do to make it less so?
- ◆ **Self-esteem and community belonging.** As with younger children, a sense of connectedness and belonging to community gives children a sense of self-worth and a desire to keep the community safe for others. Activities that involve students as advocates for the safety of others build on this idea.
- ◆ **Chances to take healthy risks.** Because risk taking is developmentally appropriate, even necessary, it is helpful to give children opportunities to take risks in healthy ways (e.g., leading a school project, playing sports, giving a public performance, trying out a new pastime, making new friends, making a presentation to the class, etc.).
- ◆ **Smart friends.** One of the most protective actions children can take is to choose friends who support smart, safe choices.
- ◆ **Independence.** This is also a good age for children to practice making decisions apart from their peers and to learn about their differences with friends as well as the similarities. Practice makes it possible for a child to choose a safer action in a risky situation, independent of peers.

Learning from Experience

Children have many resources for learning about injury prevention. They are creative, clever and able to learn quickly. There are some limits on how much they can understand about the physical risks of a situation, but they do have the ability to learn from experience.

Personal experience is a powerful way to shift attitudes and behaviors. It works well for children because they tend to learn kinesthetically (through physical states and movement) and are eager to know more about the world.

Learning from Others' Actions

Fortunately, children don't have to learn about safety only through their own experience. They can also learn from others' actions and experiences, and save some wear and tear on their own bodies. The trick, from the educator's standpoint, is to help children personalize what they see happening to someone else. An injury or a close call for a friend or classmate carries valuable lessons.

How Children's Relationships Grow

Younger children are most closely connected to family and primary caregivers. As they grow older, friends and school become increasingly important in their lives. They begin to develop special friendships, best friends and an appreciation for one-on-one relationships. By grade 2, they have developed great sensitivity to others' feelings and experiences.

Children in grades 3 and 4 are better at cooperative learning and enjoy working in groups. They may continue to have a best friend or a group of best friends, but enjoy meeting new people too. Clubs, sports and organized activities are fun. They are competitive, and are sometimes torn between their desire for fairness and their desire to win. Their analytic skills are improving, which heightens their interest in solving social problems and noting imperfections and hypocrisies around them.

If a child is cut playing with a piece of broken glass during recess, it provides an opportunity to talk about better ways to approach broken glass for *everyone* in the future. If Jackson is running through the hallway, knocks his head on a post and needs stitches, what can everyone learn about safe ways to move about the halls?

You can maximize students' learning from situations in which someone is injured or nearly injured. Questions such as the following help children personalize such experiences:

- ◆ Anthony was hurt when he fell from the jungle gym. Has something like this ever happened to anyone else you know? Has it ever happened to you?
- ◆ What happened?
- ◆ How did you feel about it? How did other people feel?
- ◆ If you were in a situation like that today, would you do anything differently?
- ◆ What would the smart choices be for someone in that situation?

One caveat when using these kinds of teachable moments is to avoid blaming or stigmatizing children who serve as examples. Instead, be sure they are seen as valuable members of the community with important experience to share. Help them talk about what went wrong and what they and others can learn from the incident.

This strengthens the process of personalization. If students believe they might have made the same mistake as Jackson did by running in the hallway, they are more likely to take steps to avoid repeating those errors. If they don't relate in a personal way to Jackson's situation, they are less likely to learn from the incident.

In a nonblaming atmosphere, students can be more open about sharing their experiences and letting their peers learn from them. Admitting a mistake is often a challenge for children. It is easier and more productive for all if they feel encouraged, supported and safe from ridicule.

Learning from Role Models

An impressive role model can often persuade children of the importance of preventive steps such as wearing bicycle helmets or safety belts. Support children in choosing role models consciously. They can look to older students in the school, admired teachers, recreation leaders, media personalities or a classmate. They can be asked to draw pictures or write stories about someone who has been a good role model for them around injury prevention.

The power of role modeling can go in both directions. To complete this circle, you can have students write, draw or talk about the ways they want to be good role models for younger children.

Learning from Other Sources

Other sources of empathic learning can also provide valuable lessons. Stories, folk tales and movies may be useful in helping children think about safe choices. Current news events can offer teachable moments for learning about safety.

Children can also apply the principles learned from one experience to other circumstances, and teachers can maximize the circle of learning from any incident that carries a safety lesson. If the wagon full of watermelons is pushed fast and recklessly so that it overturns, it's a great time to teach real lessons about momentum, speed and inertia that can be extended to being safe on a bike or skates, or in a car.

Television and Other Media

Television, movies and advertising all influence children's approaches to risk taking.

Television contains high levels of violent content, even in children's programming. Cartoons frequently include characters who batter and maim one another. Children's action dramas show heroes who solve problems by fighting, using clever weaponry, and martial arts. Overt violent content is common in commercials, even for family-

oriented programs. Sitcoms are often driven by characters who demean, denigrate and deride each other and themselves.

The families shown on TV have always been less than real. In the past, June Cleaver vacuuming in her pearls and pumps, the relentless cheeriness of Donna Reed, and the ebullient camaraderie of the Partridge family could make many viewers wonder about their own less than perfect but ever so real families.

Today's TV families still aren't real, but the pendulum has swung from the idealized "happy home" images of the past. Characters trash-talk their elders and peers, slap and shove each other around, scheme to avoid responsibilities, and are driven by selfish rather than community interests.

You can help your students analyze what they see on TV, in advertising and in movies. How do they think these media influence children's choices about risk and community behavior? Do they see the ways media normalize values of disrespect? encourage violent responses to problems? worship independent action? (Action heroes usually don't ask their parents for help.) How is this different from the values in your classroom?

There are many solid arguments for limiting television viewing among schoolchildren. Schools may want to work with parents and

More Is Worse

Researchers have suggested a range of problems linked with children's television viewing habits. One interesting study (Singer et al., 1998) surveyed over 2,000 Ohio public school students in grades 3–8.

- Those who watched greater amounts of television per day reported higher levels of violent behaviors and more symptoms such as anxiety and depression.
- Those who preferred action and fighting programs reported higher levels of violent behaviors.

community programs in an effort to boost reading, physical activity and family activities and decrease hours in front of the TV. The influence of these programs on your students will continue, however. One of your best strategies is to give them tools their talented brains can use to analyze what's wrong with what they see on TV.

Gender and Geography

The rate of risk for some injuries varies by gender, socioeconomic status and geographic region.

Boys at Risk

Boys are almost always injured more frequently than girls. There are three reasons for this. First, boys tend to be more aggressive in their behaviors and more attracted to risk. This is not true of all boys, of course, and some girls are very involved in risky behaviors. But in general, boys choose riskier activities than girls.

Second, boys face social expectations about their behavior that encourage them to take greater risks. They are often urged to be more aggressive, run faster, fight harder, just “do it!” They are teased if they act afraid. They may be derided by parents, older kids or peers if they hesitate.

Another Danger from Television

Almost every household has one or more television sets. Between 1990 and 1997, there were 73 cases of injury from falling TV sets reported to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, 28 of which resulted in deaths. Toddlers were the most common victims.

TVs should always be placed in safe and stable locations, especially in homes with young children.

Finally, there is an important effect of *exposure* for boys, which is simply that boys tend to be exposed to more risky situations, again because of social expectations. They ride with Dad in the truck, and Dad has been drinking. They go hunting with their uncle and are close to firearms. They go fishing in the boat when the waters are rough. They are given skateboards for their birthdays. They're left alone at home at earlier ages than girls. Each of these instances, and hundreds of others, increases their exposure to risk.

Geography and Poverty

Urban and rural children face different types of risks. Urban children have a lower rate of death or injury from motor vehicle collisions because many of their families do not own cars. But they are more at risk for pedestrian-vehicle injuries when they play unsupervised in streets and parking lots. This often happens because there are not safe alternatives such as parks and playgrounds, and, in crowded cities, spaces for cars and people overlap.

Urban children also are more likely to be in the vicinity of handguns, street violence, gangs and drug-related activities that can lead to injury. The frequent use of firearms in these areas increases children's risk of injury or death by shooting. Rural children are more likely to suffer injuries from motor vehicle collisions, to be injured in remote places with limited medical resources, and to experience longer lag times between time of injury and provision of qualified medical care. These kinds of differences lead to different death rates by region.

What About Race?

In injury epidemiology, race is usually a marker for risks linked to geography and lower income. For example, among Native Americans, geographic isolation and poverty both contribute to higher rates of risk in residential fires. African-American children living in poverty may reside in urban neighborhoods where drug trafficking and gang activity are concentrated.

Poverty is associated with specific kinds of risks as well. Poor children live in more crowded conditions and are less likely to have smoke alarms in their homes. Their families are more likely to rely on unconventional sources of heating, and the rate of smoking is higher. All of this adds up to greater risks for fire-related injuries.

Poorer families may not be able to afford bicycle helmets, swimming lessons, new bicycles or skates in good repair, after-school daycare or other proactive means of preventing injury.

Disasters, Acts of Violence and Other Traumatic Events

Through the reach of incredibly efficient global media, disaster has become a part of our everyday lives. What a strange position this puts us in. By nature, we want and need to know what's going on around us. It's instinctive—part of the way we protect ourselves and stay safe. Is there danger over here? Does a member of our tribe need help over there?

This was easier to manage when the danger was a barn fire down the road, or a rabid dog wandering through town. Or when the person who needed help was a neighbor known to everyone. Or when the help that could be offered or taken was straightforward and obvious.

That is no longer the way things are. We feel the distorting impact of the media strongly. Think about the truly bizarre things that begin to feel commonplace: mass shootings at schools... serial murders... assassinations... random acts of violence... hate crimes. The media are drawn to and tend to cover the most spectacular and destructive natural events, the most graphic mayhem, and the most depraved behaviors.

Horrible things do happen every day. But from an epidemiologic standpoint—how often these tragedies strike per 100,000 people, say—they are far less common than a look at the evening news suggests. Many adults are torn between their desire to be informed

about the world and their wish to keep a realistic bead on what's really happening in day-to-day life.

If these circumstances confuse and confound adults, it's no surprise that children are also in turmoil. There are really two directions we need to take in injury prevention efforts with children when we consider dramatic, traumatic events such as natural disasters and acts of violence. We need to do proactive planning to protect life and prevent injury should such an event occur. We also can establish an ongoing plan to help students work through the feelings they naturally have when they hear about these events occurring elsewhere.

Planning Ahead

Schools should have programs in place to deal with the possibility of natural disasters or acts of violence on or near campus. This would include prevention planning; what to do during an event to keep students and staff safe; and what to do after an event to treat injury, minimize psychological and emotional trauma, and promote recovery.

The great majority of students will never need to deal directly with mass violence. Natural disasters such as floods, hurricanes or earthquakes, though more common, will directly affect only a small number of the nation's students (although, if your community is touched by such an event, many of your students may feel it). This is an area of considerable specialization which is beyond the scope of this book, but is an essential part of creating safe schools. (See the Resources section for further information.)

Strategies to Help Children Cope

A more pressing and ongoing, if less dramatic, concern is what to do to help children remain resilient in the face of the terrible events they hear about in news reports. Even when something happens far away, an event can feel very close, very real and very threatening to children (not to mention their parents and teachers).

When violence or tragic injury happens to someone within the community, the effect and the fear are even more powerful.

Once again, we struggle with statistical versus emotional reality. Auto collisions are far more common than stranger abductions. Drownings are a greater threat to children than random shootings. But we all feel less certain and less powerful after random events. Children, like adults, recognize that they have little control in these kinds of situations. This dilemma poses a terrible challenge to children's need to feel safe.

Fortunately, there are strategies you can use to help children cope in a productive and realistic way with traumatic events. Some are part of an ongoing program of communication, expression and skills training. Some are things you might do in response to a specific event. All can help children regain some sense of self-determination and mastery.

Empowering Messages for Kids

It's hard for kids to witness natural disasters and acts of violence, even from the distance of TV news. Here are some messages you want kids to internalize when you help them try to understand these events.

- I know the rules; I know what to do (grades K–2).
- I can figure things out and know the right thing to do (grades 3–4).
- I'm choosing smart, safe friends.
- I know adults who are there to help me when I need it.
- I can ask for help when I need it.
- When I make smart decisions, I help everyone stay safer.
- My community cares about me, and I care about them.
- I know people are watching out for my safety—friends, family, teachers and school.

Strategies include:

- ♦ **Take concrete steps to protect and prevent.** Schools should already have mechanisms in place to keep campuses safe. These would include things such as fencing the school property; limiting access to only students, staff and approved visitors; hosting parent meetings on safety; having clear school policies for reporting unusual incidents or suspected family violence.
- ♦ **Talk to students about what has been done.** Point out the ways the school has created a safe environment.
- ♦ **Recognize and talk about feelings.** Children, like adults, feel sadness, fear, anger and insecurity in the face of traumatic events. Give them a chance to notice and express their emotions.
- ♦ **Find ways to re-establish a sense of personal power.** One of the greatest injuries to children who are indirectly affected by a traumatic event is a loss of control and confidence. Take steps that can help them reconnect to their sense of personal power. For example:
 - Do physical activity or tasks that help kids feel strong and capable. (Play sports, work in the school garden, clean up the playground, wash the windows.)
 - Give students a chance to reinforce their skills at safety assessment. (Am I OK? Do I need help? Whom would I ask?)
 - Use community action and involvement, such as writing letters to the editor, presenting plays or puppet shows or poems to other classes, reading stories at a parent meeting, having older kids help out younger kids, setting up buddy systems for getting to and from school, sending cards or letters to individuals affected by the traumatic event.
 - Move classes back to normal routines fairly quickly.
- ♦ **Offer truthful reassurances.** We cannot promise children that no harm will ever come to them. But we can show them all the steps we are taking to keep everyone safe and express our fierce commitment to this goal.

- ♦ **Confirm their place in the community.** Emphasize the importance and strength of belonging to a community. In most instances of mass or random violence, someone somewhere heard beforehand and did *not* tell people who could stop it. In your own class, help students make a commitment to talk about things that don't feel right and to get help if something needs to be stopped. This is the kind of community that can prevent most acts of violence.

While the risk of these events happening continues to be statistically small, their emotional impact can cause a very real kind of emotional and spiritual injury to children. Since we will not necessarily be able to stop the next act of random violence or the media attention that follows it, our most practical and realistic intervention is to protect children's ability to feel strong and capable, help them enjoy a sense of belonging, and let them know they have a right to be safe in the world.

Building the Foundation

Some interesting dilemmas arise when planning injury prevention education with children. You want children to make wise choices to avoid injury, but they are not developmentally capable of making informed decisions in some of the situations they will face. You want them to stay away from dangers, but also be willing to take developmentally normal and necessary risks. You want them to be assertive and confident, but not aggressive, rude, overconfident or careless.

It might help to think about the idea of a fulcrum that supports and balances the weight of these opposing forces. Direct your educational efforts toward the fulcrum. The goal is not only to give children the tools they need to stay well balanced in their choices about safety, but to give greater substance to the fulcrum itself. Children's decisions will be more sound when based on a solid foundation of developmental capabilities, practical skills and lots of practice.

10 Attributes of Children Who Thrive

Ron Taffel (1999), a family therapist and researcher, identified 10 core attributes of children who thrive in their families and communities and can make safe choices. These attributes appear repeatedly in psychological literature spanning the past 30 years.

All children are naturally more gifted in some areas than others. But children with significant problems in any of these domains are more likely to have school, peer and family problems that lead to increased risks.

1. **Mood mastery.** Knowing appropriate and calming responses to emotions such as anger, stress or anxiety.
2. **Respect.** Respecting parents and other adults.
3. **Expressiveness.** Ability to talk sincerely and descriptively about things they feel are important.
4. **Passion.** Having an interest they feel strongly about.
5. **Peer smarts.** Ability to interact in rewarding ways with peers.
6. **Focus.** Ability to concentrate on a task, experience, goal or relationship.
7. **Body comfort.** Accepting their appearance, appreciating what their body can do for them.
8. **Caution.** Approaching first-time experiences thoughtfully and seeking counsel beforehand when appropriate.
9. **Team intelligence.** Knowing how to work with groups and collaborate to get things done without losing their individuality.
10. **Gratitude.** Having an appreciation of the good fortunes and helpful relationships in their lives.

3 **The Big Picture: What Kids Need to Know**

The big picture in injury prevention

This is straightforward: to help children establish a personal commitment to being safe and build the skills they need to follow through on that commitment. To this end, all of the safety education work you do with children should move them toward five broad goals.

