

Speak Up Be Safe 6th Grade Curriculum: Major Topics and Key Terms

An important part of growing up and preparing to become an adult is having more responsibilities and privileges. With the increase in privileges, comes a responsibility to stay safe. However, the adults in your life are still responsible for protecting you from certain types of danger, including abuse. It is important to know who your **safe adults** are so you know who to go to when faced with an unsafe or uncertain situation. (The characteristics of a safe adult are reviewed and students are asked to identify safe adults in their lives.)

There may be times when safe adults are not available and you need to make choices or decisions regarding your personal safety. **Personal safety** means doing our best to stay away from danger and situations where we might get hurt. Knowing what to do to prevent unsafe situations can help you to stay safe.

Safety Rule #1: "It's MY body."- You deserve to be safe, and your body also deserves to be respected and safe. You should feel in charge of what happens to your body. That is your right.

Our **personal boundary** (or personal space) is the area around our bodies, and we usually like to choose who is allowed in that space. When our boundaries are being crossed, our body and mind send us signals that let us know something is not okay. It's important to listen to our "intuition" or "gut feelings". These tell us we need to avoid or escape from potentially unsafe situations. People have different personal boundaries.

You are developing different circles of friends. The levels of communication and trust and degree to which you share feelings and emotions differ with each group. These circles indicate the different boundary levels you have based on how well you know and trust a person. As your social world is expanding, you will have to decide who gets to be close to you and who does not.

Child Abuse is when someone, an adult or another child, does something to harm a child or threatens to harm a child. Sometimes the person doing the abuse is a stranger, but most of the time the child knows his/her abuser. There are 4 different kinds of child abuse:

1. **Physical Abuse** is when someone hurts a child's body by hitting, punching, kicking, shaking, or twisting something like an arm or a leg. It can leave behind a bruise, a broken bone, cuts, or burns. Sometimes a parent or caregiver might spank a child to discipline them. A spanking should not leave behind a bruise or a mark. If it does, it may be child abuse.
2. **Neglect** is when a child is not getting what he/she needs to be healthy and safe (e.g., not being fed, not having proper clothes, not having a place to live, being left alone for long periods of time, being left with people that aren't safe, or not getting needed medical care).
3. **Emotional Abuse** is when a child is told bad things about themselves over and over again to hurt their feelings or make them feel bad about themselves. All people deserve to be respected and safe- not just their bodies, but their feelings too.
4. **Sexual Abuse** is when someone (even someone the child may know and love) shows, talks about, or tries to touch private body parts. **Private body parts** are the parts of the body covered by a bathing suit. Sexual abuse includes someone: (a) trying to talk to a child about or show a child their private body parts or asking a child to talk about or show his or her private body parts, (b) trying to touch a child's private body parts or to have a child touch their private body parts, or (c) taking pictures of or

showing pictures of private body parts to a child. The pictures could be people in a magazine, in a book, or on a website without clothes.

Some types of touching and showing private body parts aren't abuse. Examples: a doctor checking a child's body for injuries and illness and a parent/caregiver is in the room, and a child needs help washing and a parent /caregiver helps the child. It is wrong when someone touches, talks about, or shows pictures of private body parts not to help a child, but in a way that will harm or hurt a child.

Puberty is the time when physical changes begin happening to the body as a result of maturing. Growing up and approaching the teenage years with all of the new responsibilities, privileges, maturing bodies and relationship changes can in some ways increase a child's risk for abuse.

Even as you are gaining more independence, asking an adult to help with a problem can be the responsible and mature thing to do. Also, having questions and wanting to talk about them is normal.

Safety Rule #2: "Ask an adult if I am safe." - You don't always have to know if something that has happened to you or someone else is safe or not. You can talk with a safe adult, and he or she will help you figure it out.

There are 4 parts that make up a whole, complete person:

- The physical part- our physical body.
- The emotional part- the feelings that help guide us through life or reflect what's going on with the rest of our body.
- The mental part- our mind which helps us decide what we believe to be true and what we should question.
- The spiritual part- a set of beliefs or values a person has that makes his/her life meaningful.

