

# Safety around household products, medicines and other substances.

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

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- identify safety rules about household products, medicines and other substances such as alcohol, tobacco and caffeine
- understand the importance of safety for the individual, the family, the school, peers and the neighbourhood
- recognize the connection between making healthy choices and staying safe

## TIME

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- 45-minute lesson

## REQUIRED MATERIALS

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*Safe or unsafe situations?* handout

*Safety rules* handout

scissors (one pair for each student)



Resiliency is the ability to thrive in the face of difficult circumstances. Protective factors build resiliency, increasing a young person's chances of becoming a healthy, productive adult. Developing good social skills, having parents who monitor their children's behaviour and feeling connected to school are some examples of protective factors that can make a positive difference.

Risk factors are life events and experiences that are associated with problem behaviour such as dropping out of school or using substances. Examples of risk factors are substance use at an early age, conflict within the family and low school grades. For young people to build resiliency, the protective factors in their lives have to outweigh the forces that drag them down (Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission [AADAC], 2004).

## Opening activity: Identifying safe and unsafe situations

(15 minutes)

Protective and risk factors can be categorized into five main areas of a person's life: the individual, family, school, peers and neighbourhood (AADAC, 2003). This lesson focuses on creating a consistent message about safety and healthy choices in each of these areas.

Explain to students that you will distribute a handout that describes safe and unsafe situations with household products, medicines found in the home and other substances such as alcohol, tobacco and caffeine. Explain that the handout includes 12 situations that may take place individually, with family, with friends, or in the neighbourhood. Ask students to cut out all 12 situations and divide them into two piles: safe situations and unsafe situations. Ask students to think about the choices in each situation, and how these choices can lead to healthy or unhealthy consequences.

Once the class has finished sorting, lead a brief discussion about this activity by asking the following questions:

- Was it difficult to identify the safe and unsafe situations?
- How did choices in the situations lead to healthy or unhealthy consequences?
- How did you divide the situations?
- Where else might these situations arise?
- What are other examples of safe and unsafe situations?

Go through each of the descriptions to be sure students are clear about which are safe and unsafe situations. Also, make a point of mentioning that these situations happen in different areas of a person's life: some happen to the individual, or between friends, and some happen at home, at school or in the neighbourhood. A key has been provided which indicates the area each situation pertains to and whether it is safe or unsafe.

## Small group activity: Brainstorming safety rules

(10 minutes)

Write each of the five areas you have discussed (the individual, family, school, peers and neighbourhood) on a different page of flip chart paper and post the pages around the room. Arrange the students in groups of five or six and assign each group one of the five areas. Ask the groups to generate a list of safety rules about household products, medicines and other substances such as alcohol, tobacco and caffeine. Clarify that students should focus on the area their group was assigned; e.g., the family group will identify safety rules in the home, the school group will create rules for the school setting, and the neighbourhood group will focus on neighbourhood safety. The groups that are working on safety rules for “the individual” and “peers” will think of examples that relate to children and youth when they are by themselves or with friends. “Individual” and “peer” situations can happen in a variety of places, so these two groups do not need to worry about whether the safety rules relate to the home, the school or the neighbourhood.

Encourage students to brainstorm as many rules as possible in an eight-minute period. Have the groups delegate one student to record ideas, and another student to report back to the larger group. For the last two minutes of this activity, ask the groups to decide on the three to five most important rules and to underline them.

## Small group presentations

(15 minutes)

When the groups have finished their lists, allow them two minutes to present their ideas to the class. After each group presents, ask students to record the three to five most important rules on the “Safety Rules” handout provided with this lesson.

## Closure and homework activity: Putting safety into practice

(5 minutes)

Ask students to take their completed “Safety Rules” handout to five appropriate representatives from each area. Discuss examples of people they could go to (themselves, siblings, parents, classmates, school staff, friends or neighbours). Their homework assignment is to ask each representative to read the safety rules for the appropriate area (i.e., a mother would read the safety rules for the family and a principal would read safety in the school). The representatives can agree to the rules by signing the handout in the spaces provided under each section. By doing this, students and representatives are agreeing to put these safety rules into practice. Clarify that students should receive one signature for each of the five areas. If a representative disagrees with one of the rules, he or she can simply record why in the margin of the handout.

Make the link that these signatures represent people who can support students in making difficult decisions or help them through tough situations.

# Safe or unsafe situations?

A PARENT WHO HAS BEEN DRINKING ALCOHOL OFFERS A RIDE TO HER CHILD'S FRIEND. THE FRIEND SAYS, "NO, THANK YOU, MRS. SMITH. I'LL WAIT AT THE NEIGHBOUR'S HOUSE UNTIL MY DAD COMES."