Children need to be able to:

- 1. Notice, trust and express their feelings.**
- 2. Make choices that keep themselves and others safe.**
- 3. Ask for help when they want or need it.**
- 4. Help their friends make smart choices to stay safe.**
- 5. Speak up to help protect the community if someone is making a risky choice or doing something dangerous.**

Once children commit to these goals, the specifics will follow logically. If a child knows it is important for her to make choices that keep herself and others safe, it's obvious that looking for tadpoles in the run-off after a big storm is a bad idea.

When we give students a chance to develop strengths, skills and a sense of personal power, we give them tools they can use to stay safe. Assertive and empowered children notice their environment and their feelings. They can judge whether they need the help of friends or an adult. They can act with confidence in getting that help. They help their friends make safe choices and feel part of a

safe community. These are kids who are most likely to make smart choices in risky situations and least likely to be victimized by adults or other children.

This chapter examines how to move students toward the first three goals of noticing feelings, making safe choices and asking for help. The next chapter offers ways to meet the last two goals through the powerful influence of peers.

Noticing Feelings

One of the most important strategies for helping kids stay safe is to help them learn to notice and describe their feelings. Children need a chance to think about the ways they feel physically and emotionally, to experience a range of feelings, and to learn appropriate ways and clear language for expressing these feelings to adults and peers.

Emotions cause physical reactions in the body. Children can learn to connect physical feelings with various emotions (e.g., a stomach ache might mean you are afraid; feeling that you just can't sit still might mean you are excited). Children who understand this connection can notice their body's responses and put a name to their feelings.

You can help children learn to recognize their own body signals: What does my body feel like when I'm afraid? when I'm happy? when I'm sad? when I'm angry? How do I breathe? How does my stomach feel? How do I think and talk?

When children learn to identify and discuss their feelings with peers and trusted adults it reinforces the importance and relevance of emotions and “gut instincts”—an essential element of teaching kids to be safe. A sense of apprehension, fear, disquiet or uncertainty, even if it is quite subtle, is likely to be a child's first warning of danger.

We want children to notice these feelings. We do not want them to shy away from believing what their stomach or heart or head tells them. Children who recognize and trust their feelings and intuitions will act, and act sooner, when something doesn't feel right.

To help children recognize potentially risky situations, start by teaching them to ask themselves broad questions:

- ◆ **Am I OK?**
- ◆ **Do I need help?**

If they are not OK, they need to change the situation, and may need help to do it. When children ask these questions, their feelings are one of the most obvious and important places for them to find the answer.

To make decisions based on their feelings, children can learn to ask and answer other questions:

- ◆ **What is my fear (sadness, anger) telling me?**
- ◆ **What needs to change so I will feel better?**

Then they can communicate with others and make smart decisions for themselves. These are skills children can learn and practice over time. One of the best places for them to do this is in structured classroom activities like the ones provided at the end of this chapter.

Sharing stories and personal experiences can normalize feelings and help children develop compassion for others. Activities that focus on emotions teach children that all kinds of feelings are OK. Children like the idea that feelings are ways the body sends messages, and that learning to listen to these messages can help them make safe choices.

Focus on Feelings and Situations Rather Than Strangers

Much has been made of “stranger danger” for children. Kids are taught not to talk to strangers, not to get in a car with a stranger, and to tell their parents if a stranger touches them in an improper way. But many, perhaps most children who are exploited by adults are the victims of people they know, often people they trust and love.

While children should certainly be counseled to avoid strange homes and cars, abandoned buildings and vacant lots, they should also be taught to notice the following kinds of feelings and situations, and to talk to an adult they trust if things like these come up.

- Keeping a “special secret” from one or both parents.
- Touching someone, or being touched, in ways that feel strange or uncomfortable.
- Looking at something (pictures, videos) or someone, or being looked at, in ways that feel strange or uncomfortable.
- Having a secret friendship with an adult that parents do not know about.
- Feeling scared, angry or uncomfortable around an adult or another child.
- Being physically hurt by someone.
- Being asked to hurt animals or other children.
- Someone not respecting a limit (you say “stop” or “no” and the person doesn’t stop).

Making Safe Choices

To stay safe, children need to have the ability to make different kinds of choices to fit different situations. In a risky situation, they may need to recall the safety rules they know. They may need some kind of immediate physical help. They may need advice on how to solve a problem. They may need support to take steps that will reduce their risk.

Thinking About Choices

Children make choices about risk every day. But they usually do not pay nearly as much attention to their choices as they do to the *outcomes* of their choices. If Evangeline chooses to run across an intersection without looking first to make sure it's safe, she may be able to catch up with her friend Lupe. That's a good outcome. If a driver slams on the brakes and yells at Evangeline for her carelessness, she feels scared and bad. That's an unwelcome outcome.

When you work with students on injury prevention, you can bring their attention to the choices that *precede* the outcomes. Read stories and stop at appropriate moments, asking students, "Does Rudy have a choice here? What choice does he need to make?" When students roleplay, stop at meaningful junctures so the entire class can make suggestions about safe choices the characters can make.

Ask students to think very deliberately about their own experiences, and those of friends. "Did you have a choice to make? What was it? Are you happy with that choice now?"

These are good questions to ask regardless of whether the choice was a safe or risky one. If an action was dangerous, you can help students think about the negative consequences that might have followed. ("So you chose to join the Sunday bike ride in the park even though your brakes weren't working. I'm glad that everything worked out OK and that you had fun. But I wonder if you can think of anything that might have gone wrong?")

A Range of Options

In discussions about making safe choices, teachers can describe a range of options for children. **Here are some of the most common and obvious:**

- ◆ **Leave** a dangerous situation.
- ◆ **Ask** a grown-up for help.
- ◆ **Get support** from smart, safe friends.
- ◆ **Plan ahead** to avoid risky situations.

Even very young children can use the first two choices. By second grade, choosing safe friends is an important strategy. And by third and fourth grades, planning ahead and thinking about ways to avoid risky situations are good exercises.

Third and fourth graders are also ready to start thinking about ways to change a risky situation. They can figure out that if swimming on their own is dangerous, finding an adult to swim with will make the situation safer. If riding their bikes across a busy intersection is dangerous, they might be able to cross safely by walking their bikes in the crosswalk.

Questions to Ask

A general approach to making safe and smart choices can be applied to the many specific topics in safety education. Again, you can help students ask themselves some key questions that can work in many different situations.

Model for them by asking questions in response to current events, schoolyard happenings, or classroom lessons, for example:

- ◆ Did something go wrong in this situation?
- ◆ What could have prevented the risk or the injury?
 - What rules could have prevented it?

- What equipment could have prevented it? (bicycle helmets? safety belts? knee pads?)
- How would planning ahead have helped?
- ♦ Who could help in a situation like this? (before the event? after the event?)
- ♦ Did safe friends help in this situation? What could smart, safe friends do for one another in a situation like this?
- ♦ What kind of example did these people set for younger children?

Following Through on Smart Choices

It takes skills to be able to follow through on smart choices. To avoid a risky situation, a child may need to say no to an adult, turn away from a peer, or give up a chance to impress an older kid. This is where general confidence and self-esteem become essential.

Confident children are better able to follow through on safety rules and choose appropriate adults to turn to for help. They believe the trusted adults in their lives want them to stay safe. Because they have experience talking with friends and adults about feelings and problems, it is not such a great leap to reach out when a new problem arises.

Asking for Help

For many children, knowing they need help may be the most complicated part of the equation. (This is often true for adults as well.) We can guide children in a number of ways to make these assessments wisely. One of the best ways, again, is to teach them to ask themselves questions and give them the skills to interpret and act on their answers.

Children who know the rules for a given situation start with a ready-made guide. For younger children, this is often enough to

direct them. If they cannot keep to the rule (because of peer pressure, confusion, temptation, unusual circumstances, etc.), it is a good idea to ask for help. Younger children are usually looking for concrete support in staying safe. They turn to adults for help crossing a busy street, lighting a campfire or learning to roller-skate.

Third and fourth graders are more likely to face some genuine moral dilemmas concerning injury prevention. Do they step away from a friend who wants to ride bikes down a steep, dangerous hill? Do they look away when another child is bullied so they don't get picked on themselves? Do they tell on a friend who is sneaking into a neighbor's pool in the afternoons to go swimming alone?

Children also benefit from a chance to think about the kinds of problems they can solve on their own (cleaning a scraped knee, stopping a little brother from crossing the street) and the kind that need adult help (a wound that's bleeding a lot, a neighbor child who is playing with a weapon). Stories, short vignettes or roleplays can give children practice and guidance.

Whom to Ask

Once children determine that they need help, the next step is identifying where to go or whom to turn to. They might get help from a parent, another family member or a teacher. They might look to a friend their age or someone a little older. They might seek out a recreation leader or someone at their church or temple. In some situations, they would want help from a police officer or other safety provider.

Sometimes it's hard for children to know who can help them. The best way to hone your students' skills in choosing well is to give them lots of opportunities to practice. Encourage them to talk to people in their lives about all kinds of things. Children who have experience talking about feelings, thoughts and questions find it easier to ask for help.

You can also help them think about and describe the kind of support they have gotten from others in the past. Who helps them when they're ill or injured? Whom do they like to be with if they're sad? Whom do they like to share good news with? Whom do they feel happy around? In this way children clarify for themselves which people they can turn to and rely on when they need help with safety concerns.

How to Ask

Children also need practical experience in *how* to ask for help. They gain this by learning to talk about what they are feeling (afraid, unsure, angry) and describing what they need to feel safe.

Classroom activities can give students practice in naming these things. For example, students might draw a picture of a place that feels safe and secure for them. Older students could write an essay describing a place that would be safe for a character in a story.

Look for opportunities to use language describing feelings. When the class hears a story, ask questions such as "How do you think the puppy felt when they put that big collar around his neck?" or "Why were the children laughing after they got down from the mountain?"

Practical skills in how to ask for help are also important. Students can roleplay asking friends for help or write scripts of ways a child could ask a grown-up for help. All children should understand how to call 9-1-1.

In class, they can practice using a real (but disconnected) telephone. They also need to know how to turn on cordless and cell phones, even if they do not have these kinds of phones in their homes.

Classroom Activities

The following activities can be used to reinforce the concepts discussed in this chapter. Feel free to adapt activities to suit the needs of your students and classroom.

When I Feel This, My Body Feels That

This activity helps students connect physical sensations to emotions and learn words and language that help them talk about feelings.

- Use stories, vignettes or pictures that suggest different emotions. Ask students to think about the feelings a character is probably having. Explain that a person's body will often tell him or her about feelings. Ask students to describe the way the character might feel in his or her body. Then have them identify what the emotion could be.
 - Then ask students to imagine some of their own body feelings in different situations. *Examples:*
 - Imagine waiting in line to ride on a big roller coaster. How does your body feel?
 - Your body is telling you you're having an emotion or a feeling. What is it?
 - Some other situations you can ask students to imagine:
 - Getting exactly the present you wanted for your birthday.
 - Seeing your best friend again after she's been away for 3 weeks.
 - Having a pet die.
 - Talking to your dad after you broke something important to him.
 - Doing a great job on your book report.
-

This Person Is Feeling...

This activity helps students practice reading another person's emotions through facial expressions and physical gestures.

- Bring in some pictures from magazines that show people expressing different feelings: happy, scared, angry, tired, sad, excited, and so on.
 - Ask students to identify what the person in one of the pictures is feeling. How do they know this? Does everyone agree that this is the feeling the person is having, or are there other ideas?
 - Have students turn to a neighbor and demonstrate the way they would show the feeling being discussed.
 - After you have gone through several different feelings, have students work in small groups to take turns showing facial expressions and body gestures for a feeling, and having the others guess what the feeling is.
-

I Know the Rule

This activity helps students identify the rules in situations that pose a risk.

- Present short vignettes where a character comes to a decision point, such as wanting to cross the street, play with someone who's playing with matches, or go wading in the neighbor's pool.
 - Ask students: What are the rules? What should the character do?
 - Have students make up their own vignettes for the class or in small groups, or talk about something that really happened in their lives.
-

Making Choices

This activity helps students explore the kinds of choices people can make in risky situations, and decide what the good choices are.

- Present forced-choice vignettes where a character comes to the proverbial “fork in the road.” *Examples:*
 - Does he cross the street with his friends, even though no grown-up is around, or does he wait on the corner while they walk away?
 - Does she speak up when she sees one student picking on another, or does she walk away and hope no one picks on her?
 - Does he hang around his friends while they’re setting off fire-crackers, or go somewhere else until they’re done?
 - Does she strike out when another girl hits her first, or does she leave the situation?
 - Ask students to talk about these situations and what they think a good choice would be.
 - Ask them to talk in small groups about choices like this that they themselves have made.
-

Does This Person Need Help?

This activity helps students distinguish between situations they can solve on their own and those that require adult attention.

- Present pictures from magazines or storybooks or read short vignettes that describe a situation where a child is facing a problem. Have some things children can manage on their own (e.g., cleaning up a scraped knee, sweeping up some spilled

sugar, a peer calling someone a name), and some that would need some adult help (e.g., cleaning up broken glass, seeing a fire, being harassed in an ongoing way).

- For each situation, have students decide whether the character can handle the situation on his or her own or should ask someone else to help.
 - Students who enjoy small group work could make these decisions in groups.
-

Who Can Help Me?

This activity helps students identify specific people who could help them in different situations.

- Give students a list of situations where they might need help. For younger students, include things such as:
 - I need to cross the street.
 - My tummy hurts.
 - I need help on a school report.
 - Another kid was pushing me around.
 - My friend is mad at me.

For older students, add some more complicated situations, such as: I have a friend in trouble and I'm not sure how to help.

- Review the list and ask students to name 1 or 2 people they could go to for help in this situation. Older students could do this using a written worksheet.
-

Calling 9-1-1

This activity allows students to practice making 9-1-1 calls and giving appropriate information to the dispatcher.

- Bring a telephone to class and have students practice making 9-1-1 calls (with the phone unplugged). You can roleplay the dispatcher, asking the caller for facts such as name, address and what is happening. You might also see if you could get a real dispatcher from the police department to come to the school and roleplay with students.
 - Review the kinds of situations where people should call 9-1-1.
 - Have children practice turning on different models of cell phones and cordless phones as well.
-

4 **The Power of Peers: Safe Friends and Communities**

When children feel that their peers and community value safety they are more likely to make safe choices. This chapter addresses the fourth and fifth goals identified at the beginning of Chapter 3.

Children need to be able to:

- 4. Help their friends make smart choices to stay safe.**
- 5. Speak up to help protect the community if someone is making a risky choice or doing something dangerous.**

The sense that making smart, safe choices is something friends do for one another will go a long way toward keeping your students safe, both in and out of school. By bringing conscious attention to the experiences your students have with each other—to their sense of community, belonging and responsibility—you can greatly enhance the effectiveness of your injury prevention teaching.

Injury prevention offers great opportunities for peer collaboration. Every kid has some experience with taking risks, and every kid has expertise on what happens when you make a choice that isn't safe. Peer projects addressing injury prevention are wonderful vehicles for building a sense of community among your students, that feeling of belonging that is so essential to children's safety. And problem solving with peers around safety issues provides a powerful means for students to build cognitive and social skills at the same time they build safety skills.

Choosing Safe Friends

The kinds of friends kids choose can have a great impact on their risk-taking behaviors. Do they choose friends who are committed to making smart choices? Then they are more likely to make smart choices themselves. Do they belong to a group that pursues the thrill of dangerous risks? So will they. Do they feel as if they're "stuck" in a "good kids" group and long for the day they'll be a member of a more popular or intriguing group of risk-takers? Doing something showy and dangerous just might be a way to break into that new circle.

How do you support students in ways that strengthen their connections to friends and peers who value safety? Give them opportunities in classroom activities to state their values clearly and emphatically to their peers.

Students can use stories, pictures and testimonials about their own friends to highlight the ways friends help friends stay safe. Forced-choice activities can help third and fourth graders think about some of the more complex situations they are likely to face. For example, students could read a roleplay or vignette that comes up to a decision point. Do you tell on a friend who's doing something risky? Do you go along with a group when they're breaking a rule? Students can talk in groups about the possible choices and their consequences.

Classroom activities like these set and reinforce the community standard that good friends are smart and safe. This helps children choose these kinds of companions and strive to be this kind of friend.

Protecting the Community

There are wonderful benefits to helping children cultivate a sense of community. Children are reassured when they know they belong to something with a bigger purpose (and a greater understanding) than they alone can have. When they see that they make unique

contributions to their community, their sense of self-worth is strengthened. When children (or adults) know they are valued by the community, they can more easily take steps to keep themselves and others safe. The sense that they matter to others allows them to matter to themselves.

