

TOOL



THE ALLIANCE
FOR CHILD PROTECTION
IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

BODY SAFETY¹

In addition to regular and consistent safety assessments, case workers can hold separate sessions with children and caregivers on body safety and safety planning. This can help children to communicate their boundaries and respond to unsafe situations. These sessions can help children to feel more control and confidence in responding to threats when they occur.

Key information to cover in the body safety session includes:

- a. Be attentive and knowledgeable.**
- b. Be cautious and prepared.**
- c. Be assertive!**

a. Be attentive and knowledgeable

Case workers will need to teach children about possible dangers in their environment and help them to pay attention to their intuitions. It can be helpful if children can (1) recognise danger signs that indicate heightened risk; and (2) rehearse how they might respond to danger.

b. Be cautious and prepared

Talk with children about what to do if/when they feel unsafe. Have children practise proper responses to danger or potential violence through role-playing, etc. This can help to increase the children's self-confidence and efficacy in handling a potential threat.

When teaching a child about safety planning, case workers should do the following:

- Help the child to name some adults who make him/her feel safe. (If the child is having difficulty with this task, the case worker can ask about specific people, such as a teacher, a caregiver, a sibling, a friend.) Once the safe people are identified, the case worker can encourage the child to tell one of those safe people if they feel worried or unsafe. (As part of safety planning, these people should be involved/included in a session to formally acknowledge them as “safe people” in the child's life.)
- Help the child to name places that make them feel safe, especially those places where they would go if they did not feel safe at home.
- Map out a plan with the child and practise how the child would respond if he/she felt unsafe. What would he/she do? What would he/she say? It is important to have children practise saying “No!” to an adult who is doing anything that makes them feel uncomfortable.

¹ This is a tool from UNICEF (2012). Caring for Child Survivors of Sexual Abuse: Guidelines for health and psychosocial service providers in humanitarian settings, First Edition, p.206–207, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/532aa6834.html> [accessed 27 September 2020].

c. Be assertive

This should start with a review about what is and what is not an acceptable risk or danger. Children should practise what they would do if they are in a situation where they are being asked to carry out a dangerous task or something they are not comfortable with.

It may be helpful to explain the following concepts to the child:

- Nobody should make you do work that puts you in danger where you can be injured or harmed, even if it is someone you know and love.
- If you feel uncomfortable about what is being asked of you, you should tell that person: “I do not want to do it” or “No”.
- In addition, where children are being abused physically or sexually at work, reinforce that it is never okay for anyone to hurt or hit you, verbally harass you or touch you in your private parts in a sexual way – even if it is someone you know and love.
- Give children techniques (run, hide, ask for help, call out, scream) to use in response to danger, violence or inappropriate touching and behaviours. Help the child to identify a trusted adult whom he/she can confide in if anyone threatens them again.
- During this session, it is important for the case worker to help to develop the child’s confidence and skill in protecting their bodies. As part of this, it is good to review the safety plan that was created with the child during case management services.