

INSIGHT

Personal Safety Australia Newsletter

Aug - Sept 2007

FEATURES

Teaching our kids how to be safe:

Child protection and
empowerment curriculum

Commitment:

The essential ingredient

Parent/Child Communication:

Child protection and
empowerment series No.1

OUR MISSION

Personal Safety Australia is a Brisbane-based personal safety consultancy with a mission to equip, empower and inspire individuals, organisations and their clients to maximise their safety, enhance their wellbeing and advocate for the safety and wellbeing of children and other vulnerable groups.

OUR COMMITMENT

As part of *Personal Safety Australia's* commitment to equipping, empowering and inspiring those most vulnerable, 10% of all course and presentation fees are donated to charities supporting children living in extreme poverty.

TEACHING OUR KIDS HOW TO BE SAFE

Child Protection and Empowerment Curriculum

Personal Safety Australia is embarking on its most challenging endeavour to date with the development of child protection and empowerment curriculum for prep through to Year 12 students. The project not only acknowledges the dire need for such, as identified by numerous Australian child protection experts, but presents an unparalleled opportunity to positively impact on the safety and wellbeing of a significant number of our most precious Australians.

The Qld Crime and Misconduct Commission Report (CMC 2004) into child-focused sexual abuse prevention programs identifies the need for prevention programs with standardised materials, content and administration procedures, preferably integrated into the school curriculum. Arguably Australia's most renowned and respected child protection expert, Freda Briggs (2000) also believes child protection training must be 'ongoing with opportunities for regular practice and reinforcement'.

Key components of PSA's proposed curriculum, based on the CMC's recommendations and input from child protection experts, include:

- Progressive, developmentally-appropriate content for prep through to Year 12 students;
- User-friendly lesson plans and support materials assisting teachers to implement regular training sessions;
- A multi-systemic approach, targeting children, parents and teachers;
- Support training for teachers and parents;
- Meeting the needs of both boys and girls, appreciating gender differences and subsequent content and delivery requirements.

Once developed, PSA will ensure a comprehensive evaluation to determine program effectiveness. The long-term goal of this project is the inclusion of materials in Australian school curriculum.

PSA is looking for teachers and other professionals working with children, who are committed to child protection and empowerment, who would like to be part of the development working party. For further information or to express your interest, please contact us via the details on p 4.

Briggs, F., 2000 *Teaching Children to Protect Themselves*, NSW Allen and Unwin

CMC, 2004 *Child-focused sexual abuse prevention programs: How effective are they in preventing child abuse?*, Brisbane, Qld Govt

OUR SERVICES

Children's Safety:

Empowering Children to Stay Safe Workshops:

Equipping parents, carers and those working with children with key information to empower and maximise the safety of children. Topics include: awareness of risks; indicators of abuse; and essential safety and empowerment messages.

Protective Behaviours Workshops and Awareness Sessions:

Equipping participants with communication, problem-solving and networking skills to relay to their children and clients to enable them to feel safe and to take effective action in any threatening situation.

Child Protection Policy Development: Maximising the safety of children in care and providing a supportive work environment for staff and volunteers by implementing policies and procedures that: minimise access for child abuse offenders; and deal appropriately with abuse or suspicion of abuse that may occur.

Recognising and Reporting Child Abuse Workshops:

Increasing awareness and enhancing understanding of the surrounding issues to enable participants to recognise and report child abuse and to implement preventative measures to protect children in their care.

COMMITMENT THE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT

Henry Ford is often quoted as saying 'Whether you think you can or can't, you're usually right'. In terms of personal safety, these words could not be more true, particularly when responding to an attack or confrontation. Self belief and commitment to safety are essential to take control and maintain one's safety.

In his book *'How dangerous men think and how to stay safe for life'*, Brent Sanders (2001) describes an encounter with a woman, Mary, who stayed back after a personal safety seminar. She told him what a waste of time the idea of self belief and commitment was as "she knew" if she was attacked, there was nothing she could do about it. Brent chatted with Mary and discovered she had a young daughter. As the conversation progressed Brent painted a fairly dramatic and threatening situation involving Mary's daughter and asked Mary what she would do. This woman who had claimed to be totally helpless and unable to defend herself gave Brent a graphic and violent demonstration of what she would do to someone who dared threaten her daughter's safety. In doing so, Mary realised not only was she more than capable of defending her daughter, she was also to defend herself.

Like Mary most people have a strong commitment to the safety of loved ones and would often do ANYTHING required to defend *their* safety. Sadly, many of us lack the same level of commitment to our own safety. If you are one of these people, challenge yourself to change this negative pattern of thought and realise the tremendous ability you have. In the words of another great man, Thomas Edison, 'If we all did the things we were capable of we would literally astound ourselves'.

Commitment is one of the fundamental concepts of personal safety covered in *Personal Safety Australia* Personal Safety Seminars. For more information or bookings, please contact us.

Sanders, B., 2001 *How dangerous men think and how to stay safe for life*, NSW Random House

LAST CHANCE FOR SPECIAL OFFER: CHILD PROTECTION WEEK

National Child Protection Week 2007 commences on Fathers' Day, 2 September and runs through to 8 September. Child Protection Week provides individuals and communities with a range of opportunities to participate and contribute to the prevention of child abuse and neglect.