These are some of the reasons to place an emphasis on the ability to speak up if someone is acting in a way that endangers the community. You want your students to think in community rather than individual terms. You want them to reflect on the ways their own behaviors affect other people's lives. You want them to care, and to gain comfort and meaning from caring and belonging.

But there's another pragmatic reason to pursue this fifth goal. Speaking up helps people take steps to prevent injuries. In some cases, it can help stop full-fledged disasters. Children with a sense of belonging and responsibility will not simply walk away from classmates who are setting trash-can fires in the bathroom, or an older student picking on someone younger. They will recognize what's happening and have to think about the situation. Making a conscious choice *not* to tell an adult will take some effort, if a child has made a *commitment* to speak up.

It takes skill and determination for children to decide to speak up. You want students to have many chances to practice and experience it. This can help prevent everyday dangers, such as bullying, setting fires or riding bicycles dangerously. It can also help in less common or extraordinary cases. A child who is skilled at speaking up to keep the community safe will not be silent when a classmate brings a gun to school, plots to use an explosive or aggressively stalks a younger child or peer.

Classroom activities can provide opportunities for students to both give to and receive from the community, feel special among their peers, and appreciate the specialness of others.

Shaping Values and Norms

The use of values and norms in peer activities in the classroom provides an excellent framework for developing students' sense of belonging to a community and for strengthening their commitment to choose safe friends and be safe friends themselves.

Values are the personal beliefs children develop that help guide their behavior. Many of their values come to them through parents' beliefs and family experiences. Children's values are also influenced by popular culture, including television, movies, music and retail advertising. School lessons make an important contribution as well. Children are intrigued by questions about right and wrong, good

Reaching Out to the Outsiders

A rash of student shootings in schools has drawn attention in recent years. When we look at the children who are the perpetrators in these instances, virtually all of them have suffered severely from being social outcasts.

They may have been harassed and bullied by other students. They may have been insulted or humiliated in front of peers. They may have felt they had nothing special to offer within the context and culture of their school or community.

Children in these circumstances often begin to embrace the identity and role of being an outsider. They don't share the values of their community, and they don't want to. The idea of committing an outrageous and violent act begins to feel gratifying and appealing.

Not every child who is an outcast will go on to commit heinous crimes. But certainly one important preventive effort is for families, schools and communities to identify such students, offer support, and do everything possible to give every student a chance to belong and succeed.

and bad, and how one follows through on responsibility to family, friends and community.

When you ask students to work with their peers in injury prevention, you give them an opportunity to examine and construct a foundation of personal beliefs about risk taking. How do I make choices about risk? How important is it to me to make safe choices? What would I do to help a friend stay safe? How far will I go, and what social costs will I bear, to keep myself safe?

Norms are what children understand about other people's values and behaviors. Children's *perception* of social norms can have a tremendous influence on their ideas and values about injury prevention. What behaviors do they think are typical? What do they imagine adults, older kids or same-age peers would do in a given situation? What do they believe other students are doing about safety belts and bicycle helmets? What would the sixth graders do if they had a chance to go swimming but there was no adult around to supervise? What would the other third graders do if they knew someone was playing with matches at recess?

When students talk with their peers about values, and listen to what their peers say in response, they get a sense of actual social norms. They find out that most children:

- ◆ Want to be safe.
- ◆ Like the idea of being a good role model for younger children.
- ◆ Want to protect their family and friends.
- ◆ Are disturbed when they see people taking risks that could hurt themselves or others.

But children are also conflicted about these things. They like the thrill of taking risks. They don't want to look like babies. They want to be admired and looked up to by other kids. One reason taking risks can be so compelling for children is that it often offers powerful peer reinforcements.

Structured classroom activities basically give you a chance to stack the deck in favor of safe choices. You can offer children opportunities to speak up about values that weigh in on the side of wisdom and safety. You can help them articulate why caring for others is important. They can make safety-conscious public declarations within the classroom and school by wearing buttons, signing contracts or posting drawings.

Then, when Miranda is sitting on her skateboard at the top of a too steep hill and some older kids are urging her to try to ride down, she has options. She knows the older kids will tease her if she walks away, and she won't like that.

But she also knows she is part of a community of peers who will praise her for taking care of herself, for being a good role model for

Helping Kids Belong

Some children have a harder time feeling connected to others. They are less popular. They are not chosen for teams or groups. They may not have a best friend.

Most of these children welcome help at improving their social success. Behavioral programs focusing on social-relationship skills have been successful in improving the acceptance of such children among peers.

You can use some of these same principles in peer-oriented classroom activities. Have children talk about the qualities that make them want to be friends with someone. Build a sense of community responsibility, so children who are more popular naturally make the effort to include those who are less so.

Children who do not have best friends can begin to develop closer friendships by spending time in classroom peer groups. Let children work in a variety of groups. Kids learn different things about social relationships in groups with close friends, with acquaintances, and with people who are casual friends.

younger kids, and for doing the most grown-up thing anyone could do in the circumstances. She may not make the safer choice, but the *possibility* that she will is much stronger when values and norms supporting safety are in place.

In Practice: Values and Norms That Work

There are a number of values and norms that are particularly effective in keeping kids safe. You can enhance your injury prevention efforts by promoting certain values among your students and giving them a chance to see how these values are supported by peer attitudes and behaviors. This is a powerful way to help injury prevention skills “stick.”

Following are some of the most useful values in injury prevention, along with the kinds of norms that reinforce them. The values are phrased in terms of personal thoughts and ideas. The norms are demonstrated by group behaviors. Guidelines for the classroom offer ways to clarify, consolidate and reinforce these norms.

Value: I know what is expected of me.

Norms:

- We follow the rules and routines of our class (our school, the free reading period, lunch, recess, etc.).
- We expect consequences when we don't follow the rules.

Classroom Guidelines:

- Be clear about rules and routines.
 - Clarify misunderstandings promptly.
 - Use logical consequences for infractions of rules.
-

Value: I respect differences.

Norms:

- We learn about each other's differences.
- We treat each other with respect.
- We look for ways we are similar to and different from other people.
- We teach others about things we know; we learn from others when they know things we don't.

Classroom Guidelines:

- Teach conflict resolution skills.
 - Use people of different sizes, ethnicities and abilities as examples and role models.
 - Use teachable moments to underscore ways people respect differences.
 - Develop a personal delight in learning from differences, and share this with your students.
-

Value: I can get help.

Norms:

- We can name people who can help us.
- We can choose good people to go to for help.
- Some problems we can handle on our own. Some problems are too big for kids, and we get help for those.

Classroom Guidelines:

- Use activities that help students identify the people they can turn to for help.

- Help students differentiate between problems kids can solve and problems that need adult help.
-

Value: I take care of myself, my friends, my family and my community.

Norms:

- We make smart, safe choices that are good for everyone.
- We support each other to make smart, safe choices.
- We are good role models for younger children.

Classroom Guidelines:

- Help students understand the broader consequences of their behavior (i.e., that others are affected by their choices).
 - Have students identify ways they take care of others.
 - Provide opportunities for students to learn from older student role models, and to be positive role models for younger children.
-

Value: When something isn't right, I speak up and tell someone who can help.

Norms:

- We speak up if we see bullying, harassment or hazing.
- We speak up if we see something dangerous happening, or know about something that's going to happen.
- We get a grown-up to help when we need it.

Classroom Guidelines:

- Validate the community standard of getting help when something isn't right.

(continued)

Chapter 4

- Work to maintain a balance between empowering students to find their own solutions and creating an environment where they can comfortably ask for help.
 - Help students identify ways that bullying or harassment hurts everyone, not just the person being victimized.
-

Value: I like being with smart, safe friends.

Norms:

- We help our friends stay safe.
- We choose friends who are smart and safe.

Classroom Guidelines:

- Have students identify the qualities of safe friends, and what they like about them.
 - Do an activity where students describe or write about a smart, safe friend.
 - Do an activity where students in pairs or small groups work together to make an environment or situation safer.
-

Value: I want other people to feel safe.

Norms:

- We know our own feelings and can talk about them.
- We ask others about their feelings.
- We think about the ways other people feel, and take steps to help them feel safe.
- We help others (through community projects, church or temple, school programs to help younger students, etc.).

Classroom Guidelines:

- Use stories, real-life examples or activities to build students' sense of empathy.
 - Do activities that help students identify and describe emotions.
 - Give students opportunities to perform community service (e.g., helping younger students; making cards for people in nursing homes; planting trees; cleaning up beaches, playgrounds or parks, etc.).
-

Value: My friends and peers feel the way I do about staying safe.

Norms:

- We talk together about ways to stay safe.
- We show by our actions how important being smart and safe is to us.

Classroom Guidelines:

- Provide many opportunities for students to declare their smart, safe values in small groups, in front of the class, and within the school at large. (This can be done verbally or with buttons, posters, signed contracts, pictures, stories, etc.)
 - Use same-age or slightly older role models who have good, smart, safe values.
-

Value: I have a place and belong in this community.

Norms:

- We listen to each other because we have important things to say.
- We notice when someone in our class is absent, or sad, or hurt.
- We notice when someone in our class is happy or successful.
- We talk about the ways each one of us counts in this class.

(continued)

Classroom Guidelines:

- Give students opportunities to reflect on and describe their sense of connectedness (to the class, with friends, to the school at large).
 - Facilitate small-group connections among students and help isolated students become connected to a small group.
 - Encourage students to experience belonging in different configurations (e.g., with different small groups).
 - Give students plenty of chances to express their beliefs, accomplishments and plans; demonstrate their talents; experience their uniqueness within the class; and feel the importance of their unique contributions.
-

Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution is an especially exciting aspect of injury prevention because it's an area where the content and form of the learning intersect.

- ♦ **As a content area,** conflict resolution helps children learn ways to resolve differences without resorting to violence. Less violence means less injury. Clearly, this can be a great strategy to keep kids safe.
- ♦ **As a form of learning,** having children work in peer groups to address real or model conflicts gives them powerful opportunities to practice resolving differences in socially productive ways. They don't just talk about conflict resolution—they experience it.

Working It Out Among Peers

The child developmentalist Jean Piaget believed that children need to work through conflicts and differences among their peers. In fact, he saw this as an essential requirement for cognitive development.

When young children have conflicts with adults, they face someone with greater social status, more power, more knowledge and more developed cognitive skills. Children resolve these conflicts by conforming to the more powerful adult. Even a child who resists an adult's wishes is essentially conforming to the adult world view—protesting the way things are, not suggesting ways they could be different.

Only among peers do children have a chance to weigh their values and persuasions against those of social and cognitive equals. In a peer context, they can evaluate the foundations of their reasoning. Instead of conforming to someone more experienced and powerful, they adapt or restructure their views to reach agreement. Through give and take, peers can coordinate to achieve a common end, often coming up with a significantly new vision in the process.

Some research bears out Piaget's theories. When children collaborate with peers, they solve more challenging problems than they can alone. This is not simply a matter of a more knowledgeable student being paired with one who is less so. Children approach problems more successfully and creatively even with a peer who isn't more capable.

Collaboration enriches the complexity of writing projects, and these improved skills carry over to individual writing later. Collaborative conversation involves both generating new ideas and reflecting on ideas already on the table. Children shift between "expert" and "novice" roles, rather than staying in one role or the other.

These are exactly the qualities we want to cultivate in children to help them make smart, safe choices. By working things through with peers, they can learn to evaluate each unique situation thoughtfully, share ideas with others, stay open to new suggestions and look to friends for support. They may well pick up a more accurate picture of peer norms while they're at it.

Embracing Diversity

Children need to learn to accept differences. They need to know how to work with peers from different cultures, children who have different family histories, and people of different religions. This is not solely a philosophical or political concern, but a powerful safety strategy as well.

All children will experience periods of uncertainty and anxiety in their lives. They will look for reassurance by finding friends they can call their own, groups they feel a part of, values they can share. In many school and community settings, these kinds of resources become divided by race, class or religion.

When such polarization becomes institutionalized in the school setting, children do not have the opportunity to explore and experience other points of view, satisfy their curiosity or learn acceptance. In some schools, it is actually emotionally or physically dangerous to move outside one's "group."

Such divisiveness can lead to extremely dangerous situations. Gang membership becomes more attractive, and violence may erupt. Students pursue feuds, bring out weapons, act on a perceived need to defend a friend's honor or avenge a companion's death. Tragedy is almost inevitable in situations like this.

This is why one of the most powerful preventive actions we can take to keep children safe is to help them develop a true enthusiasm for the richness and value of cultural diversity. At early ages, this might be brought forth by tasting different kinds of foods or

hearing folk tales of many cultures. As children mature, they will enjoy learning about different roles and functions in families across cultures. By third or fourth grade, community roles and spiritual ideas can be exciting.

This approach goes beyond tolerance. By embracing diversity, children are able to enrich their lives and enhance their skills in the world. Their “group” is not defined solely by a racial or ethnic identity. Instead, they have the expansiveness to feel themselves a part of their entire class, school or community.

The Power of a Safe Community

When you give students a chance to express and confirm smart values about injury prevention among a group of peers, you appeal to their natural inclinations to be an active member of a strong community. You lend counterweight to influences that might pull them away from these values. You provide opportunities for them to feel good about their ability to be strong and do what’s right for themselves and for others. You facilitate their feelings of connect-edness and belonging.

The values and norms your students establish about safety and injury prevention will support them through many difficulties to come in their early elementary years. When students have the chance to affirm these values and norms under the powerful and approving gaze of their peers, they can carry these safe values forward in ways that will serve them well for the rest of their lives.

Classroom Activities

The following activities can be used to reinforce the concepts discussed in this chapter. Feel free to adapt activities to suit the needs of your students and classroom.

A Safe Friend Is the Best Friend!

This activity helps establish a value for having safe friends.

- Have students identify the qualities of a safe friend, by either drawing a picture or making a list, or both.
 - Tell a story about kids involved in some activity where a question about safety comes up (one kid wants to roller skate down a steep, busy street; someone suggests taking a new shortcut home through unfamiliar territory; someone is playing with matches; someone is teasing a kid who is afraid to jump into the lake; etc.). Ask students what a safe friend would do in these situations.
 - Ask students to talk about real friends they have who make safe choices.
-

How Will This Turn Out?

This activity helps students examine the qualities of safe friends.

- Tell a story that involves a safety issue.
- When you come to a point where a decision has to be made (whether to run across the busy street, skate down the steep hill, climb into the drainage ditch after the storm), ask students to

think about what a group of not-safe friends might decide to do. What could the consequences be?

- Then ask what a group of smart, safe friends would do.
-

This Is My Community

Help students recognize their own and others' contributions to the community, and enjoy the ways this enhances their sense of belonging and connectedness.

- Have students talk about their own contributions in small groups.
 - Ask them to write down one thing they notice about every other student in the class—something that person contributes that is special and unique. Share the lists.
 - Taking turns in front of the class, have students name one of the things they bring to the community. Then have them choose another student and describe something he or she brings.
-

Doing My Part

Build connectedness to community through tasks and responsibilities that are really fun.

- Allow students to choose the theme for a class party.
 - Let students select a story to be read or the route for a class walk.
 - Have students work in a small group to decide the theme for a class mural.
 - Invite students to help arrange a guest speaker (e.g., a family member who works for the fire department).
-

Why I Buckle Up

This activity helps establish a peer norm for using safety belts and riding in the back seat.

- Ask students to think about the reasons they wear safety belts and sit in the back seat.
 - Have them share their answers before the full class or in small groups.
 - Ask if they feel safer when they are buckled up.
 - Ask if they feel smarter.
-

5 Information for Teachers

Your goal in teaching injury prevention to children is to help them grasp the big picture. Teachers do this by taking hold of the practical details. How does a child stay safe around water, fire, motor vehicles or aggressive peers? How does a teacher communicate these principles in a meaningful way, in a manner that helps the learning “stick”?

This chapter offers specific information on a variety of injury prevention areas, including key content to cover, difficult questions students might ask, and ideas for classroom activities to strengthen the learning.

Using Essential Teachable Moments

Injury prevention offers tremendous opportunities to use teachable moments. Children make choices about risks every day. Their lives in and out of school provide myriad examples of the benefits of making smart choices—and sometimes the costs of making poor ones. In-the-moment explorations of safety issues are powerful tools for making classroom learning exciting and immediately relevant in the real world.

A mix of planned classroom activities and serendipitous circumstances gives children lots of different ways to take in injury prevention information and make it their own.

