

PERSONAL SAFETY
FOR
PRE-SCHOOLERS

Dear Parents:

For the 16th year, The Carousel School will present the “Personal Safety for Preschoolers” curriculum. This book has been compiled by the Children’s Trust Fund, who instructed our staff. Please keep this book to use as a reference.

It is our intention, together with parents, to teach the importance of safety in the environment for every child. We encourage each family to discuss these rules at home.

The Carousel staff is truly dedicated to protecting our students’ lives.

Thank you very much for supporting us in this most important endeavor.

Sincerely,

Phyllis A. Regan
Director

PAR:CMA

Table of Contents

#1 Family Safety Rules

#2 Assertiveness

#3 Personal Safety

#4 The Touching Code

#5 Touching Safety

#6 Choosing a Babysitter

#7 Feeling Safety

#1 FAMILY SAFETY RULES

During the next few months, your child will be learning to apply family safety rules to potentially unsafe "What if" situations. At school, we will be discussing traffic, fire and water safety. We have asked the children to ask the adults in their families about their rules for these areas.

Traffic Safety: We will cover how to best ride safely in cars and busses. Traffic rules for crossing streets will also be discussed. You can support this learning by doing the following:

- a. help your child apply traffic safety rules when getting into a car and crossing streets.
- b. ask your child to tell you what traffic signs and symbols mean when you are on a walk along city streets.

Fire Safety: The children will not only learn how to apply fire safety rules, but also how to "stop, drop and roll" if their clothing catches on fire. You can support this lesson by drawing a simple map of your house marking the exits he/she should use in case of fire. You may want to have a practice fire drill for the whole family.

Water Safety: Water safety rules are covered for boat and bathtub use, as well as for pools and other swimming areas. Learning to swim is the best safeguard against drowning. Therefore, I have listed some local swimming programs which offer lessons for young children:

Waltham Boys and Girls Club
Waltham YMCA

(781) 893-6620
(781) 894-5295

Thanks again for taking the time to read this and support our safety program.

#2 ASSERTIVENESS

In learning to apply safety rules, children may be faced with situations in which another person wants them to do something that is unsafe. For example, it may be another child who wants them to play with matches or an adult who asks them to ride unsafely in a car or truck.

In order to adhere to their safety rules, children need to learn and practice refusal skills. The children will be learning how to resist unsafe situations by using words ("No", "Stop it") and body language (shoulders back, head up, looking the other person in the eyes) to stand up for themselves.

The children will not be practicing how to disobey their parents or to challenge other adult authority figures, except in situations involving safety. They will be encouraged to say "No!" to anyone, be they other children or adults, who ask them to break a safety rule.

Assertiveness, the ability to stand up for oneself, needs practice and recognition. The children may not always use these skills appropriately and may need help in correctly applying them. It should be stressed that it is okay to say "no" in situations involving safety, but it is not okay to disobey in other situations, such as when their parents want them to eat their dinner. Children also need guidance in when to use a polite "no" and when to be more forceful.

By helping your child learn when and how to say "no" and resist unsafe situations, you not only will be helping them to act safely, you will be helping them feel good about themselves as well.

#3 PERSONAL SAFETY

The children have learned to apply safety rules to potentially unsafe situations in the environment involving traffic, fire and water safety. They have also learned how to resist pressure to break safety rules. The children will now extend these guidelines and skills to situations involving people.

We refer to safety rules to use with people as **PERSONAL SAFETY**. As with traffic, water and fire safety, the children will be learning to apply **their** family safety rules to situations involving people, either acquaintances or strangers.

Grownups and older youth are presented as people who, in most cases, care about child safety; however, since children cannot be sure of the safety of all situations involving people, they should always follow personal safety rules. Children will not be able to recognize an unsafe person, for child abusers usually look perfectly normal and in fact, are usually **known** to the child. However, they can learn to recognize and resist potentially unsafe situations, such as those involving the offer of rides or gifts, requests for personal information, etc.

We are encouraging you to discuss your family safety rules for the following areas:

- responding to a grownup's request for help when the child is not with a parent or caretaker.
- responding to a grownup's request for personal information (name, address, etc.)
- responding to a grownup's request for information over the phone or at the door.
- responding to grownups who offer gifts without a parent's or caretaker's knowledge or permission.
- responding to offers of rides.
- getting found when lost.

Teaching children to tell about potentially unsafe situations involving people is an important part of our personal safety program. With your children, talk about who they might go to if they needed help. Children are often scolded for "tattling". Make it clear that it is **always** best to tell about situations involving their and other's safety.

If you have any questions concerning this portion of our safety program, please call us.

#4 THE TOUCHING CODE

Now that the children have learned to use personal safety rules with people, we will be extending these guidelines to situations involving touch.

"Safe" touches are identified for the children as touches which show love and care. Safe touch may include even painful touch that is given to promote health and well being (such as removing a splinter). Children are asked to give their own example of safe, caring touch (such as hugging or shaking hands).

"Unsafe" touches are presented as touches which use or exploit the receiver, which are uncaring and hurtful, or which involve an older person touching the private parts of their body.

To help children resist unwanted or unsafe touches, they have been given a **TOUCHING CODE**. Some examples of the Touching Code include: "Stop", "Don't touch me! I don't like it!", and "I don't want to share my body." When using the Touching Code, the children are taught to:

- *look directly at the other person's face when they say it.
- *say it like they really mean it.
- *look like they mean it (no smiles or giggles).
- *avoid giving reasons.

Everyone needs to understand and respect children's use of the Code. Too often adults ask children to give hugs or kisses to relatives or friends when they don't really want to. By respecting children's right to resist unwanted touches, adults help them also learn to resist abuse.