It is important to pay attention to the 4 different parts and try to find balance among them. All of these parts are important and deserve equal attention. When one of the parts is hurt or suffering, it disrupts the others. Experiencing any of the types of child abuse can hurt all of the parts of the whole person.

Safety Rule#3: "I have choices." - If you are in a situation where you might not be safe and can't get to a safe adult right away, there may be things you can do to protect yourself from abuse. There are six choices, or **resistance strategies**:

R- Run (Run away if possible or as soon as possible. Get to a safe place.)

E- Escape (If you can't get away immediately, do so as soon as safely possible.)

S- Scream (Scream "no" or "stop" and threaten to tell.)

I- Ignore (If someone is trying to engage you in conversation or calling you over to a car or house, ignore them and move on.)

S- Stay Away (Avoid all future contact, or at least contact where you would be alone with the person.)

T- Tell (Tell a safe adult.)

In an abuse situation, the abuser is usually someone the child knows. He/she decides to take advantage of the relationship and puts what they think they need or want over what is right or healthy for the child.

It is common for abusers to use tricks and manipulation. **Manipulation** is making someone feel bad or guilty to get them to do something or not do something (e.g., telling an adult outside of the situation). The abuser might threaten to harm him/herself, harm the child or another family member, or threaten to leave the child's

life if the child tells anyone about the abuse. It's important for the child to listen to his/her intuition. Even if the child feels bad or guilty, his/her intuition may be saying the situation is wrong. It's important not to ignore these inner feelings and follow the safety rules. If a safe adult doesn't listen or is not supportive, you need to tell another safe adult. Keep telling safe adults until someone listens and does something to help.

Cyberbullying is when a person teases or harasses someone over the internet or by using a cell phone. Children and adults who would not normally say mean and hurtful things to peoples' faces sometimes do it through texting or using the internet.

If you would not show a person something or say something to their face, you should not be putting it into a text or email. Pictures and texts can be sent to a lot of people. Once you send something, you can't "unsend" it. Once it's been shared, you have no control over what happens to it. When we are using our cell phones or the internet, sometimes we are more daring or less careful about what we may say to people.

Sexting is when people send text messages about and/or pictures of private body parts using their cell phones. Sending these sorts of pictures and/or texts to a child is against the law whether they come from an adult or another child, and it can be abuse.

On the internet, children can talk with people they don't know using social networking sites. It's easy to forget that sometimes we're not even sure who we're talking with online. Using the internet for gaming, communicating, researching, and chatting can be fun and helpful. But there are times when the internet and social media are unsafe to use.

Important internet safety rules include: never share personal information online; never meet in person with someone you "met" online; never say something hurtful, embarrassing, or personal about someone online or in a text message; and speak up right away if you witness or are subjected to online cruelty.

Safety Rule #4: "Tell Someone." -If you're in an unsafe situation or think you're in an unsafe situation, it's important to tell a safe adult. Abuse is scariest when children keep it to themselves and feel alone. Once they tell, they can be protected from harm and begin to heal. It's also important to tell if you think or know someone else is unsafe.

Safety Rule #5: "It's NEVER my fault." Child abuse is never the child's fault, even if they kept the abuse to themselves, or shouldn't have been in a place or situation where abuse happened or where they saw it happen to someone else. Manipulation and power are key elements in abuse and bullying. No matter what choice or decision a child makes, a child NEVER deserves abuse. Regardless of the person's relationship to the child or what the child may have done, it is never OK for someone to abuse a child. Also, it's never too late to tell about child abuse.

Sexual harassment means to tease, bother, or annoy someone because they are a boy or girl, and it is any behavior that is unwanted and sexual in nature.

Sexual harassment can take place in person or electronically, and there are laws and school policies against it. There are 3 types of sexual harassment that happen at schools: talking, writing, and physical. (Examples of each type are provided.) Anyone can be sexually harassed and anyone can potentially sexually harass someone else. What matters is how the person on the receiving end feels about the behavior. The "victim" decides if the behavior is unwanted and is sexually harassing; NOT the perpetrator.