Here are some ways to help create teachable moments to personalize and transfer students' learning well beyond the lesson:

- ◆ **Use real-life examples.** What happened to students on the way to school? at lunch? at home last night? What about during the art lesson when the table with the mural was knocked over onto Sarah's foot? Situations in which safety is a concern are presented on a daily basis. Use examples like these in your classroom activities. Ask students to come up with other examples.
- ◆ **Make stories real.** Storybooks, short stories, vignettes or roleplays can all model the kinds of choices children should make to keep themselves and their friends safe. Even fantasy tales (sponges in outer space; talking dolphins; flying carpets) that stretch and delight the imagination can offer examples related to injury prevention. If your injury prevention curriculum asks students to suggest safe choices a character in a roleplay could make, you might stop and ask similar questions when reading a story to the class later.
- ◆ **Recognize and validate students' experience.** Children already have a lot of knowledge about injury prevention from their own experiences. They also have ideas and opinions about the subject. You can ask children to share an experience where they made a smart, safe choice. If you observe a student make a safe choice on the playground, ask what past experiences led to that decision.
- ◆ **Let students teach each other.** Children learn well through personal experience. They love to generate and try new ideas. They learn from role models and peers. Use these qualities by asking children to share their opinions, challenge one another's thinking, and work in groups to come up with smart solutions. Students might present a skit, write a newsletter, or speak in front of the class about what they have learned. As teachable moments arise, ask students to share personal experiences that would help classmates better understand some point about injury prevention.

- ◆ **Give students a chance to practice skills that relate to their lives.** Children need skills to back up their knowledge about injury prevention. Your curriculum might have them do a roleplay where a friend wants to go swimming without an adult, or might ask them to identify adults they can turn to if they are troubled or scared, or include exercises to help them weigh the pros and cons of taking a risk. Refer to these skills at later teachable moments. For example, ask a student who has lost her bicycle helmet to weigh the pros and cons of riding without the helmet until she is able to get a new one.

Working the Room

Really skillful politicians do this thing called “working the room.” They greet people and make them feel like old friends. They listen, and then use their constituents’ concerns to expand on their own agendas. They may overlook some of the fine points, but the big picture shines on, illumined by their charismatic presence. They enlist people’s enthusiasm and commitment by making the encounter dynamic and personal. By the end of the evening, people are signing up to canvass, writing out checks and wanting to get their friends and family involved too.

Many people feel a certain cynicism about politicians, but this process, well done, can be a wonder to behold. Does it seem like too much of a leap to suggest that working the room can be useful in injury prevention education as well? Injury prevention is easier for kids when they have a charismatic role model to follow (such as an admired teacher).

There’s a lot you can accomplish:

- ◆ **Build enthusiasm.** You want to increase and sustain your students’ enthusiasm and commitment to injury prevention. Your active and involved participation helps set this tone.
- ◆ **Make it personal.** Finding ways to personalize injury prevention makes it more substantive for kids—something that affects each student, and that each student in turn can influence.

- ♦ **Set an agenda.** You have great opportunities to reinforce the safety message when you make connections between students' ideas, concerns and experiences and the big picture of injury prevention.
- ♦ **Spread the inspiration.** Enthusiasm for injury prevention needs to be present at every level possible—individual, class, school, home and wider community. This is more possible when kids feel excited and empowered by the message and want to share it with others.
- ♦ **Stay with the big picture.** The most effective injury prevention avoids getting bogged down in detailed rules or lists of do's and don'ts. Instead, it helps kids get a grasp on the big picture.

Most students are not generating a lot of direct questions about safety and injury prevention. They are, however, building belief systems about these issues. They base their beliefs on the behaviors and attitudes they see at home, among peers, in the media, within the classroom and on the school grounds. When teachers work the room, make lessons relevant and fun, and capitalize on teachable moments, they can influence students' belief systems toward healthy choices and smart assessment of risks.

Specific Topics and Guidelines

The following information is by no means exhaustive, but it covers important content for children's most common risks and concerns. Each topic includes an overall goal—the “big picture”—and some specific content that supports that goal. Each area includes classroom activities, sample questions and answers, and models for teachable moments.

(*Note:* For publications that offer more thorough discussions of any of these topics, check the Resources section.)

Motor Vehicle Safety

Goal: Children wear safety belts and sit in the back seat.

Content:

- ◆ Everyone should wear safety belts. Wear one every time you are in a vehicle.
- ◆ The back seat is safest for kids. Children age 12 and younger should always sit in the back seat.
- ◆ Small children (under 40 pounds) should ride in appropriate safety seats.
- ◆ Children ages 4 to 8 (about 40 to 80 pounds) should use car booster seats and safety belts every time they ride.
- ◆ Older children are important role models for younger children.

Sample Questions and Answers

Aren't air bags dangerous? Can't they kill you?

Air bags help adults and older children stay safe in a collision. They are a good idea, and they work well.

But they are not safe for younger kids like you. Some children have been hurt, or even killed, because the air bag opens so fast.

Fortunately, you don't need to worry about this if you ride in the back seat. This is always the best place for kids, even if a car doesn't have air bags. By the time you are about 12 years old, it will be safe for you to ride in the front, and an air bag would help you if the car was in a crash.

How come we don't have seat belts on the bus?

That's a good question. I've wondered this myself. What I found out is that school buses are almost never in crashes. The drivers are very careful. It is really unusual for anyone riding in a school bus to be injured in a collision. In fact, the greater danger is when kids get

off a bus and cross in front. So it's important to always be careful about this.

But I still think it would be a good idea to have safety belts on the bus. Shall we write a letter to the principal about this?

What if my family has a truck? We don't have a back seat.

That's kind of tricky, isn't it? But if there isn't a back seat, you have to ride in the front seat. Be sure to wear your safety belt. If the truck has an air bag, it would be best to get an on/off switch for it. If your family has another vehicle that does have a back seat, it would be better for you to ride in that until you're older.

Riding in the bed of a truck is never a safe choice. Riding in front with a safety belt may be the best choice you can make.

A Teachable Moment

A group of students sees their teacher, Mr. Akagi, driving into the school parking lot. He unfastens his safety belt and gets out of the car. As the children greet him, he asks if they noticed any of the things he was doing to make his drive safe.

The children point out that he was wearing his safety belt and driving slowly around all the kids coming to school. One student says it's also a good thing he wasn't trying to talk on a cell phone or drink coffee while he was driving. Then the kids get goofy, and tell him he wasn't driving with his eyes closed, and he wasn't driving with his feet. They all laugh. The children enjoy the positive role modeling of their teacher's commitment to safety.

Pedestrian Safety

Goal: Children make safe choices around traffic.

Content:

- ◆ Children should play in safe areas, away from motor vehicles. The street, driveways and parking lots are *not* safe play areas. It is *never* safe to run into the street.
- ◆ Adults and children can cross streets safely by using crosswalks, knowing how to use traffic lights, looking carefully in both directions, and only crossing when the road is clear.
- ◆ Children under age 10 should cross the street with an adult.
- ◆ Children and adults should use great care when crossing around school buses (under the driver's guidance is best). It's not safe to step off the curb in front of a bus, even if it is parked. Neither the bus driver nor drivers in passing vehicles can see this area well.
- ◆ Pedestrians should be careful on streets with multiple lanes. When a car in the first lane stops at the crosswalk, cars in the second or third lane may not stop.

A Teachable Moment

Ms. Moore's class is going on a nature walk in the park across the street. The class has always crossed carefully and properly on such outings. This week, the class has been learning about being smart and safe in the street. Ms. Moore asks various students to describe the safe choices the class is making at different moments as they move along.

Kerry points out that they quiet down as they come to the corner. Jamal talks about the way they cross at the crosswalk, when the cars have stopped or the road is clear. Madison notices that each group of students stays close to their assigned adult—Ms. Moore and two parents who are helping during the outing.

Sample Questions and Answers

How come grown-ups don't follow the rules and cross the street safely?

Some grown-ups think they can figure out when it's safe to cross. They don't wait for the light or cross at the crosswalk. Some think that cars will stop for them. Most of the time, this is true. But not all the time. Adults get hit by cars when they're crossing the street too. So the smartest thing for all people, no matter how old they are, is to cross at crosswalks and traffic lights.

What if there aren't any crosswalks on the road by my house?

Sometimes there aren't any crosswalks. Then you need to go to a part of the road that's flat and straight, where you can see really well. Look both ways carefully before crossing and be sure no cars are coming. And don't forget to have a grown-up cross with you!

What if there was an emergency? Could I cross the street by myself?

I think it depends on the emergency. If it's something very serious, you might have to cross the street. But think about it carefully. Is this a "big help" or a "little help" situation?

Is someone hurt badly? Are you in danger? Do you need help you can only get if you cross the street? Is there any grown-up, or even an older kid, who can help you?

Cross *very* carefully if you decide you have to. Look both ways to be sure there are no cars in sight. Remember, drivers may not see you.

What if there isn't any traffic?

Most of the time, if a street seems quiet, there probably aren't any cars coming. But once in a while, a car does come. It may come out of a driveway or around a corner. This can surprise someone crossing the street.

Cars can travel very fast, and they are not expecting to see people in the middle of the road. It can be especially hard for drivers to see children. This all adds up to a dangerous situation. That's why the safest and smartest plan is to cross safely, at crosswalks, with a grown-up.

Water Safety

Goal: Children make safe choices around water.

Content:

- ◆ Learning to swim is fun, smart and safe.
- ◆ Children should *always* swim with an adult.
- ◆ Only very strong swimmers should swim in deep water, and only when others are watching.
- ◆ Water can change (e.g., a slow creek can become fast and deep during a flood or storm).
- ◆ Children and adults need to know that all water can be dangerous (pools, drainages, creeks, rivers, lakes, ocean).
- ◆ Even very good swimmers must avoid some kinds of water (fast floods, high waves).
- ◆ Water wings are always a poor safety choice. They don't help people swim better. They can slip off easily, and someone who doesn't swim well could drown.

Sample Questions and Answers

Is it OK to swim with my 14-year-old cousin? He's a real good swimmer.

Talk to your parents about this and see what they think. And think about it for yourself too. What do you think?

Being a real good swimmer may not be enough. It's also important for your cousin to have some basic lifesaving and water safety skills.

He'd need to be a very responsible person. Would he stay with you, and not go off swimming on his own? Would he keep an eye on you constantly, or start playing around with his friends? Would he be watching one or two younger kids, or a whole bunch? Would he be happy watching you, or would he feel tired of it after a while and start daydreaming?

You probably have a pretty good idea yourself about whether this would be a good idea. You'll have the most fun in the water if you know you're safe.

A Teachable Moment

The rain was fierce over the weekend. On Monday morning, Mrs. Cardenas overhears Harrison telling some other children about playing in a drainage ditch right after the storm. He vividly describes the swirling eddies, the chunks of wood, the yucky yellow foam. He threw in rocks, pushed globs of trash around with a big stick, and got mud smeared all over his shoes. Then he fell and the slimy, gooey mud splashed all over his clothes. It was "gross, and totally cool."

Mrs. Cardenas joins the conversation. She acknowledges how exciting this experience was for Harrison. She asks some of the other students what things they found interesting about the storm, and asks Harrison more about what he felt and thought while he was playing in the drainage. Then she reminds the group of a recent class lesson about curiosity, and the ways being curious about something affects choices about safety.

One of the kids says, "Yeah, Harrison, it felt cool, but it wasn't a very smart thing to do. If you'd slipped, you might've bumped your head or something and drowned." A couple of other students nod their heads.

Mrs. Cardenas leaves it at this, knowing Harrison is well aware of the risks he was taking. She trusts that the judgment of his peers will help him think twice before he does this again.

What if I just go into the water up to my knees?

In almost any kind of water, just going in up to your knees can be dangerous. In a river, creek or lake, a person might slip and fall into deep water. In the ocean, a wave might knock you down.

Sometimes a certain wave will be much stronger than the others. Then the water could pull a person out into the surf. Sometimes a person sitting at the edge of a pool, or standing on the steps, gets pushed or slips into deeper water.

It's also very hard to know how deep water is, how fast it's moving or how dangerous it really is. This is why, even if you are a very good swimmer, you should only go in the water if you are with an adult.

Bikes, Blades and Boards

Goal: Children wear protective equipment and make smart and safe choices about where and how they ride when bicycling, roller blading or skateboarding.

Content:

- ◆ Children and adults should wear helmets every time they ride a bicycle. Helmets are a good idea for skating and skateboarding, too.
- ◆ This is easier for children when peers believe wearing protective gear is smart, hip and cool.
- ◆ Children under age 10 should ride only on sidewalks and off-street bike paths.
- ◆ Adults should supervise children when they begin riding on streets, and be sure they demonstrate their ability to ride safely and observe rules and laws for riding on the streets.

Sample Questions and Answers

What if I'm just riding my bike on the sidewalk in front of my house? Do I still need to wear a helmet?

Let's look at some of the things that could be a problem for a bicyclist on a sidewalk. If someone was bicycling past driveways, cars might come in or out, and that could be dangerous. A person who was turning a bike around in a small area could fall and hit his or her head. If a neighbor's big dog started chasing a bicycle, the rider might get pushed off course and run into a tree. If there are leaves or gravel on the sidewalk, the bike could slip and the rider could fall.

Most of the time, these things wouldn't happen. But you've only got one head, and keeping it healthy and working is important. So I think it's a smart idea to wear a helmet any time you're on a bicycle. What do you think?

What if my friends all ride their bikes in the street, even if their parents say they aren't supposed to?

This is hard. You want to make smart and safe choices, but sometimes other kids don't. They might even tease you if you do. This is one reason we talk about helping friends be safe. A good friend wants you to be smart and safe. And that's what you want your friends to be, too.

I've heard kids say that they like to think about how strong they are. It takes a lot of strength to do what they know is right and smart. They know it's hard. They know they're special because they're making a choice that they believe in. They're proud that they're making the choice their parents would want them to make.

A Teachable Moment

Mr. Dexter sees Gina riding into school along the bike path wearing a new green bicycle helmet. As she walks by him on the playground before the bell, he calls out, "Hey, Gina. You're lookin' good on that bicycle. Very cool helmet!"

Gina smiles proudly, carrying her shiny new helmet under her arm.

Fire Safety

Goal: Children know basic fire prevention strategies, steps to take in the event of a fire, and what to do to escape fire and injury.

Content:

- ◆ There are good ways to prevent fire injury. The most important are using smoke detectors and planning escape routes.
- ◆ Children should never use matches, lighters or flammable materials unless they are being closely supervised by an adult.
- ◆ Children should have a fire escape planned and know the steps to take if there's a fire. (Leave the area or the building; tell an adult right away; call 9-1-1 if no adult is around.)
- ◆ If people need to escape a fire, the best thing to do is get low and crawl below the smoke.
- ◆ If clothing catches on fire, drop and roll back and forth to put out the flames. Running will make the fire worse.
- ◆ It's important for children to be familiar with the equipment firefighters wear so that in a rescue situation they won't be frightened and run away from someone in protective gear.

Sample Questions and Answers

What am I supposed to do if I see an older kid playing with matches?

The smart answer is to tell an adult about it who can tell the kid to stop. Sometimes, this might feel hard to do. If you want this older kid to like and respect you, telling probably doesn't feel like a very good way to do that.

This is why it's so important for you to learn to like and respect yourself. You know how dangerous playing with matches can be. Kids start most of the home fires where kids get hurt.

Maybe kids who play with matches don't know this, or maybe they think the danger is exciting. Maybe they think that playing with fire is a tough, grown-up thing to do. They probably think they're in control and won't let a fire get started.

But if you think about this, it starts to sound as if the *real* tough, cool, grown-up thing to do is to take steps to keep you, your

A Teachable Moment

Alissa spent the weekend camping with her parents. She tells the class about the big campfire her mom built. Alissa and her sister roasted marshmallows and poked the fire with a stick so that sparks flew up into the air.

Ms. Magana asks other students about roasting marshmallows. Carl explains how to sandwich marshmallows and chocolate in graham crackers to make S'mores. Jennifer likes to burn her marshmallows until they're black. Arthur thinks it's gross to use sticks you just find on the ground to roast marshmallows. Bill tells about the time his marshmallow caught on fire. When he brought it up to his mouth to blow it out, it fell off the stick and he got a nasty burn!

Ms. Magana asks each of the students who told a story to name something they or their families did to make these experiences around fire safe. She writes each suggestion on the board.

- Always have a grown-up there.
- Keep a water bucket nearby.
- Clear away all the stuff around the fire pit that could catch fire.
- Make sure there's nothing nearby you might trip over.

