

What is “Protective Behaviours?”

Protective behaviours is a safety awareness Programme for children, young people and adults which aims to build self-esteem and an increased confidence and assertiveness relating to feeling and being safe.

It is a practical and down to earth approach to personal safety which was first developed as an prevention programme as a response to young children talking about situations in which they didn't feel safe.

The Protective behaviours (PBs) process starts from the belief that we cannot be scared into feeling safe. It therefore avoids a focus on scary scenarios and rigid sets of rules for how to deal with unsafe situations (which tend to induce fear and guilt). Instead, it teaches an ability to recognise when we are not feeling safe, and provides skills and tools to enable individuals to take action and get help when they need it.

Protective behaviours also recognizes that life is about taking risks and trying new things and that this is part of healthy development and an important life skill.

Protective behaviours is based on two themes which are used to teach and reinforce the basic concepts on which the process is based.

“WE ALL HAVE THE RIGHT TO FEEL SAFE”

“THERE IS NOTHING SO AWFUL THAT WE CAN'T TALK WITH SOMEONE ABOUT IT”

Feeling safe is something that is generally not focused on until the feeling has gone away and we start to feel uncomfortable or scared. The Protective behaviours process helps people to identify what feeling safe is like for them and teaches the ability to recognise the difference between feeling safe, fun scary feelings, risking on purpose and feeling unsafe.

The first Protective behaviour's theme

‘We all have the right to feel safe’ reinforces not just individual rights, but the responsibility to make sure other people feel safe with us. This helps to promote the idea of responsible citizenship and encourages thoughtfulness of our own safety as well as developing empathy for the safety of others.

Key elements of the teaching include:

- ✚ Children understanding about their right to feel safe
- ✚ Recognising and managing risk and developing strategies to keep themselves safe
- ✚ Improving children's emotional literacy and behavioural competencies
- ✚ Teaching about body awareness
- ✚ Knowing about the importance of telling and not keeping secrets
- ✚ Choosing networks of safe people to talk to



Protective behaviours”
A safety awareness and
resilience building
programme at
Stonehill School -
Information for
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What are the benefits of “PB’S?”

Protective behaviours teaches awareness of what happens in our bodies when we start to feel uncomfortable or scared.

These are called our bodies'

EARLY WARNING SIGNS.

They may include butterflies in the stomach, shaky knees, heart beating faster etc.

The programme teaches recognition of these body signals as an indicator that we may need to STOP THINK and TAKE ACTION.

Healthy lives involve an element of adventure and risk-taking. Often, when we do something fun-scary or take a calculated risk we can feel a bit unsafe and experience these same Early Warning Signs, but there is a fundamental difference. A fun-scary activity or calculated risk is chosen, and we have an element of control or a knowledge that there is a time limit (like on a roller coaster ride). Protective Behaviours therefore teaches us to ask ourselves whether we have choice and control or a time limit in a situation.

Sometimes the reason that we don't take notice of our Early Warning Signs is because of the messages that we get from all around us about how we think we should feel, think and behave.

These might be about powerful stereotypes or assumptions which can lead us to make decisions that are not in our best interests and don't support us in feeling safe.

The second Theme

‘There is nothing so awful (or too little)
that we can't talk with someone about it ’

introduces the idea of personal support networks of people that we could go to when not feeling safe and a process for how we might identify those people.

A support network aims for of a minimum of four people in addition to any adults at home. Strategies for checking out potential network people and building networks are explored including one-step removed questions and the use of our Early Warning Signs. The strategy of persistence is also reinforced to ensure that we get the help we need even if other people on our network are too busy or don't listen.



Why Protective Behaviours is different to other safety programmes

Stranger danger is a safety programme which only deals with the potential dangers that strangers pose to children. However, research shows that children are significantly more at risk from people they know. Therefore focusing children's ideas on stranger danger potentially leaves them vulnerable to other forms of danger and abuse. Protective behaviours on the other hand aims to teach children and young people a range of safety skills and techniques which can help them in a wide variety of situations.

Unlike some other safety programmes, Protective behaviours has a strong emphasis on developing an internal measure of whether we feel safe or not and on developing individually based strategies and solutions. This is in contrast to many other programmes which focus on external rules for people to follow, such as ‘run, yell, and tell. While there is a place for rules, particularly with young children, this does not encourage the development of safety awareness as a life skill, nor does it accommodate those situations where it may not be possible to follow the safety rules. For example if someone is so afraid that they are unable to run away

