

Life Skills and Personal Safety Program for Primary School Students

Life Skills enable the development of self-awareness, empathy, as well as the ability to communicate and manage emotions (based on World Health Organization definition). While these skills are not new, the earlier we expose children to these, the faster they learn to use them.

Enfold's program encourages students to apply life skills in their day to day interactions and unexpected contexts, especially those related to managing feelings, choosing healthy foods and activities and being safe. Students learn how to build a positive body image, express their anger, sadness, and fears; as well as respond to bullying, taunting and abuse.

The modules have been researched and refined by Dr Sangeeta Saksena and Dr Shaibya Saldanha over a decade to be scientific, age-appropriate and value based.

Many schools have incorporated this program in their academic calendar as it enables children to not only recognize sexual abuse, but also feel confident about reporting it to trusted adults.

The program is available in English, Kannada, Tamil, Hindi, Telugu, Malayalam and Bengali.

1. Details and Value of the Program for Primary School Students

The modules for primary school students includes the following topics. We also customize the content to address specific concerns of the school.

Session 1:

- a. Building self-esteem
- b. I am the boss of my body
- c. I know my body
- d. Keeping my body and brain active and healthy.

Rationale

Self- esteem plays an important role in developing self -confidence and reducing vulnerability of children to abuse. The higher the self- esteem the lower is the vulnerability to different kinds of abuse, including sexual abuse. Helping children build their self-esteem is an integral part of empowerment of children and personal safety education.

Session 2:

- a. Body Image
- b. Teasing and bullying

- c. Gender sensitization.

Rationale

People often comment on a child's looks and tease or taunt them, or in some way hold them responsible for how their body looks or the biological sex they are born with. This erodes their self-esteem. This session intends to help children build self-respect and self-confidence and gender sensitivity. It helps them respond positively to taunting and bullying.

Session 3:

- a. Accepting feelings
- b. Expressing feelings
- c. Managing anger, fear

Rationale

Our reactions to situations and people are largely determined by our feelings and emotions. Children often do not know how to express their feelings. They also harbour beliefs about certain feelings that prevent them from accepting or sharing them. This session provides them with a vocabulary for different emotions and helps them develop skills to articulate their feelings, especially in uncomfortable situations.

Session 4:

- a. I know my body
- b. Body Safety Rules
- c. Secrets

Rationale

Children are often not taught personal safety rules clearly and are somehow expected to derive them from what people around them say and do. Adults may have attached shame to certain parts of the body in their attempt to teach children social etiquettes about clothing and touching. Children may have been told that they 'should not allow anyone to touch them in certain parts of the body'. This is difficult to do. In this session we articulate Personal Safety Rules and discuss how we can be a Safe Person by following the rules for ourselves and others.

Session 5:

- a. Personal Safety Guide
- b. Shame and blame
- c. Safe adults

Rationale

Children have been taught through generations to listen to their elders and to obey them. This conditioning helps abusers take advantage of children as they know that children will not disobey them. According to Government of India study 2007, sexual abuse begins at around 5 years of age, peaks at around 12 to 14 years of age and then begins to decline. It can also continue into adulthood. In this session, through roles plays, we help children learn how to be safe in different context and how they can respond if a person – known or unknown - breaks personal safety rules.

At the end of the Course, the student would be able to:

- Demonstrate an awareness of their qualities and capabilities; positive body image, and gender sensitivity.
- Take informed decisions about healthy food options, and actively participate in nurturing their body and mind.
- Communicate better with their friends and family members; share feelings and disturbing events.
- Recall Personal Safety Rules, recognize sexual abuse and know how to report perpetrators of the crime to trusted adults