The class talks about Bill's experience and suggests ways to be sure something like this doesn't happen. They include:

- Don't hold the marshmallow too close, even when you're blowing it out.
- If it's burning really bad, just let it burn, don't try to put it out.

friends and other people safe. It may be hard, but I think that's what a really strong person would do.

If my dad says it's OK for me to light fireworks, doesn't that make it OK?

You have to think about what's OK for you. Your dad is giving you a chance to make a choice. Here are some things to think about.

Most safety experts feel no one should use fireworks, not even adults, because of the chance of getting hurt. Some think that even

When Kids Are Fascinated by Fire

Many children are curious about fire. They may play with matches, set fire to toys, or investigate flammable materials. Usually, firm limits from parents and other adults, along with fire safety education, will lead to more appropriate behaviors. Your local fire department may have a schools program that includes firehouse tours or classroom speakers.

Closely supervised experiences with fire can also help children explore their interests safely. For example, parents can watch as children light candles, or ask children to help build fires in a fireplace or oversee a campfire. Discussions of fire safety should be an ongoing part of these activities.

Some children have a more problematic fascination with fire. A curious child who does not have close supervision or healthy outlets for learning about fire can easily get into danger.

Repeat firesetters tend to be children with conduct disorders, poor peer relationships, aggressive behaviors and high levels of anger. Often they have difficult family relationships; parents may be involved in violence, use drugs, be dealing with depression or other significant dysfunction.

Even children with this profile can usually learn to redirect their anger and frustration into outlets other than firesetting. Professional intervention by an experienced child psychotherapist or mental health program is a good idea in these cases.

when adults are using fireworks, children under age 14 shouldn't be lighting them. Sometimes it's pretty hard for kids to get the fireworks lit and move away safely.

If you *do* decide to light fireworks when you're older, be smart about it. Make sure there's a grown-up watching and helping you. Follow all the safety rules. Think through how you're going to light the firecracker before you do it. Don't hold the firecracker in your hand. Think about where you will stand while you light it and how far away you will move once it's lit. Check to see if anything is in your way.

And remember to be strong in your own self-respect. If you decide you don't want to do this, that's OK.

Safety from Bullying and Fighting

Goals:

- 1.** Children know productive ways to deal with anger, resolve conflicts and avoid a victim mentality.
- 2.** The classroom and school community establish values of cooperation, and students speak up if they witness bullying.

Content:

- ◆ Feelings such as fear, anger, discomfort or uncertainty can contribute to bullying or being bullied.
- ◆ Students can learn and practice conflict resolution techniques.
- ◆ Build understanding of why bullying happens (how does the victim feel? why do people bully? how does a bully get away with it?).
- ◆ A sense of belonging to the group can help stop bullying.
- ◆ Use group problem-solving to come up with solutions to bullying situations (especially for grades 3–4).

Sample Questions and Answers

What if someone picks a fight with me? (calls me a name? uses a bad word about me? uses a racial slur?)

It's painful when someone is trying to hurt us. People might do something physical, such as punching or kicking. They might be disrespectful of us. They might use bad language. Sometimes people use hurtful words about race or religion.

It's important to stand up for yourself and to have pride in yourself. The problem is that fighting back—by punching, calling names, or using hurtful words—doesn't usually help. The hardest way to “fight back,” but I think the best, is to know that what bullies say isn't true. You can prove that by believing in yourself and walking with pride, even if that means walking away.

One of the strongest people I've ever heard about was Martin Luther King, Jr. Do you remember when we talked about him in class? He was someone who had so much pride in himself, he wouldn't let anyone turn him into a violent person.

I know a girl who was with a group of friends. They started picking on somebody. What do you think she should have done?

That must have been hard for her, especially if she thought it was wrong. I would hope a girl in that situation would be able to speak up and tell her friends to stop. Sometimes, even if someone thinks speaking up is the right thing to do, she isn't able to. She might be afraid of not being part of the group, or of getting picked on herself.

I want you to be strong and sure of yourself so you'll be able to do the things you know are right. One of the best ways for any of us to do this is to choose friends who also want to do the right things. It's also important for kids to have adults they can talk to if something like this happens to them.

You know, often in a group no one really wants to be doing this mean behavior. Things just get out of hand. But once it's started,

it's really hard for anyone to speak up and stop it. What do you think it would take for someone to be able to speak up in a situation like that?

A Teachable Moment

As the bell after recess rings and students line up, Mrs. Bowden sees Shaquille, Hector and Daniel pushing Ricky out of the line. Daniel yells, "You stupid punk!" The boys stop as soon as she speaks to them, but a lot of glowering continues. She tells the rest of the students to go in, and stays outside to talk with the boys.

Accusations and denials fly fast and furious. Ricky "dissed" Hector first. Hector kicked Ricky first. Shaquille and Daniel didn't want Ricky hiding behind them when Hector was after him.

She stops them. "We've been talking in class about ways to avoid fights and conflicts. Let's see how much you've learned. This afternoon, when the class is working on their rain forest projects, I want the four of you to meet with me. We'll talk about some different ways you might have dealt with this."

When they meet later, Mrs. Bowden keeps the boys on track and the fight from recurring. They review the class lessons, and she asks each boy to suggest something he could have done that might have kept the fight from happening.

Hector said he could have ignored Ricky's taunting. Shaquille thought he could have spoken up and told Hector that pushing Ricky wasn't a good way to deal with the situation. Daniel agreed that when he called Ricky stupid, it just goaded Hector on. Ricky said he should have spoken directly to Hector and said, "Stop picking on me!" instead of insulting him, and then asked for help from Mrs. Bowden if Hector didn't stop.

"You see," Mrs. Bowden told them, "each of you could have done something to stop this fight. I hope that next time something like this comes up, you'll remember that you can make smart choices that help keep you and others safe."

Safety from Adults (Family Violence, Stranger Violence)

Goal: Children can take steps to avoid or get out of danger.

Content:

- ◆ Children can develop self-assessment skills: Am I safe?
Am I OK?
- ◆ It's important to know how and where to get help (adults and peers who can help).
- ◆ Problem-solving skills include leaving a dangerous situation, getting help and telling someone.
- ◆ Assertiveness skills help children speak up and take action.
- ◆ Mapping out safe routes to and from school helps keep kids safe.
- ◆ Standard prevention guidelines include not taking rides or presents from strangers, and avoiding abandoned buildings, lots and playgrounds.

Sample Questions and Answers

My parents both work, so who would I get help from after school if I needed it?

You'll need to think about this to come up with a good answer. I think it would help to talk to your parents and get their ideas, too.

Here are some ideas I have. There might be a neighbor who's usually nearby when you get home after school. Maybe that would be someone who could help you.

Your parents might have a friend you could call on the phone. You might have a relative, such as an aunt or grandparent whom you could call. Or you might be able to call your parents at work if you needed help. Maybe there's an after-school program at a daycare center or the Y that you could go to regularly, so you aren't alone after school.

It's also important for you to know how to call 9-1-1 if you need help in an emergency, so you can reach the police, fire department or medical help.

Do you think any of these ideas would work for you?

A Teachable Moment

Roxie is telling her friends about the movie she saw last night. A princess was being treated very badly by an evil wizard, until this fairy godmother came along. She was very, very powerful and could do all kinds of magic. She kept the princess safe and locked the evil wizard in a cave.

Mr. Wong is standing nearby. He joins in, "I wonder what you would tell the princess to do if the wizard was bothering her and there wasn't a fairy godmother around."

This starts a lively conversation. The other girls say the princess could tell her parents. Roxie protests, "But then the wizard would do something terrible to them." Then they suggest she could get together a group of strong friends to fight back. ("The wizard has strong friends, too, and they have magical powers.") Maybe the princess should move out of town. ("The wizard could find her anywhere she'd go.") She could always tell the police. ("They didn't have police. That's why they have fairy godmothers and wizards.")

The girls begin to argue. "Someone could help her." "Maybe the princess could just get a big dog and scare the wizard away."

Mr. Wong says, "These are good examples. I don't know about the princess, but sometimes in real life kids may think a problem is so big no one can help them. But I think there's always someone who can help. That's why it's so important for us to stay in touch with the people who can help us, and those we can help, too."

My sister said she was going to tell everyone what a big baby I was if I didn't go on the roller coaster. My stomach hurt before we even got to the gate.

I'm glad you noticed your stomach telling you about your feelings. It sounds to me as if the big roller coaster was very scary for you!

Remember, knowing that you're scared is a good thing. It means you can take steps so you feel safe. You can get help if you need to. I think knowing what you're feeling and taking care of yourself are very grown-up things to do. That doesn't sound like being a baby to me at all.

We were doing a clean-up day at my church and Mr. Harris wanted me to go into the basement with him to clean it out. But my tummy felt funny and I think I was scared of him. So I said no the way we practiced in class. Then my mom got really mad at me for not doing my share of the work.

That must have been terrible for you! It took a lot of strength to speak up and say "no." I'm glad you were able to do that, and it sounds as if it was the right thing to do.

I wonder if you could talk about this with your mom now. You could let her know what you were feeling then and how you were trying to take care of yourself. You could even ask what she would want you to do in a situation like that. Do you think she would understand?

I could also talk to your mom if you'd like. It might help for her to know about the things we've been talking about and practicing here in class.

Firearm Safety

Goals:

1. Children know to leave any place where there are guns.
2. Children don't play with or joke about guns, or use guns to threaten others.
3. Children tell an adult if someone around them has a gun.

Content:

- ◆ There are some basic rules to follow about firearms: leave if there's a gun around; don't touch or handle guns; tell an adult.
- ◆ It's smart to be wary of guns. Firearms pose a real danger.
- ◆ If children live in households with firearms, they need to know and follow safety guidelines.

Sample Questions and Answers

How can a gun hurt you if you know it isn't loaded?

People who know a lot about guns will tell you that they never point a gun at anyone, even if they're just playing around and even if they know it isn't loaded. The reason is that if they made a mistake, someone might die or be badly hurt.

Most of the time, people won't make a mistake. But if they did, just once, even if they had been right about the gun not being loaded a hundred times before, they could hurt someone.

Free Gun Safety Programs

If your school or district is offered any free gun safety curriculum, examine the program carefully. It may be funded by gun manufacturers or the National Rifle Association, whose recommendations may not be consistent with those of recognized safety organizations.

This is why we say kids should never handle guns at all. You might be sure a gun isn't loaded. You might believe you know how to hold a gun safely. You might think it's exciting and safe to look at a gun close up. But if you're wrong about any of these things, you or someone else could get hurt. Adults shouldn't handle guns either, unless they've been trained and know how to do it safely.

What if my friend's dad wants to show me his gun?

I think the best thing is to talk to your parents about this first. Tell your friend's dad that you need to do this *before* you see the gun. Some families think it's a good idea for kids to learn about guns and others think it's best if kids aren't around guns at all. That's why it's important for you to talk to your parents and find out what they think.

You also know enough to make some smart, safe decisions for yourself. *Never* stay in a place where children or teenagers have guns. It doesn't matter whether the gun is loaded or not, leave right away. Don't play with guns, and don't hang around with friends who do.

If you're ever around anyone who's drinking alcohol and using guns, leave. That's never safe. Tell your parents or another adult about it.

Guns in the Neighborhood

Some children live in neighborhoods where gunfire occurs on a regular basis. In these settings, it would be appropriate to have class discussions about students' experiences, and to share safety suggestions. Students may even want to practice drills where they drop, duck and take cover as they would at the sound of shots.

This is an immensely depressing prospect for most educators. For your own sanity and spiritual health, join in broader efforts to reduce crime, limit drug traffic and provide a safe community for children.

A Teachable Moment

“Blam, blam, blam!” Corey shouts. “Blood and guts all over!”

“That is so gross,” says Amanda.

“But it was a really cool movie,” Heather chimes in. “The alien had this weapon that blew humans to bits, and the only human weapons that could stop him were these big old guns that they hadn’t made since the 23rd century. It was awesome!”

Ms. Manders asks the students to quiet down until reading period is over, but when it is she says to the class, “It sounds like Corey and Heather really enjoyed that new movie *Alien Blast*. Let’s think for a few moments about the movies you like the most. What makes a movie interesting to you?”

The discussion ranges from favorite stars to lots of excitement, to animals, to good fight scenes. Then Ms. Manders asks the class to think about the way they feel after they see a really good movie. Students answer happy, excited, sad, sleepy, silly, scared and revved up.

Ms. Manders says, “We know that most movies are made-up stories. When people make movies, they usually want them to seem real. But sometimes it doesn’t work. What’s the hardest thing for you to believe when you see a movie?” The students talk about dinosaurs that look fake, cops who always find parking places, guns that never run out of bullets, and parents who let their kids build rocket ships in the back yard without ever noticing.

Ms. Manders agrees with all of these comments. “You know, one of the things that I always think is hard to believe is the way so many movies make it look as if guns help solve a problem. Have you ever noticed that? In real life, weapons almost always make a situation worse. One of the things we’ll be learning about later this year are ways people can work out problems without fighting or using weapons. I’m looking forward to talking with all of you about that. Now, let’s get ready for lunch!”

Internet Safety

Goal: Children make smart choices and avoid being exploited, manipulated or hurt when using the Internet.

Content:

- ◆ There are some basic Internet safety rules, including not giving out your address, last name or phone number.
- ◆ Establish habits of openness and sharing during Internet use. Children's work and exchanges should be observed by peers and adults and shared with parents.
- ◆ Children should seek advice if they're not sure they should give out the information an individual or site asks for.
- ◆ Tell a trusted adult any time an Internet experience puzzles or troubles you.

What's Appropriate on the Internet?

Each school or district should have a Technology Office or other entity that establishes guidelines for appropriate use of the Internet in classrooms. Different communities will make different choices about these matters.

Some schools maintain active Internet sites where students contribute essays, drawings and reports. Students may be identified by school, grade level, teacher name and their own first name. Some sites include class photographs, or photos from student field trips or projects.

Others schools use more stringent guidelines. For example, they may decide against the use of photographs or student names.

Individual teachers should inform themselves of any school or district policies. If these are not already established, encourage your school to set these up thoughtfully and proactively.

Sample Questions and Answers

I want to send my poem to this website for kids, but they need my name, age and school. Can I do this?

I'm glad you asked. Let's go over our class rules and see if this would be OK. You can give your first name and last initial. You can give your age. You can give the name of our state. Is that enough for you to include with your poem?

If the website says it needs your last name or the name of your

A Teachable Moment

Mr. Talamantes is working with several students on an Internet project. They are looking at a site with children's drawings and stories from all over the world. They find a photo of a boy named Raul who lives in Brazil. He has written a story and drawn a picture about his school. The students find this especially interesting because they have been learning about Latin America.

The students like Raul's story. They decide to e-mail him and tell him what they are learning about Brazil.

Then Selina asks, "Is this safe for Raul? We know a lot about him from the Internet. We know the city he lives in and the school he goes to and what he looks like. What if someone bad got on the Internet? Could they find him and hurt him?"

Mr. Talamantes uses this as a chance to go over the rules in their own school for sharing information on the Internet. They look at Raul's pages and agree that they would not put quite as much information in a site of their own. Their school has decided not to use photographs of students.

Mr. Talamantes reassures the students that Raul will probably be just fine, but he knows the parents and teachers in their school have decided to be extra careful about students using the Internet. He tells Selina he is glad she brought up such a good question.

school, too, maybe we should write them an e-mail and tell them why we think this isn't safe for kids. Shall we do that?

I've been playing Internet checkers a lot with this kid from Germany. He sent me an e-mail and wants to know my address so he can send me a pen-pal letter. He sounds really cool. Would it be OK?

Here's a hard thing about the Internet. You get to know someone who seems as if he'd be a good friend. You'd like to exchange phone numbers or addresses so you can get to know each other better.

3 Main Internet Risks for Children

1. Exposure to inappropriate material. This includes sites that are sexually explicit, violent, demeaning or racist.

Prevention: Schools and parents can use filtering programs that censor sites containing certain kinds of language. Close supervision of children while using the Internet is important. Cultivate open communication about what children see on the Internet and provide honest answers to their questions.

2. Contact with adults or other children who might physically harm them. This becomes possible if children provide identifying information to someone over the Internet.

Prevention: Teach children never to reveal identifying information such as last name, address or phone number, and never to arrange a personal meeting with someone they have met on the Internet. Encourage them to talk to teachers, parents or other adults if anything seems odd or makes them uncomfortable about someone they've had contact with.

