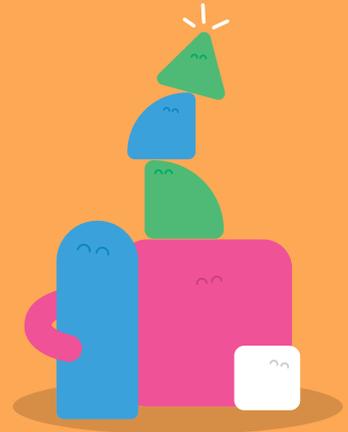


1ST & 2ND CLASS

Parent Support Sheets – Lesson 7: Feeling Safe and Unsafe



Lesson Summary:

The aim of this lesson is to help children recognise when they are feeling unsafe in friendships and what to do when they feel this way. Children learn strategies for how to cope when they are not feeling safe in friendships. These include: (1) talking to the person in a clear, controlled and confident way (i.e. being 'assertive'); (2) asking a trusted adult for advice; (3) reporting to an adult for help (i.e. when someone is in danger, when a repeated incident occurs, and the child is finding it challenging to problem-solve themselves).

The word 'assertiveness' is introduced. Assertiveness is the ability to speak up for ourselves in an honest and respectful way. Children also play a game of 'Broken Telephone' which reminds them that not everything they hear might be exactly what happened or what was said.

Try It At Home Activity: 'Being Assertive'

Within this lesson, children learnt about being assertive, with examples of clear, controlled and confident statements (i.e. 'I can say no', 'I can choose to leave a game if I want to', 'I am worth listening to'). In this 'Try It At Home' activity, children are asked to draw themselves in a 'power pose'. A power pose is a stance (way we hold our body) that makes such feel confident and powerful (like a Superman pose!). Children are asked to write something that they might say to someone who made them feel 'not okay'. This supports them when they need to be assertive in relationships. Look at their drawing and ask them to practice their power pose and say the words.



Scan here for
'Try it at Home'
activities!

Next, children learn to T.H.I.N.K. before they speak, which helps them to communicate in a kind way with others. Talk to your child about how both of you could try this idea out.

- Is it **TRUE**? Is this fact or opinion? Know and be clear before you speak.
- Is it **HELPFUL**? Does it help you, the other person, or the situation?
- Is it **IMPORTANT**? Is this something that will mean anything tomorrow?
- Is it **NECESSARY**? Would this be better left unsaid?
- Is it **KIND**? Are you telling the person out of kindness or meanness?

Dr. Malie's Top Tips:

- It is important to remind children that there is no perfect friendship. There are times when all friendships have 'thorns' (i.e. are tricky or difficult) - whether they are big or small thorns. It is important for children to be aware that they can work on these; for example, overlooking small 'thorns' or by deciding to spend less time with somebody if that friendship is very 'thorny'. **Discuss with your child times in their friendships**

Lesson 7: Feeling Safe and Unsafe

when they felt the friendship got thorny. How did they feel? What did they do?

- It is crucial for parents to **model assertive behaviour**. Seeing their parents being assertive (e.g. maybe just in the shops or in other everyday situations) will help children to learn this skill and become more assertive themselves. If, like many parents, you find this difficult, perhaps these resources might help:
 - Paterson's 'The Assertiveness Workbook'
 - Alberti & Emmons' 'Your Perfect Right'
- According to Educational Psychologist Ms. Sarah O'Hanrahan, passive children could become passive adults if they don't learn assertiveness skills at a young age, which can be harder to learn as an adult. The power of saying 'no' is important in building self-esteem. Passive children often put their heads down or walk away when somebody says something mean to them. On the other end of the scale, you have a child who uses physical or verbal aggression towards others. Neither of these communication styles (passive or aggressive) gets their needs met. **Finding a balanced and assertive way to deal with situations is healthy communication.**
- Below are a few tips for a child to build on their assertiveness skills, derived from <https://www.independent.ie/life/how-to-say-no-the-art-of-assertiveness-35236675.html>
 - **Keeping eye contact and using a power pose** is a method of standing up for yourself in an unspoken kind of way. It involves having relaxed shoulders, standing with your two feet on the ground with your head up and maintaining eye contact with the person you are speaking to. Even doing just that much can be so empowering.
 - **Having short assertive statements at the ready** in advance of any interactions is great. This means that you don't get tongue-tied. Neutral responses like 'That's your opinion' can be helpful as they give you something to say and you hold onto your power. If things are getting too heated, it can help to walk away from it. However, if you feel you are avoiding things out of fear, then it's time to talk to your trusted adult and problem-solve a way forward together.
 - **'Fake it until you make it'** is good advice for children who find it really hard to be assertive, as we all have to put on our poker faces sometimes if we are not feeling confident inside. Standing up for yourself is not about being aggressive; it is about getting your point across in a clear assertive manner and not losing your power.
 - Finally, **it would really help to practice role play exercises at home**. For instance, ask your child to direct you on playing the 'mean' role towards them (e.g. 'You're not playing with us'). Using the skills learnt above (power pose, and clear and short assertive statements), encourage your child to respond to you in an assertive way. After you are finished acting, it is important to shake off your roles and do something nice together.

Resources:

To learn more about supporting your child in becoming more assertive and confident, check out the following sources:

- Some children benefit from attending after schools' clubs which nurture their confidence, such as drama, music, dance, Scouts, or sports that are not overly competitive.
- Here are 10 simple strategies for you to support your child in becoming more assertive: <https://psychcentral.com/lib/teaching-child-be-assertive>