Personal Safety Australia is offering a **20% discount** on all children's safety services booked up to and including Child Protection Week. Bookings must relate to services provided before 31 December 2007, including:

- Empowering Children to Stay Safe Workshops
- Protective Behaviours Awareness Sessions and Workshops
- Recognising and Reporting Child Abuse Workshops
- Child Protection Policy Development.

For further information or to make a booking please contact us.

Women's Safety:

Women's Self Defence Courses:

Incorporating practical, non-strength related, physical self defence techniques and preventative and responsive safety strategies to gain defensive skills, maximise safety and increase confidence.

Workplace Safety:

Workplace Bullying Prevention Workshops and Awareness Sessions:

Raising awareness of the workplace bully and dynamics of bullying in the workplace to address this behaviour appropriately and prevent it from occurring.

Dealing with Aggressive and Difficult Clients Workshops:

Equipping clients in customer service roles with a range of communication and problem-solving skills to maintain their personal composure, safety and wellbeing and provide an excellent standard of customer service when dealing with difficult and aggressive clients.

Safety for Everyone:

Personal Safety Seminars:

Incorporating preventative and reactive strategies to deal with any threat to one's safety including: at home, in the workplace, out and about, in the social scene, on public transport and in the car.

CHILD PROTECTION AND EMPOWERMENT SERIES PARENT/CHILD COMMUNICATION

This edition of *Insight* features 'Parent/Child Communication' the first of a series of child protection and empowerment articles. The communication between parent and child is a crucial element of the child's emotional, behavioural and intellectual development. Open and honest parent/child communication benefits every member of the family, improving relationships and maximising safety and wellbeing. This article will outline how.

Increasing Disclosures

One of the most troubling findings of child sexual abuse research is the dangerously low number of disclosures of abuse by children to their parents. While the reasons may vary, the outcomes are constant... the abuse is more likely to continue, the child often feels helpless, unsupported and alone, often suffering these feelings for many years.

Parents who provide their children with plenty of love, understanding and acceptance are helping to create a climate for open communication. Children who feel loved and accepted by their parents are more likely to open up and share their thoughts, feelings and concerns with their parents, including disclosures of abuse.

Self Esteem Building

Improving a child's self esteem is another important benefit. Children begin to form ideas and beliefs about themselves based on the way their parents communicate with them. When parents communicate effectively, they are showing respect. Children then begin to feel that they are heard and understood, which is a boost to self esteem. Research indicates that children with higher self esteem more likely to resist a child sex offender and are less vulnerable to sexual abuse (CMC 2004).

Communication Skills

Children learn how to communicate by watching their parents. If parents communicate openly and effectively, chances are that their children will too. Good communication skills will benefit children their entire lives.

Improved Relationships

Relationships between parents and their children are greatly improved when there is effective communication. In general, if communication is good, so are relationships.

Cooperation

Parents who communicate effectively are more likely to gain their children's cooperation. Such children are secure in their position in the family, know what to expect from their parents and what is expected of them. When this is the case children are more likely to live up to these expectations.

How to Communicate Positively with Children

You may agree by this stage that positive, effective communication is important, but how do we go about it? Here are some tips:

- **Start communicating effectively while children are young:** This can be a matter of parents making themselves available for their children when they have a question or if they just want to talk.
- **Communicate at your child's level:** Using age appropriate language and coming down to the child's level physically ensures communication is clear and non-threatening.

Words of Wisdom

"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

Edmund Burke
(1729-1797)

"Obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes off your goal."

Henry Ford
(1863-1947)

"Opportunities multiply as they are seized."

Sun Tzu
(544 BC – 496 BC)

- **Learn how to really listen:** Make and maintain eye contact, eliminate distractions, listen with a closed mouth and let your children know they have been heard.
- **Express your own feelings and ideas:** For communication to be effective, it must be a two way street. Parents can teach their children many things, for example, morals and values by expressing their thoughts and feelings. It seems logical the more parents open up to their children, the more their children will open up to them.
- **Regularly schedule family meetings or times to talk:** Family meetings can be scheduled (e.g. once a week) and/or whenever there is something the family needs to discuss. It is important that each family member is given time to talk to and be heard by other family members. Regularly scheduled times to talk can be less formal, such as during dinner each night to catch up with each other.
- **Admit when you don't know something:** It's far better for parents to show their children that they're human and thus don't know everything than to make up an answer that might not be true. Parents can use such instances as learning experiences, for examples to teach their children how to get the information they are seeking.

Effective, open communication takes a lot of hard work and practice. Parents should remember that they will not be perfect and will inevitably make mistakes. What is important is that parents make the effort to effectively communicate with their children starting when their children are very young. This will result in much closer, positive relationships, subsequently increasing the safety and wellbeing of their children.

The importance of an open parent/child relationship is one of the key strategies to maximise children's safety included in *Personal Safety Australia* 'Empowering Children to Stay Safe Awareness Sessions'. For more information or to make a booking please contact us.

The next edition of *Insight* will continue addressing communication with children, by addressing communication during conflict and how to avoid negative communication.

Reference: Addison County Parent/Child Centre 2007, *Parent/Child Communication*



CONTACT US

Please contact us if you:

- would like further information regarding PSA services;
- wish to subscribe or unsubscribe to *Insight*;
- have a personal safety question or topic of interest you would like included in a future edition of *Insight*.

Tel/Fax: (07) 3379 4475

Email: admin@personalsafetyaust.com

www.personalsafetyaust.com