3. Harassment. Children may be harassed through threatening or demeaning e-mails or messages.

Prevention: Teach children to use appropriate language, avoid swear words or insults, and report incidents in chat rooms or bulletin boards when others do not follow these rules. Ask children to show you any e-mails or other messages that disturb them.

But you can't know for sure about this person. He might be really cool, or he might be cool only on the Internet. He might be 10 years old, or he might be 50. He might live in Germany, or he might live somewhere else.

Chances are your checker's friend is just the kind of person you think he is. But because you can't be sure, the safest thing is not to give him any information about yourself. People who use the Internet know this is safest for everybody, especially for kids.

Someone who pushes you to do something more isn't respecting you or the rules. It's one of the reasons you wouldn't ask someone on the Internet to tell you his or her last name or address.

Why don't you show me the e-mails he's been sending? Then we could work together on an answer that feels right for you.

Being Lost

Goal: Children know steps to take when they are lost.

Content:

- ◆ Know your own phone number and address.
- ◆ Staying still makes it easier for family or friends to find you.
- ◆ Good people to ask for help might be security officers; police; or mall, theme park or museum employees. If these aren't available, approaching families with children to ask for help may be best.

Sample Questions and Answers

When my big brother got lost at the museum, he ran around through all the rooms until he found my mom. Wasn't that faster than if he'd just stayed still?

It might have been faster for your brother. Sometimes it is. But *most* of the time, staying still will be faster. Then the people looking for you only have to look in each place once. This plan works even better if everyone in your family (or in your group of friends) knows that this is what any of you will do if you are lost.

Sometimes families or groups agree on a place where they will meet if they get separated. This is a good plan, too.

How can someone help you if you're not supposed to give your name or phone number to anyone you don't know?

You're right about giving information to people you don't know. If a stranger asks you for your phone number, address or other kinds of personal information, you shouldn't tell.

But it's a little different when you need help. Then you may need to give this kind of information to someone who can help you get back to your family.

It's important to choose someone who can really help you. Security and police officers are a good choice. So are people working nearby, such as store clerks or museum guides.

A Teachable Moment

The third grade class is on a field trip to the zoo. They stop at a gift store, where each child is assigned a buddy. Suzanne and Cindy are buddies, but Cindy has been getting into a lot of trouble on this trip. One of the parents sees Cindy lingering outside the store and tells her to go join the rest of the class.

When Suzanne comes out a few minutes later, the class is gone. She can't find anyone she knows. It's very hard to just stay put, but she knows that's what she's supposed to do. She waits by the store, and about 10 minutes later her teacher, Mrs. Larkin, calls to her. She runs into Mrs. Larkin's open arms, almost crying and worried that she's acting like a baby.

When they get back to the group, everyone is happy to see them. Mrs. Larkin praises Suzanne for doing exactly the right thing by staying still, and Suzanne, bursting with pride, suddenly feels very mature and grown up.

Other Areas

A few other areas in injury prevention bear mentioning. Following are the major content and prevention guidelines to cover in each.

Poisoning

The greatest risk from poisoning is among children age 5 and under. Prevention guidelines for older children include:

- ◆ All medications should be locked, out of sight and out of children's reach.
- ◆ Cleaners, solvents and other potentially harmful materials should be in restricted storage (locked is best) and used only under adult supervision.
- ◆ A caretaking adult should always supervise use of prescription and over-the-counter medications.
- ◆ Poison control and emergency medical numbers should be posted by every phone.
- ◆ Keep ipecac syrup on hand, but use only on the advice of a poison control center or physician.
- ◆ Cooperate with lead exposure testing programs.

Playground Injury

Most fatal injuries related to playground equipment occur on home playgrounds; the leading cause of death is strangulation. Most non-fatal injuries happen on public playgrounds and are caused by falls.

- ◆ Use appropriate surfaces under playground equipment, such as loose-fill, fine sand, shredded rubber or rubber mats.
- ◆ Set and keep a regular schedule for equipment checks and maintenance on daily, monthly and annual basis.
- ◆ Follow voluntary or required guidelines for equipment standards.

- ◆ Children need adequate adult supervision while using playground equipment. Rough play, pushing, shoving and crowding should be stopped.
- ◆ When playing on playground equipment, children should remove any hood or neck drawstrings, jewelry or other accessories that increase the risk of strangulation.

Sports

Participation in sports is an excellent opportunity for children to grow physically and emotionally, improve coordination and build self-confidence.

- ◆ Children should always wear appropriate safety equipment.
- ◆ Equipment used in any sport (bats, balls, goal posts, bases, safety helmets) should be in good condition.
- ◆ Children should receive training and build skills sequentially before performing complex maneuvers or rough contact.
- ◆ Drinking liquids (water is best) prior to and during sports activities is very important.
- ◆ Children should be matched by similar skill levels, size and maturity for team sports.
- ◆ Positive team experiences can help children who are not especially skilled or competitive. Special activities can support the athletically gifted and motivated.

Classroom Activities

The following activities can be used to reinforce the concepts discussed in this chapter. Feel free to adapt activities to suit the needs of your students and classroom.

Motor Vehicle Safety Smart Kids Buckle Up

In this activity, students identify persuasive reasons for wearing safety belts.

- Tell the class a story about a big brother or sister trying to get a younger sibling to use the car seat or a safety belt. The younger child refuses.
 - Ask students what suggestions they can offer.
-

Motor Vehicle Safety Who Buckles Up?

This activity allows students to discuss the role-modeling effect of movie and television characters.

- Have students describe movie or television characters who use safety belts and who don't.
 - Ask if they think it's important for people in TV shows or the movies to set a good example for others. Would a movie character's behaviors influence what they do themselves?
-

Pedestrian Safety

Smart and Safe Coming to School

This activity has students survey the safety behaviors of peers arriving at school.

- Have students do a survey of other students arriving at school. How many of them are walking across the streets or riding their bikes in smart, safe ways?
- For older students (3–4), ask what they think kids who are taking risks think about it. Why would they choose risky behavior over safe behavior?

Water Safety

Safe Waters

Students can help a character in an interactive story make safe choices about water.

- Tell students an interactive story in which a character comes to some kind of water. Allow students to choose what it is (a faucet, a river, an ocean). Ask:
 - What does the water look like? (Deep, slow, fast, small, big, rocky, lots of trees, etc.)
 - What does the character want to do? (Cross, swim, drink, take a boat across.)
 - What will make this safe to do? (Swim with a friend, wear a life-vest, go another way.)
- As the possibilities wind down, have the character come to a pleasant resting spot (a sunny beach, a chaise lounge by the pool) and stop. Ask students to suggest what the character would say to finish the story.

Bicycle Safety

A Smart, Safe Bike Route to School

This activity helps students who are riding bicycles plan safe routes to and from school.

- Have students draw maps to show how they get to school.
 - Have them examine their maps and highlight any parts of the route that pose risks or need special attention (e.g., a busy street, a traffic signal, a steep hill, a place where it gets busy because everyone is arriving at the same time).
 - Help students plan safer routes if necessary.
-

Bicycle Safety

Safe and Awesome!

Students can learn safety skills at a bicycle or skating clinic.

- Set up a bicycle or skating clinic at school that teaches fun riding techniques along with safety strategies.
 - Give ribbons or certificates of completion to students who successfully pass skill tests, such as stopping quickly, turning a tight circle, doing a slalom course, etc.
-

Bicycle Safety

Lots of Wheels!

This activity encourages students to discuss safe ways to use vehicles with wheels.

- Have students make a list or draw pictures of all the wheeled objects they own that they can drive themselves (bicycles, skates, skateboards, scooters, etc.). Ask them to count the total number of wheels on all these vehicles.

- Then have the class discuss safe places and safe ways to ride each kind of vehicle, and what equipment (helmets, knee pads) makes riding safer.

Fire Safety

Crawl Low

This activity helps students learn about and practice crawling low to escape a fire.

- Tie a ribbon or piece of yarn across a space about 6 feet wide, and about 2 feet from the ground. It will look like a very low “limbo” bar. If you can set up 2 or 3 of these ribbons over a distance of a few yards, this activity will be even more fun.
- Tape a paper sign that says “smoke” to each ribbon.
- Describe the way smoke tends to rise in a fire and fill the room from the ceiling down. Explain that if people ever need to escape a smoky fire, the smartest thing to do is to crawl low, underneath the smoke.
- Have students practice crawling under the ribbons. Congratulate them for their agility and intelligence when they finish.

Fire Safety

Stop, Drop and Roll

This activity helps students learn about and practice the “Stop, drop and roll” technique.

- Teach students about the fire triangle—fires need fuel, heat and oxygen to burn. This is why people often blow on a fire to get it started. If someone’s clothing catches fire, it is very important that they not *run*, because this gives the fire more oxygen and can make the situation worse.

(continued)

- Have students practice the stop, drop and roll method for extinguishing a fire. Encourage them to roll back and forth over the part that is supposed to be on fire.
 - To make this activity more interactive, use bright yellow or red self-stick notes to represent fire. Stick notes on students' arms, legs or shoulders and have them roll over that area of the body as if it were on fire. Students could practice further in small groups.
 - Reassure students that while it is unlikely they will ever need to do this in a real fire, it is a smart thing for everyone to know.
-

Fire Safety

Fire Escape at School

Take time to have students map out fire escape routes for their classroom or school.

- Have students work on a school map (perhaps as a mural) that shows safe escape routes from each classroom or from the different rooms used by their class. Identify a place where all students will meet.
 - Have a plan for students to line up and conduct a roll call. Emphasize that no one should return to the building without an adult's OK.
-

Fire Safety

Smoke Alarms

This activity helps students learn about smoke alarms and practice checking the battery on the alarm in the classroom.

- Install a smoke alarm in your classroom. Talk to students about the importance of having a smoke alarm in the home, and of checking it regularly and changing the batteries twice a year.

- Have students help you check the battery on the classroom smoke alarm monthly. Twice a year, when the time changes for daylight savings time, have students help you change the batteries.
 - Encourage students to do this at home, too.
-

Fire Safety

Real Firefighters

This activity gives students a chance to learn fire safety facts from a real-life role model.

- Invite a firefighter to come and talk to the class about fire safety.
 - Ask the speaker to bring a photo or examples of the protective clothing firefighters wear going into a fire, so students can become familiar with the appearance of a rescuer. (In some instances, children have been frightened and have run away from people in rescue gear.)
-

Safety from Bullying

Are There Bullies on TV?

This activity helps students examine the norms around conflict shown on television.

- Ask students to talk about the sitcoms they watch on TV.
 - Focus the discussion on people's interactions. Do these shows use a lot of put-down humor? What are some examples? Is this a kind of bullying? Why do people find this funny?
 - Ask how conflicts are usually resolved on the shows. Have students share examples and suggest alternatives for better conflict resolution.
-

Safety from Bullying

Time to Speak Up

Students can come up with solutions to bullying by using vignettes or roleplays.

- Use puppets, vignettes or roleplays to create a scene in which one character is being harassed, threatened, provoked or bullied by another.
 - Model the steps the character being harassed might take:
 - Figure out he or she doesn't like what's going on ("Am I OK?").
 - Say something directly to the bully or harasser ("Stop").
 - Get out of the situation.
 - Get help from a grown-up if necessary.
 - Present a similar scene with new characters, and have students suggest ways the character being harassed could take steps to change the situation or get help.
 - Encourage students to make their statements forcefully and with certainty, and to practice through repetition.
 - If students enjoy this activity, try it with other stories or scenes. Use peer influence stories, such as a group picking on someone and wanting the main character to join in.
 - As students build understanding and skills, you might include a scene where a child or young character is being asked by an adult or older character to do something that doesn't feel right (keep a secret from parents, hurt another person or an animal, be photographed in ways that don't feel good, etc.).
-

Safety from Adults

How Would They Get Help?

This activity helps students explore steps children can take to get help if they feel unsafe or uncomfortable around a grown-up.

- Tell some vignettes about children who need to make a choice about safety and comfort with an adult. Possible situations:
 - A girl doesn't like spending several hours by herself at home after school.
 - A boy is upset because he didn't do his chores and his father yelled at him.
 - A girl is worried because her mother has suddenly become very sick and isn't talking to her.
 - A boy is nervous because the kid next door has been talking about bringing a gun out to show him.
 - A girl knows her uncle has been drinking and doesn't want to get in the car with him.
 - A boy feels confused about the way his dad's friend keeps punching him on the shoulder as a joke. It hurts.
 - A girl doesn't like the way her teenage sister's boyfriend keeps staring at her, teasing her and touching her in uncomfortable ways.
 - Ask students to discuss what kind of help the child needs and whom he or she could get it from.
-

Firearm Safety

Gun Tales

Students can discuss stories that raise firearm safety issues.

- Tell students the following story:

I know a kid who thinks he's pretty smart. He was feeling pushed around by another kid and it made him angry. He got his dad's gun and showed it to the other kid. He figured that would scare that kid and teach him a lesson.

- Then ask students, "What do you think? Was he a smart kid?" Develop the discussion. What wasn't smart about this? What would a smart kid have done?
- Use other stories that raise firearm safety issues. Some examples:

A. *There was a girl who was scared. Some older kids were saying mean things to her and making threats. She thought they would hurt her. She took a little gun from her house and kept it in her backpack. She didn't plan to use it, but thought it was a good idea to keep it with her, just in case. What do you think? Was this a good idea?*

B. *There was a boy who had a really terrible day at school. He got to school late and got in trouble. He forgot his homework and got in trouble. He finally got to play first base at recess and missed every ball that came his way. A girl he liked told him he was a jerk. It was a very bad day.*

After school, he got out his BB gun and went out into a field. He was shooting at tin cans. He shot at a couple of rabbits. The girl who'd been mean to him went by and he pointed the gun at her and made shooting noises.

What do you think? Did his day get better after he played with the BB gun?

Internet Safety

Our Internet Rules

Students can develop and distribute rules for smart, safe use of the Internet.

- Talk to the class about the importance of following rules for courtesy and safety on the Internet. Review some of these rules:
 - Don't give your last name, phone number or address to anyone.
 - Don't make secret plans to meet someone in person.
 - Use respectful language and avoid swear words or mean statements.
 - Don't spend time at sites that say and promote mean things.
 - Ask the class to develop their own checklist for Internet safety and courtesy rules. You could develop this list through a guided full-group discussion, or have students work in small groups to come up with a series of ideas. Then small groups could share their suggestions with the entire class.
 - Encourage students to include “do’s” as well as “do not’s” so that their lists include positive skills for making good connections. This lends more balance to the activity, keeping focus on the usefulness and value of the Internet while acknowledging potential dangers.
 - Once the guidelines are agreed on, assign a group to copy and present the checklist neatly. Then duplicate the checklist so everyone in the class has a copy. Students may want to take copies home to their parents as well. It might be useful to post the rules if the school has its own website.
-

Being Lost

Smart Skits About Being Lost

This activity has students create skits that address what to do to avoid getting lost, and how to get help if it happens.

- Have students work in small groups to develop short skits that explain ways to prevent getting lost, and what to do if it happens.
 - Some situations you might ask groups to create:
 - Parents are talking to their young child at home, going over the rules for not getting lost.
 - An older sibling is explaining the rules to a younger sibling. The younger child isn't being very attentive. How does the older child convince the younger that this is a serious matter?
 - A group of third or fourth graders are pairing up with a younger class for a field trip. The older kids are assigned younger kids as buddies, and are responsible for them. They need to go over what they expect of the younger kids.
 - A boy gets separated from his big family at the fair. He waits for his family to come find him. Other kids at the fair come by trying to get him to do some fun things. What does he say and do?
 - A girl gets out of the community swimming pool and can't find her older sister anywhere. She begins to worry. There are a couple of lifeguards, a bunch of other kids, and some parents who are watching their own kids nearby. What does she do?
-

6 Parents and Families Helping Kids Stay Safe

Through their families, children develop a sense of place and belonging in the world. They are fed and clothed and cared for. They are loved. The family supports children in developing social and cognitive skills that make it possible for them to navigate the world. Family is an arena where children can see the unique contributions they make—no one else can do just what they can for their family.

Parents and families also have enormous influence on the choices their children will make in risky situations. Family rules and traditions tell children what behaviors are acceptable. Consequences for breaking rules let them know how seriously the family is committed to keeping everyone safe.

Parents who discuss safety issues with their children in an ongoing way let them know how important it is to make smart, safe choices. Children can look up to older siblings who model safe behavior. They enjoy opportunities to be good role models themselves for younger family members.