You may want to explore alternative ways children can show affection if they don't want a hug or kiss. Suggest that they blow a kiss instead, or give the other person a "hand hug". Two books which are helpful in exploring these alternatives are **A Book of Hugs** and **A Book of Kisses** by Dave Ross.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important part of our personal safety program.

#5 TOUCHING SAFETY

Touching safety rules are an extension of the Touching Code the children have learned to use when resisting unwanted or unsafe touches. The rules are simple...

1. Anytime someone touches you in a way that hurts or scares you...Tell them to **stop!**
2. It is **never okay** for grownups or older children to touch your private body parts, except to keep you healthy and clean.
3. If someone touches your private body parts and asks you to keep it a **secret**, **tell** someone about it right away. If the first person doesn't believe you, tell **someone else!**

These rules do not involve sex education; this is left for the parents (or for another part of our program). Private body parts are presented as those areas of the body covered by a bathing suit. We suggest you use anatomically correct names when naming these parts for your children (penis, vagina, vulva, buttocks, breasts). It's hard for children to tell about sexual abuse if they don't have the "language" to tell. Naming private body parts is one way to make it okay to talk about.

The touching safety rules need plenty of practice. You can help your children apply the rules by giving them "What if" situations.

Suggestions include:--"What if":

- o a grownup you knew wanted to touch your private parts and told you to keep it a secret?
- o you had a new babysitter one night and you didn't like the way he/she touched you when tucking you into bed?
- o a grownup asked you to look at his/her private body parts?
- o When talking about touching with children, it is important to let them know that:
- o most touching is **safe** and **caring**, but some touching is unsafe.
- o they have the right to say "**no**" to any unsafe or unwanted touches, **even** if that person is someone they **know**.
- o they should never keep **secrets** about touching.
- o it is **never their fault** if someone touches their private body parts, even if they didn't say "no".
- o they should **always tell** about a touching problem, even if it has gone on for a long time.
- o it is **never too late** to tell.
- o Many of the lessons in our unit on touching deal with the exceptions to the touching safety rules. Children are told it is okay for grownups to touch young children's private body parts when:
 - o changing diapers.
 - o getting them clean in the bathtub or after using the potty (toilet).
 - o being checked by a doctor when a parent or guardian is present.

This leaves little room for confusion over **when** touching is safe or unsafe.

If you feel you would like some help in talking to your child about this subject, the following books may be helpful.

Talking About Touching for Parents and Kids,
Parent Guide & Story Book
He Told Me Not To Tell
Come Tell Me Right Away
It's My Body

Committee for Children
King County Rape Relief
Linda Tschirhart Sanford
Lory Freeman

For help in locating these books, or in answering your questions, please call us.

#6 CHOOSING A BABYSITTER

Your child spends a part of his/her day in preschool under the care of other adults. You may also hire babysitters when you're away during the evenings. How well do you know the adults or teenagers who care for your child?

As part of our personal safety program, some easy guidelines are offered for choosing a child care provider or babysitter...

1. **ASK** all your babysitters for names and phone numbers of families for whom they have babysat. Call these parents and find out what they think of each babysitter. Did they ever have any problems?
2. **TELL** your babysitters what your **FAMILY SAFETY RULES** are, including your touching safety rules. Tell them your child has been taught to tell if any of these rules are broken.
3. Make a **SURPRISE VISIT** to your child's school or preschool. You have a right to know how it is run.
4. **ASK** your child if he or she likes each babysitter. Ask for reasons why your child does or doesn't like each babysitter. Never leave your child with a babysitter with whom he/she doesn't feel comfortable.
5. Follow these safety guidelines even if the babysitter is a member of your **FAMILY**--an older brother, an uncle, grandfather, cousin, aunt, etc.
6. **NEVER LEAVE** a child in the care of someone who is using **DRUGS** or **ALCOHOL**. Drugs and alcohol do not cause a person to molest children; they can allow a person to overcome inhibitions. Many people who are molesters, molest after taking drugs or alcohol.

Once again, if you have any questions, please call us.

#7 FEELING SAFETY

Teaching children to be aware of their and other's feelings is an important part of our preschool program. In our personal safety program, we teach children to apply this awareness to situations involving safety.

Children need not wait for an offense to occur in order to recognize a potentially unsafe situation. When a situation is unsafe or potentially abusive, some children get a queasy, uncomfortable feeling (the "uh-oh" feeling) which serves to warn them of impending danger. While following safety rules is children's primary form of guidance, teaching children to use their internal warning system gives them a second layer of defense. This is as true in situations involving environmental safety as it is in situations involving personal safety.

Sometimes abusive situations are clouded and difficult for children to recognize. They may not directly involve touching, (voyeurism or pornographic picture taking are examples); or they may involve non-sexual forms of touching which are exploitative as part of the process of preparing a child for molestation (grooming). In these cases, children may not see an application for their safety rules, but may rely on their internal warning signals to give them information about the situation.

Often adults unknowingly negate children's body signals and feelings by making them wear extra clothing when they're too hot, denying children's feelings of hunger because "they just ate", and telling children they're tired when they don't feel that way at all. Adults can acknowledge children's experience without taking responsibility for children's feelings or allowing children to use their feelings to get what they want. Children can learn to accept basic family rules and to believe what their bodies tell them. For example, a child who doesn't feel tired, may be able to read quietly in bed before going to sleep. These feelings do not earn the child a right to disrupt the household schedule or pressure adults into providing entertainment.

By respecting children's feelings and inquiring how they're feeling on a daily basis, adults can help make the children in their care safer and stronger.