TWO FRIENDS ARE HAVING A SLEEPOVER. THEY LOOK IN THE MEDICINE CABINET AND SEE MANY BOTTLES WITH PILLS INSIDE. ONE FRIEND ENCOURAGES THE OTHER TO REACH IN AND INVESTIGATE WHAT'S INSIDE.

A CHILD IS PLAYING IN A PARK. A TEENAGER COMES BY AND OFFERS HIM A CIGARETTE. HE SAYS, "OK. IT CAN'T HURT TO JUST TRY IT."

A CHILD IS WALKING HOME FROM SCHOOL. TWO TEENAGERS OFFER HIM A PILL THAT THEY SAY WILL MAKE HIM FEEL GREAT. HE SAYS, "NO, THANKS," AND GOES STRAIGHT HOME.

A TEENAGER IS DRINKING SIX CANS OF POP A DAY TO HELP HER HAVE MORE ENERGY. SHE DOESN'T BELIEVE THAT TOO MUCH CAFFEINE IS UNHEALTHY.



A FATHER READS TO HIS DAUGHTER INSTRUCTIONS ABOUT MEDICINE SHE IS TAKING. HE EXPLAINS THAT SHE IS ONLY ALLOWED TO TAKE THIS MEDICINE WHEN HE IS SUPERVISING.

KIDS ARE IN THE PLAYGROUND AT SCHOOL. THEY SEE A NEEDLE ON THE GROUND. THEY DON'T TOUCH IT, BUT CALL THE TEACHER OVER TO HANDLE THE PROBLEM.

TWO KIDS ARE EATING LUNCH AT SCHOOL. ONE LOOKS INSIDE THE OTHER'S LUNCH BOX AND ASKS, "YOU BRING COUGH SYRUP TO SCHOOL?" THE OTHER REPLIES, "YEAH, I USE IT FOR MY COUGH. IT TASTES GOOD, DO YOU WANT SOME?"



A GRANDPARENT QUILTS SMOKING FOR HEALTH REASONS AND TO SET A GOOD EXAMPLE FOR HER GRANDCHILDREN.

A BABY IS CRAWLING ON A KITCHEN FLOOR AND REACHES INTO AN OPEN CUPBOARD. HE GRABS A BOTTLE WITH A PICTURE OF A SKULL AND CROSSBONES ON IT.

TWO KIDS ARE PLAYING IN A BEDROOM. ONE CHILD SAYS TO THE OTHER, "I HAVE A HEADACHE." THE OTHER SAYS, "MY MOM TELLS ME TO HAVE A DRINK OF WATER AND LIE DOWN AND FOR A WHILE."

A GROUP OF KIDS IS PLAYING SOCCER.

# Safe or unsafe situations? Answer key

## UNSAFE SITUATIONS:

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- Two friends are having a sleepover. They look in the medicine cabinet and see many bottles with pills inside. One friend encourages the other to reach in and investigate what's inside. (peers)
- A child is playing in a park. A teenager comes by and offers him a cigarette. He says, "OK. It can't hurt to just try it." (neighbourhood)
- A teenager is drinking six cans of pop a day to help her have more energy. She doesn't believe that too much caffeine is unhealthy. (the individual)
- Two kids are eating lunch at school. One looks inside the other's lunch box and asks, "You bring cough syrup to school?" The other replies, "Yeah, I use it for my cough. It tastes good, do you want some?" (school)
- A baby is crawling on a kitchen floor and reaches into an open cupboard. He grabs a bottle with a picture of a skull and crossbones on it. (family)

## SAFE SITUATIONS:

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- A grandparent quits smoking for health reasons and to set a good example for her grandchildren. (family)
- Kids are in the playground at school. They see a needle on the ground. They don't touch it, but call the teacher over to handle the problem. (school)
- Two kids are playing in a bedroom. One child says to the other, "I have a headache." The other says, "My mom tells me to have a drink of water and lie down and for a while." (peers)
- A group of kids is playing soccer. (neighbourhood)
- A child is walking home from school. Two teenagers offer him a pill that they say will make him feel great. He says, "No, thanks," and goes straight home. (the individual)
- A father reads to his daughter instructions about medicine she is taking. He explains that she is only allowed to take this medicine when he is supervising. (family)
- A parent who has been drinking alcohol offers a ride to her child's friend. The friend says, "No, thank you, Mrs. Smith. I'll wait at the neighbour's house until my dad comes." (neighbourhood)



# Safety Rules

for myself

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Signed by \_\_\_\_\_

for family

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Signed by \_\_\_\_\_

for school

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Signed by \_\_\_\_\_

for friends

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Signed by \_\_\_\_\_

for neighbourhood

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Signed by \_\_\_\_\_

## Reference List

Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (AADAC). (2003).  
*Summary report: The Alberta youth experience survey 2002.*  
Edmonton, AB: Author.

Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (AADAC). (2004).  
*Be your own hero: health, education, resiliency, opportunity.*  
Edmonton, AB: Author.