Helping families join the effort to inform kids and build safety skills does more than reinforce classroom lessons. What parents learn through the injury prevention curriculum will help them take steps to make children safer at home as well. Significant numbers of unintentional childhood injuries occur in and around the home (about 40% of fatal and 50% of nonfatal injuries). The vast majority of childhood deaths from unintentional injury occur in the evening hours, when children are out of school.

Valuable Allies

The overall goals of parents and teachers are the same when it comes to injury prevention. Both want children to be safe, secure and happy. For this reason, parents make excellent allies in your injury prevention efforts.

There are many ways to bring parents into the injury prevention lessons. Parents can be asked to discuss ideas and questions with their children. Both parents and children can think about their family's values concerning injury prevention. Some activities might help parents reflect on the ways their own behaviors influence their children's choices. Take-home letters or assignments might include information sheets that review appropriate safety guidelines for the home. Most important, activities can reinforce the caring and commitment parents have around their children's well-being.

An ongoing, proactive approach to parent involvement gives parents concrete and gratifying outlets for their concerns. They can talk more easily with their children about these issues because family activities provide a vocabulary and structure for the discussion. Parents can link their children's learning with long-standing family

What Is a Parent?

Children may have many adults in their lives filling parental roles. They may have biological, adoptive, step or foster parents. They may have other legal guardians. Some children have older siblings, aunts and uncles, grandparents and family friends who care for them and give them support. Some of your students may find parental figures in the leaders of after-school recreation programs or in their teachers.

Children can build a sense of belonging and self-esteem through many sources. In this chapter, parents are defined in somewhat conventional terms—adults who hold primary responsibility for the child's well-being—but many other “parents” can also help children build values and skills that keep them safe and injury free.

values, such as self-respect and personal responsibility. When this kind of dialogue is active in the home, it's easier for both parents and students to support the goals of the classroom curriculum.

For example, parents who join in the school's commitment to a bully-free environment will welcome classroom activities that teach their children assertiveness skills and reward them for speaking out against violence. Families that understand the risks of children being home alone for several hours a day are likely to support community solutions that offer better options, such as city-supported after-school programs. Parents who agree with the school's emphasis on wearing bicycle helmets will be more vigilant about their children's helmet use.

Challenges

There are a few areas of parental concern that can raise challenges for school injury prevention efforts. Current events may heighten alarm in areas where overall risks are low, or where options for teaching children relevant prevention skills are limited. When significant resources are turned to these topics, schools may neglect areas of greater risks and issues where the impact is more certain.

Hot Topics

Like everyone else, parents are worried about "hot topics." These compelling and dramatic areas of risk understandably weigh heavily on parents' minds. They want their children protected from stranger abductions, school shootings, and sexual and other kinds of abuse.

The Case of One

Injury prevention educators are familiar with a phenomenon they call "the case of one"—those times when a tragedy occurs to someone people are close to in some way. It might be a bullying incident involving a family cousin, the drowning of a child on the other side of town, or the abduction of a child in another state whose family seems "just like ours."

Because of this emotional or psychological closeness, the risk seems huge. The danger feels even greater the more the victim resembles oneself or one's kids. People think, "If it happened to that person, it could certainly happen to me." In these instances, strong concerns naturally arise.

A "case of one" can be an effective motivator. Parents might become involved in community programs to control bullying, to teach children to swim, or to improve communication between different law enforcement agencies in the event of an abduction. However, a "case of one" can also divert attention from more significant risks and more immediate concerns. It will not be especially helpful if everyone focuses on how to keep strangers from abducting children (a horrible but relatively rare occurrence), and

Family Strengths

Work with students to identify the strengths and resources within their respective families. Some family strengths may be based on long-standing cultural traditions. Others come from things parents have learned in their own lives.

Qualities different families have that can lend strength and support to children include:

- Having an extended family, with people of many different ages living in a single household.
- Having extensive, active and rewarding kinship networks—time with cousins, uncles and aunts, grandparents.
- Strong faith.
- Cultural traditions that value and revere children.
- Interest in school success.
- Parents whose own experiences with racism, intolerance or violence give them wisdom to help their children.
- A sense of connection to the wisdom and care of previous generations, including ancestors who died long ago.

no one works to increase the number of children who wear safety belts every time they ride in a car.

The Media

The media also play a role in exaggerating the effects of singular incidents or hot topics. Here's a recent example: a distraught and mentally unbalanced mother left her two young children in her automobile and released the brake. The car rolled into a lake and both children drowned.

This grim and extraordinarily tragic story was played out in news broadcasts for weeks after it occurred. News researchers discovered other instances of troubled parents killing their children. Perhaps a dozen cases were brought to light that had taken place in the last several years, and many people began to worry that a frightening new trend was emerging.

It wasn't. What the media focused on was a collection of isolated tragedies that occurred infrequently over a significant period of time. In that same period, perhaps 20,000 child passengers died in automobile collisions and another 2 million were injured. Much less attention was paid to the tragic and far more widespread losses of these children.

How Schools and Teachers Can Respond

Teachers and schools can address and help balance parents' concerns about hot topics and "case of one" situations in a constructive way.

Here are some straightforward steps:

- ◆ **Validate parents' concerns.** It is always reasonable for parents to have concerns for their children's safety. It is a good sign when parents' interest in their children's well-being motivates them to take action. Everyone concerned about the welfare

of children should be pleased to see these demonstrations of caring.

- ♦ **Work proactively.** Don't wait for a media crisis to create panic and frustration. Keep parents involved in injury prevention curricula, and keep them informed about school policies and other efforts that ensure the safety and health of their children.
- ♦ **Give parents a sound foundation.** Help parents understand the basic epidemiology of injury prevention through your family contacts (back-to-school nights, family letters, family activities in the health or injury prevention curriculum). Emphasize how important it is to give attention to those areas of risk where preventive steps are clear, possible and effective.

When parents have a strong understanding of the overall issues, they will be able to approach crisis topics in a more rational way. This doesn't mean they won't have strong emotions—after all, they feel their children's lives are at stake—but they will be better able to see the reasonable steps that can be taken to limit and control risks.

- ♦ **Use strategies that empower parents and students.** Strong, connected families are a wonderful resource in injury prevention efforts. There are many ways children and parents can join in efforts to create greater safety and comfort in their community.

They might share in a physical activity that helps them feel strong and fit, such as taking family walks or signing up for a karate class. They can contribute to wider community efforts to limit violence and conflict, perhaps by supporting community garden projects, drug prevention efforts, or mentoring of younger children.

Students and parents can review the steps for conflict resolution or talk about ways children are learning to recognize and manage feelings. Making activities concrete and possible gives people a sense that things can be done, so they feel more secure, more empowered and more committed to action.

◆ **Emphasize the importance of parents and family.**

Children flourish when they have a strong sense of connection to family and community. Be sure parents understand how essential their role is in keeping their children safe, not just by setting up appropriate rules and guidelines, but by providing a sense of belonging.

Children who know they belong have the self-esteem to believe they are worth keeping safe. Children who are confident of their place in the world make smarter, safer choices in their lives.

More Ideas for Involving Parents and Families

One of the most exciting and effective ways to involve parents and families in injury prevention is through family activities connected to classroom lessons. Students can gain wisdom from their parents' experiences and values. Parents can learn facts from information sheets and their children's reports of school programs. Families together can make a clear and conscious commitment to making their homes safe for everyone.

Specific activities might ask parents and children to survey the safety features in their home or neighborhood. It's helpful to start from the premise of "things we're doing right." Are there locks on the doors? Are medicines stored out of reach of young children? Are electrical appliances properly connected, with undamaged cords and plugs?

Parents and children could then determine whether any safety improvements are needed in the home. The most important is installation of properly working smoke detectors. Family activities might have students join their parents in changing the batteries on smoke detectors twice a year. It's also a good idea for children and parents to map out escape routes in the event of a fire in the home.

Families might also look for areas of risk in the neighborhood, suggest solutions and take steps to follow through. Is there a side-

walk that the city should repair? Are any street lights burned out? Does a street need speed bumps or stop signs? A letter or phone call to the Department of Transportation would be a great response.

Parent groups can get involved in making safety work for everyone at the school. PTAs have sponsored programs to provide free or low-cost smoke detectors or bicycle helmets. Local businesses might support such efforts with donations or discounts. Older students at middle or high schools might help with fundraising, presenting safety clinics for students and their families, or volunteering to mentor a young student on bicycling or roller blading safety and skills.

When Family Behaviors Aren't Safe

Families of widely varying styles and resources all provide children opportunities to learn about themselves in powerful and essential ways. This does not mean, however, that every family is equally effective in helping children develop confidence and competence or in keeping them safe. Just as families can reinforce children's smart and safe choices, they can throw wrenches into the works, often without intending to or realizing they are doing it.

Perhaps an uncle in a hurry walks across an intersection against the light. A parent might disconnect the waning battery in a beeping smoke detector and forget to replace it right away. Maybe a father lets the kids ride in the bed of the truck for a short drive to the store.

Family activities can help parents understand how valuable and powerful their modeling can be. A parent who is receptive to the school's injury prevention efforts will also be more responsive to guidance around the importance of children riding in the back seat, or of securely locking away firearms in the home.

What Would You Do?

Parents and caretakers make decisions every day that affect the well-being of their children. Some of these choices are not consistent with expert recommendations about child safety.

Think about the following list. Have you done any of these things yourself, either as a child or as a caretaker? Which ones seem understandable in some situations? Which alarm you? What would you do (or what have you done) if a student told you this happened in his or her family?

- A young child sits in the front seat for a short drive to the grocery store.
- A child is allowed to ride her bike on the sidewalk and driveway in front of her house without a helmet.
- A parent allows a seven year old to cross unaccompanied to visit the neighbor on the other side of their quiet street.
- A parent runs inside to answer the phone while the children play in the shallow end of the pool.
- A second grader goes swimming at the local lake under the supervision of her 11-year-old sister. There are no lifeguards.
- A fourth grader spends several hours alone at home in the hours after school or in the evening.
- A kindergartner spends several hours alone at home in the hours after school or in the evening.
- A child has a computer in her room with an Internet link.
- There are firearms in the home.
- There are firearms in the home that are stored loaded in an unlocked cabinet.
- A father who has been drinking drives several children home after a birthday party.
- A parent is selling drugs.
- A parent drinks a six-pack while cleaning firearms.

Sometimes, however, despite your best efforts to join with families, parents may not be receptive to suggestions. They may feel they have a better sense of their child's physical capabilities, and believe he or she is mature enough to ride a bicycle in traffic or cross the street alone. They may think it's just fine to drive a short distance without the constriction of a safety belt, or they may just be fed up

A Real-World Example: Parents Who Drink and Drive

Sometimes successful interactions need to involve the community. Here is one teacher's story.

"I worked with a school in the southwest that was near an American Indian reservation. We knew there was a lot of alcoholism on the reservation, and we had some instances where parents picking up kids after school had obviously been drinking.

"If we made reports in these cases, we were afraid it would just alienate the whole American Indian community. Almost all of the teachers in the school were outsiders to them, and we were just starting to build some really good connections with parents.

"On the other hand, if we didn't do anything, some of our students might be seriously hurt, or even killed. This was terrifying to us.

"What we finally did was talk to tribal leaders and the tribal health authority. They were really concerned too. They carried out a very powerful educational campaign about drinking and driving, and emphasized how important children's safety was to everyone on the reservation. They also let parents know that if they picked up their kids at school when they'd been drinking, the teachers had to tell the police.

"It seems to have worked. We haven't had drinking parents picking up kids. I'm really happy about the way this turned out, because it kept the focus on the ways parents care about their kids and protect them."

with an irritable child who doesn't want to wear one. They might think fighting is a reasonable option for settling differences, and worry that conflict resolution strategies will make their children "too soft" for the harsh world that awaits them.

Sometimes the challenges are more distressing. Particular concerns arise with families whose behaviors or styles of interaction pose threats to children's physical well-being.

This might be a family with a casual approach to rules in which adults do not keep a close eye on children in the family pool. A parent who drinks may make the choice to drive children while under the influence. Many young children have easy access to loaded weapons. Parents may punish children in physical ways that are risky. In some families, there is an ongoing pattern of emotional or physical abuse. Some parents are involved in dangerous illegal activities, such as illicit drug sales or manufacturing.

It's hard to fall back on clear-cut guidelines in all of these situations. State laws or district policies concerning reporting of child endangerment may come into play, but often circumstances are ambiguous enough that the reporting guidelines may not be absolutely certain. Teachers, understandably, can feel fiercely protective of their students. But taking big-gesture steps, such as making a police report, may create additional risks to a child's overall well-being if the family becomes alienated from the school.

Violence in Families

Family violence presents a difficult and definite threat to children's safety. Some children are neglected, some are emotionally exploited, and some are abused physically or sexually. When there is violent discord between spouses or between parents and adolescents, young children may be harmed when trying to break up fights, or simply because they did not get out of the way quickly enough. Children are vulnerable targets in marital disputes, sometimes with tragic outcomes when one or both parents are psychologically disturbed.

Guidelines for intervention are more clear in the area of family violence. In all states, teachers, physicians, therapists and others who work with children have a clear obligation to intervene in situations where there is evidence of physical abuse, including sexual abuse. While specific guidelines vary from state to state, the overarching principle is certain and the steps to take are usually well drawn.

Teachers need to receive training and ongoing guidance on reporting issues. They need to be familiar with signs of possible abuse, as well as their own school and district procedures for follow-up when abuse is suspected. Where there is reasonable evidence that physical or sexual abuse is occurring, teachers have an obligation to file a report with police or Child Protective Services. (See the Appendix for a list of common signs of abuse and neglect.)

A dilemma can arise when the evidence is ambiguous. What if you learn of such violence through unsubstantiated rumor? What if you have some intuitive sense that a student is being abused, but no real evidence? What if a child explains away bruising—a fall from a bike, a tackle in a field hockey game, a scratch from a big dog?

Even the most experienced teachers and health providers can miss signs of abuse or other dangers within the family. Many children become adept at hiding abuse, sometimes in an effort to protect their families and/or the abuser. Professionals with a duty to report often struggle with these issues, wondering if action on their part would prevent a tragedy, or precipitate one.

General Guidelines for Teachers

There are ways for teachers to check their intuition and make proper decisions in situations of suspected family violence or abuse.

Here are the most important things to remember:

- ◆ **You know a lot.** You are probably already familiar with the common signs of child abuse. You know what kinds of behaviors are typical for students at your grade level. You know when a student's behavior is out of the norm for some reason. Once you have come to know your students individually, you know when

something is wrong for a particular student. Your expertise is immensely valuable.

- ◆ **Specific kinds of information will help you make an effective decision.** Know the policies and procedures of your school and district and the laws of your state. Know the parameters for mandated reporting. Know the ethical guidelines of your profession.
- ◆ **There are other professionals who will help.** Most schools have a designated mandated reporter. It may be someone on staff at the school, a district representative, or someone with the state or county health department. This is the person who will usually make the written report to the police or Child Protective Services. He or she can be a great resource for ideas and information.

Local Child Protective Services usually have anonymous reporting arrangements. It is often possible, and even advisable, to make an anonymous call to check on a situation and get advice about whether the circumstances require a report.

- ◆ **Reporting decisions are not made in isolation.** Your school or district should have staff with whom teachers can discuss concerns, ask questions, consult on specific situations, and make appropriate decisions about reporting. The decision to make a mandated report should always be made with consultation and assistance. This helps everyone keep a level head and make the wisest choices possible.
- ◆ **Your intuitions are valid.** Intuitions are not the same as facts, and you cannot treat them as if they are. It is not appropriate to make a mandated report based on intuition alone. This does not mean, however, that intuitions are not real or legitimate. When you have a sense that something is wrong in a student's family relationships, you are likely to be right. Pay attention and take steps to gather facts about the situation so that you can understand your intuition and make appropriate decisions about helping your student.

Families with Guns

An estimated 40% of U.S. households contain a firearm—1 in 4 is a handgun. Many of your students have firearms in their homes. By third or fourth grade, some of them probably own guns of their own, especially BB or pellet guns.

Safety experts are absolutely clear that having firearms in the household significantly increases the chance of a child being shot. In fact, most childhood shooting deaths occur when children come across loaded guns, usually in unlocked storage, very often in their own or a friend's home.

This poses a dilemma for the injury prevention educator. You want children to build a strong understanding of the danger of firearms and to practice the skills necessary to avoid risky situations around guns. But you don't want to alienate families that keep guns.

Here are some suggestions:

- Provide clear, accurate information about the dangers of firearms.
- Help children learn appropriate safety steps (especially leaving a place where unsupervised children or teenagers are handling guns, or any situation that feels uncomfortable), and the skills necessary to follow these steps.
- Encourage students to tell a trusted adult if other kids are playing with guns.
- Avoid making negative comments about people who own firearms.
- Support community education efforts aimed at reducing firearm dangers and increasing safety awareness for gun owners.
- Stay alert for signs that a child may be in danger because of gun practices in the home (especially drinking and handling of firearms). This can represent a significant risk to a child, and a report to or discussion with Child Protective Services may be appropriate. These calls can be made anonymously.

- ◆ **There are lots of steps that help.** You need not wait until you have a mandatory reporting situation on hand to take action. Start by gathering information or providing special support to a child you have concerns about. Try talking individually with the student, setting up a parent conference, or making a referral to counseling for the child or family. Bring activities into the classroom that help children identify their feelings and build self-assessment skills. (Am I OK?) Use skill-building activities that help children speak up and get help. Continue to be available to the child, even if he or she indicates there is no problem at home.
- ◆ **Teachers can benefit from ongoing training.** In services should regularly address issues such as family violence, unsafe behaviors, mandatory reporting guidelines and decision-making processes. Such training will be most useful and effective if it includes discussions of the kinds of families that have raised concerns for the teachers in your school. It's a good idea to have books and articles on family violence and appropriate interventions in a teacher resource library. Teachers should receive annual legal updates on reporting guidelines, as well as notice of any important changes that occur over the course of the school year. Ask for these kinds of trainings if you are not receiving them.
- ◆ **You may have to live with ambiguity.** It is inevitable that signs of family discord will emerge among some of your students, and at times this discord will appear to present significant danger for a child. It's difficult even for the most experienced specialists to make the "right" decision about whether to intervene dramatically in a child's family life and initiate a legal report. This is one reason it's helpful to have laws that state as clearly as possible the circumstances under which reporting is required.

Remember, almost all parents—even those with significant problems and violent behaviors—take their role as parents very seriously and care deeply about their children. Rely on your own expertise, the support and consultation of competent colleagues, and your best gut sense of what you need to do. These are the qualities that will help you make the best decisions in difficult or ambiguous situations.

Real-World Examples

When it comes to intervention, there are no easy answers. Here are two professionals' stories.

Sometimes It Doesn't Work...

"We had some kids in our school who lived in a household where there were guns and a lot of illegal activity. A gun was actually discharged inside the house at one point, so someone called and made a report.

"A police officer went out and talked to the mom and her boyfriend. The boyfriend said, 'I was just cleaning my gun and it went off. It was an accident.' The officer asked if the kids were OK, and the adults said, 'Oh, yeah.'

"There wasn't anything further done. These kids are still living in a house where people are dealing drugs and shooting guns.

"I'm pretty sure I'd go ahead with a report in another situation if I felt it was appropriate. But experiences like this make me sometimes wonder what's the point?"

...and Sometimes It Does

"I worked with a kid who was obviously having a lot of trouble at home. She was absent a lot, not well groomed, and hungry much of the time. We found out from the pediatrician at the county hospital that her mom was a heroin addict. The doctor made the report to Child Protective Services, and we all worked together to make a good plan for this family—the doctor, the school, CPS.

"It was hard and labor intensive. But the mom got into a methadone program. She loved her daughter very much, and being a parent was important to her. It pushed her to get clean.

"The girl was in foster care for a while, but saw her mom regularly. Eventually, mom and daughter were reunited. It took a couple of years, but the girl's in junior high now, and she looks great! I think our interventions saved this child, and her mom."

How an Injury Prevention Curriculum Can Help

An effective injury prevention curriculum has the exciting potential to give children in risky family situations the resources to help prevent or stop the abuse.

When a curriculum supports certain norms for safe behavior (e.g., it is not OK for one person to hurt another), abused children can see that abusive behavior is not normal and is not OK. When children learn to identify and describe their feelings to others, they are also building awareness of their emotional life. Abused children realize they do not feel safe when they are being abused. When they are taught to identify competent helpers and ask for assistance during times of difficulty or danger, they see that a path away from the abuse may be available.

Similar processes can help children who lack adequate supervision, have parents with troubling patterns of alcohol or other drug use, or experience other family behaviors that leave them feeling uncomfortable or unsafe. You want your students to believe the messages they get from their bodies about their feelings and speak up when they don't feel safe. You want them to know whom and how to ask for help. You want them to have ongoing conversations with their parents and other family members about everything that is important to them.

Children with these skills can improve their lives, even in families where safety is not always a primary focus. Risky family behaviors can be sensitive, difficult issues, but most families want to know about their children's concerns and welcome the chance to make the world safer for their children. Sometimes children who learn to speak up in these ways help a troubled family get back on course.

Family Activities

The following activities can be used to reinforce the concepts discussed in this chapter. Feel free to adapt activities to suit the needs of your students and their families.

Family Talk: What Helped You Feel Safe?

This activity encourages students to learn from their parents' experiences.

- Have students ask about their parents' childhoods.
 - What kinds of things scared them when they were little?
 - What helped them feel safe?
 - Can they think of a time an adult helped them make a smart, safe choice that kept them out of danger?
-

Family Talk: I'm Responsible

This activity gives students an opportunity to discuss family responsibilities with their parents.

- Have students talk with their parents about the kinds of responsibilities everyone in the family has to keep the home safe.
 - What do the parents do?
 - What does the child do?
 - What do siblings and other family members do?
-

Family Talk: Ways to Say No

This activity has students demonstrate to parents their skills at saying no in risky situations.

Teaching assertiveness skills and ways to say no is an important part of helping children stay safe. It's also essential to involve parents so they are not surprised when their children practice these more forceful expressions. Instead, they can support their children's efforts to be assertive and direct about feelings.

- Have students show parents some of the different ways they are learning to speak up.
 - You could give parents a list of situations to practice with their children (e.g., a stranger at a carnival wants you to take some candy from him; a kid in your class keeps teasing you; a coach tells you to go out and play even though you're injured). Suggest that parents work with their children on appropriate and effective ways to say no in these situations.
-

Our Safe Home

This activity encourages students and parents to note safety features in their home.

- Ask students to complete a worksheet with their parents that lists some of the ways safety is observed in the home.
 - Include some check-off boxes for the most important items (working smoke detector, planned fire escape route), or a separate list of safety suggestions for parents.
-

Fire Escape at Home

It's important that students and parents plan a fire escape route from their home.

- Have students take home a family activity sheet that asks families to map their home and plan fire escape routes from each room.
 - Ask them to plan 2 possible exits, and show a place outside the home where the family will meet.
-

Appendix A: Signs of Neglect and Abuse

A number of indicators can help identify instances of neglect or abuse. Familiarity with these signs can help you make appropriate interventions in cases of known or suspected neglect or abuse.

Sometimes an instance of abuse is witnessed directly. In most instances, however, teachers and others who care for children must respond to less certain information, making inferences from physical and behavioral signs.

Seeing these signs in a student certainly suggests a need to gather more information. When injuries or signs are severe or persistent, or several different indicators are present, “reasonable suspicion” may be raised. Speak with a consultant in your school, the mandated reporter in your system, or local Child Protective Services to evaluate whether a report is required or recommended, or if other intervention is called for.

Reports should not be made based on behavioral indicators alone, since there may be many causes for these.

Physical Abuse

Defined

The physical injury of a child inflicted by a parent or other caregiver, other adults, older children or peers. In your state, legal definitions might require that the person inflicting the abuse be 18 or over for mandatory reporting guidelines. Intervention is called for any time a child is being injured in this way, however, no matter how old the perpetrator is.

Physical Signs

- ◆ Bruises, welts or bite marks on any part of the body, especially face, neck, wrists, ankles, torso, back, buttocks or thighs.
- ◆ Lacerations or abrasions on any part of the body, especially to mouth, eyes, genitalia, arms, legs or torso.
- ◆ Burns on any part of the body, especially soles of feet, palms, back or buttocks; or signs of scalding water immersion (sock-like or glove-like burns).
- ◆ Injuries to both sides of the face. (Unintentional injuries, such as falls, usually injure only one side.)
- ◆ Marks in the shape of an article such as a belt, cord, kitchen utensil or iron.
- ◆ Continual presence of injuries in various states of healing.
- ◆ Marks appearing regularly after weekends, vacations or absences.

Behavioral Signs

- ◆ Wearing long sleeves or other concealing clothing inappropriate for weather.
- ◆ Apprehensive around adults; hyper-alert around crying children; unusually uncomfortable with changes in routines.
- ◆ Avoids going home.
- ◆ Behavior more exaggerated than that of peers (more aggressive, more withdrawn, mood changes).
- ◆ Low self-esteem.
- ◆ Injures self; prone to accidents; suicide attempts.

Sexual Abuse

Defined

The sexual exploitation of a child by a parent, relative, other caregiver, other adult, older child or peer. This includes a range of possible behaviors, including exhibitionism, voyeurism, showing the child pornographic materials, photographing the child for pornography, touching, fondling, or any form of sexual intercourse.

Physical Signs

- ◆ Often hard to see in school settings (teachers don't usually see genitals and underclothing).
- ◆ Showing pain or discomfort in walking or sitting.
- ◆ Torn, stained or bloody underclothing.
- ◆ Pain, itching or irritation in genital area.
- ◆ Bruises, abrasions or bleeding in genital area.
- ◆ Bruises or abrasions in mouth.
- ◆ Sexually transmitted diseases.
- ◆ Pain during urination; urinary tract infections.

Behavioral Signs

- ◆ Poor peer relationships.
- ◆ Sexualized behavior, acting out or sexual aggression among peers.
- ◆ Does not want to change for gym; avoids P.E. activities.
- ◆ Extreme fear or dislike of being touched.
- ◆ Withdrawal; regressive behaviors; fantasy.
- ◆ Reports sexual abuse by caregivers or others.
- ◆ Low self-esteem.
- ◆ Injures self; prone to accidents; suicide attempts.

Neglect

Defined

Adult caregivers withhold or fail to provide a child's basic needs, including food, shelter, clothing, supervision, education, hygiene or medical care. Emotional neglect includes acting in a way (either by omission or commission) that seriously impairs the emotional and mental development and functioning of a child.

Examples include unusual confinements (tying children down, locking them in closets for long periods), abusive language that denigrates the child, or withholding physical contact and affection to a severe extent. Such actions may be the result of a caregiver's alcohol or other drug abuse, mental illness or general personality traits.

Physical Signs

- ◆ Physical or mental development slow, behind peers.
- ◆ Appears at school hungry, poorly groomed, inappropriately dressed.
- ◆ Medical needs are not attended to.
- ◆ Speech problems.

Behavioral Signs

- ◆ Frequently truant.
- ◆ Begging or stealing food.
- ◆ Unusual habits (rocking, biting, sucking).
- ◆ Poor peer relationships; overly aggressive or withdrawn.
- ◆ Consistently describes long periods of unsupervised time, especially in dangerous situations.
- ◆ Avoids or delays going home.
- ◆ Extremes in behavior (very adult-like, very infantile, very emotional).
- ◆ Reports that there is no caregiver available.

Appendix B: Curriculum Integration

Here are some ways teaching about safety and risks can be integrated across the curriculum. Although this is by no means a comprehensive list, it may identify ways you are already addressing injury prevention, as well as suggest new approaches that will enhance your teaching.

Subject	Lessons Thematically Related to Injury Prevention
Social Studies/ History	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Common ways people were injured in other times and places.2. The risks pioneers and immigrants had to take to get to new homes, and the ways they cared for their communities.3. Choices people in other times and cultures faced that contributed to risks or injury.4. Examples of people facing conflicts and coming up with nonviolent solutions.
Math	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Use safety statistics in math exercises.2. Discuss chance, risk and ways to influence outcomes.3. Use word problems that address things such as the number of smoke detectors in a big hotel or the number of bicycle helmets used by a cycling team.4. Total up the number of safety belts in the family cars of all the students in the class.

Subject	Lessons Thematically Related to Injury Prevention
Language	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read and discuss stories about decision making, risks, consequences, planning ahead, bullying, and thinking about the future. 2. Teach communication skills, refusal skills, and how to talk about feelings. 3. Teach media literacy, especially ways media contribute to children’s risk-taking behaviors. 4. Write stories about belonging to the classroom community, making contributions to the community, and supporting friends.
Science	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How the body heals. 2. Ways safety equipment protects people from injury (e.g., dropping a melon in a bicycle helmet and without). 3. Degrees of intensity (faster, greater impact, etc.). 4. Momentum and impact (link to risks and injury).
Community Involvement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Invite guest speakers who can talk about safety (e.g., nurse, doctor, fire fighter or police officer). 2. Have students teach younger children about safety guidelines. 3. Write letters to the editor about school or community safety issues. 4. Share positive health messages with others through writing, posters, wearing badges, making statements in class, or creating public service messages.

Resources

Injury Prevention

Wilson, M. H., S. P. Baker, S. P. Teret, S. Shock and J. Garbarino. 1991. *Saving Children: A Guide to Injury Prevention*. New York: Oxford University Press.

General overview of issues, epidemiology and recommendations. Solid data.

Bullying

Beane, A. L. 1999. *The Bully Free Classroom: Over 100 Tips and Strategies for Teachers K-8*. Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, Inc.

Wide selection of classroom activities and strategies.

Olweus, D. 1993. *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do*. Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, Inc.

Excellent insights and recommendations based on author's large-scale studies of bullying. Compares studies across cultures.

School Violence

Dwyer, K., D. Osher and C. Warger. 1998. *Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Guidelines and recommendations. Look online at www.ed.gov.

Resources

Kane, W. M., M. M. Avila and H. C. Quiroz. 2001. *Step by Step to Safe Schools: The Program Planning Guide*. Santa Cruz, CA: ETR Associates.

Outlines the procedure for developing a comprehensive safe schools plan. Includes worksheets for evaluating the school's current environment and policies.

Nader, K., and R. Pynoos. 1998. *School Disaster: Planning and Initial Interventions*. Camden, ME: Gift from Within.

Guidelines and recommendations. Look online at www.source-maine.com.

Self-Esteem

Berne, P., and L. Savary. 1996. *Building Self-Esteem in Children*. New York: Crossroad Publishing.

Narrative book describes the dynamics of healthy self-esteem. Provides lots of pragmatic suggestions for ways to encourage and enhance self-esteem in children. Focuses on ideas for parents, but is useful for teachers and others who work with children as well.

Borba, M. 1989. *Esteem Builders: A K-8 Self-Esteem Curriculum for Improving Student Achievement, Behavior and School Climate*. Torrance, CA: Jalmar Press.

A collection of over 250 activities addressing 5 essential elements of successful self-esteem. Appropriately tailored to students by age levels, based on self-esteem research.

Canfield, J., and H. C. Wells. 1994. *100 Ways to Enhance Self-Concept in the Classroom*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Book filled with fun, easy-to-do activities that build self-esteem and a sense of belonging. Some take only moments; others are more in depth.

Khalsa, S. 1996. *Group Exercises for Enhancing Social Skills and Self-Esteem*. Sarasota, FL: Professional Resource Press.

Good ideas and activities. Many involve worksheets and writing better suited to older students, but some can be adapted for younger children.

Seligman, M. 1996. *The Optimistic Child: A Proven Program to Safeguard Children Against Depression and Build Lifelong Resilience*. New York: Harper Perennial.

Written for teachers and parents, reviews Seligman's long-term research on what makes children resilient. Provides clear, research-based rationales for the useful recommendations and suggestions.

Community

Bukowski, W. M., A. F. Newcomb and W. W. Hartup, eds. 1998. *The Company They Keep: Friendship in Childhood and Adolescence*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Anthology of somewhat scholarly articles about the benefits and mechanisms of children's friendships.

Quiroz, H. C. 1996. *Start with the Kids: 5 Days to Building a Classroom Community*. Santa Cruz, CA: ETR Associates.

Practical and creative strategies to give students a sense of belonging and responsibility.

Websites

Children's Safety Network

www.edc.org/HHD/csn

Data and recommendations regarding injury prevention among children.

Resources

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control

www.cdc.gov/ncipc

Part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Extensive statistical and epidemiologic information, recommendations.

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

www.nhtsa.dot.gov

Information and recommendations for safe bicycle riding.

National Safe Kids Campaign

www.safekids.org

First and only national organization dedicated solely to prevention of unintentional childhood injury. Excellent, up-to-date epidemiology and recommendations.

National School Safety Center

www.nssc1.org

Information on a broad range of safety topics.

No Bullying Campaign

www.nobully.org.nz

New Zealand-based website includes strategies and approaches for preventing bullying.

References

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