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ABSTRACT

This booklet discusses the problem of child abuse in Australia, profiles four child abuse prevention programs, and provides practical suggestions for early childhood educators to help prevent child abuse. The profiled sexual abuse prevention and awareness programs include: (1) CARE Kit, which includes workshops for community agencies, parents, and teachers, as well as daily lessons for students over the course of several weeks; (2) Body Rights: A (DUSO) Approach to Preventing Sexual Abuse of Children, a series of lessons that teach children about their bodies and provide safety rules that they can follow; (3) Talking About Touching Program II, a full personal safety curriculum for preschoolers; and (4) Protective Behaviors Program, an anti-victim training program for children and adults. The booklet stresses that educators and parents can reinforce the goals of these and other programs by encouraging children to take responsibility for their actions, providing positive feedback, discussing emotions and feelings with children, establishing safety rules, encouraging children to be assertive, and including parents in the planning and implementation of child abuse prevention programs. An appendix lists 12 alternative strategies for parents to use instead of hitting their child. Contains 14 references. (MDM)

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KEEPING OUR CHILDREN SAFE



Protective Behaviour Programs in Early Childhood Settings

Coleen Clare and Diana Roe

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FOREWORD

This Resource Booklet makes a valuable contribution to understanding a number of programs which aim to keep young children safe and help them to protect themselves from abuse.

Programs of this kind are an important part of our society's response to the growing awareness that many young children are denied the right to protection from abuse.

It is important for those working with young children to know that, as with almost all that is new, there is some debate about the appropriateness of protective behaviours programs. Such debates are a vital means of improving our knowledge about how to work on difficult issues. They also remind practitioners of the need to monitor their own practice and to evaluate in an ongoing way, the effect of the programs they implement.

Pamela Cahir
National Director
Australian Early Childhood Association

KEEPING OUR CHILDREN SAFE

Protective Behaviour Programs in Early Childhood Settings

Coleen Clare and Diana Roe

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YOUNG CHILDREN AND THE ISSUE OF ABUSE

Child abuse is now recognised as a major problem of modern society. Children are at risk of being physically, sexually, verbally and emotionally abused. They may be involved in domestic violence, be bullied by older children or adults or be in other situations where they are likely to become victims. The young child is highly at risk: recent studies of sexual assault suggest that the child under five is more at risk than older children (Finkelhor, 1986). Physical abuse is far more common for young children (QCPCA, 1986). Statistics suggest that as many as one child in three will be abused before they turn eighteen (Briggs, 1987). Many young children live in homes where violence is a regular occurrence (Scutt, 1983). Figures suggest that one child in five lives in a home in which there will be violence. All the research shows that most child abuse occurs within the family, or with close family friends. The stranger in a raincoat or a black car, although still of concern, is not the most likely threat to a young child.

The effects of child abuse on children are often long-lasting. Some children suffer permanent physical injury, and many others suffer emotional and psychological trauma which lasts throughout adult life. It is important to look at ways in which the risk of abuse can be lessened and also to look at ways to help children learn appropriate skills to seek help when and if abusive situations occur.

From an historical perspective attitudes to children have improved over the years. For example we can now say that at least officially some practices and customs such as female infanticide, severe whipping and beating of babies and toddlers, swaddling, deliberate maiming and the sexual usage of children have become publicly unacceptable in Australia. However national and local statistics clearly indicate the incidence of child abuse remains high and the effect on many children devastating.

The role that educators can undertake in identification, reporting and long term prevention of child abuse has to be carefully prepared for and implemented. Sufficient background knowledge, experience and training is necessary if educators are to play a significant role. This role may encompass: including protective behaviour programs in the developmental curriculum, utilising daily professional interactions with children and supporting children and families by undertaking a community education role. In these areas educators can make a worthwhile and productive effort to raise awareness and assist in the prevention of child abuse.

Early childhood teachers, carers and parents need effective training which will help protect children in a world which is often unsafe; training which will not stifle the natural adventurousness and loving outreach that we want children to have. Recently programs have been developed to assist teachers and parents with that training process. They are often called anti-victim training programs and are aimed at teaching children how to be safe, adventurous and loving.

WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT CHILDREN AT RISK: THE NEED FOR PREVENTIVE PROGRAMS

Within the educational setting most adults are keen to help keep the children in their care safe. When they are faced with the issue of child abuse it is difficult to understand the extent of the problem and to know what can be done. The occurrence of child abuse is a difficult and sensitive social issue. Teachers, carers and parents are not usually trained or prepared to cope with the problem. Preventive programs offer systematic approaches which can be included in the educational curriculum in early childhood settings.

Parents, carers and teachers are now aware that many of our children are robbed of their childhood innocence as they experience and live through various forms of child abuse (Smart, 1986). As educators we believe that all our children have the right to receive love and protection.

We know that loving touch is as necessary to children as food when they are hungry and warmth when they are cold. Loving touch is a basic need throughout life and all protective behaviour programs need to encourage children to learn positive acceptable ways to have this need met.



Loving touch is as necessary to children as food when they are hungry or warmth when they are cold.

In homes and schools a loving environment needs to be created and maintained where our children learn to receive and give loving, nurturing touch and also how to clearly and loudly resist uncomfortable touch. We can help achieve such an environment by teaching our children to recognise, understand and act on their feelings about what feels like a good touch and what feels like a bad touch and what leaves them uncomfortable.

We can teach the concept of positive touch through discussion, positive feedback and most important of all adult modelling.

In protective behaviour programs loving touch is taught in the context of children learning to achieve a full, healthy, productive life which nurtures, comforts, heals and affirms the strong able self in each child.

PREVENTIVE PROGRAMS

There have been a number of programs set up to help children deal with abuse. Four of the most widely used programs in Australia are:

- C.A.R.E. Kit
- Body Rights (DUSO) Program
- Talking about Touching: Personal Safety for Preschoolers
- Protective Behaviours

C.A.R.E. Kit

Available from: Phil Martin
Orient Point
Via Nowra NSW 2541
(044-23 1801)

The C.A.R.E. Kit was developed in response to a request from the Canadian Mounted Police. They suggested to the Child Abuse Research and Education Productions Association of British Columbia that a comprehensive and locally produced education program for child sexual assault prevention was desirable and that one which had a specific component for community education would be most effective.

The kit was developed, piloted and evaluated in Canada. It has been trialled in Bomaderry Primary School in Australia and the evaluation was positive (Martin, 1985).

Before the program reaches the classroom, three workshops are needed:

- (i) for community agencies
- (ii) for parents and
- (iii) for the teachers and staff of the school.

The class teacher presents the program, involving a 15-20 minute lesson each day, for several weeks.

The kit consists of message cards, discussion cards, a cassette, 3 puppets, a fact sheet, two booklets, a poster for each child, a children's book and a lesson planning guide.

All the materials are well written, illustrated and presented and convey their message clearly. The cassette has on it the script of the book and a song which reinforces the 'trust your feelings' theme of the kit. The program is structured in 3 parts.

Part 1: relates to each person owning and being responsible for his/her own body and feelings.

Part 2: introduces the notion of sexual abuse through discussions about touching.

Part 3: focuses on self-protection and strategies for reporting.

Although this kit is presented as a complete program it is recommended that it be taught either as one component in an entire safety program or as a part of an ongoing personal development program. The messages of the program need to be reinforced in incidental ways or by using supplementary material relevant to the age group of the pupils. It is also suggested that children take part in the program for two consecutive years.

Body Rights: A (DUSO) Approach to Preventing Sexual Abuse of Children

Available from: Australian Council for Educational Research Limited
9 Frederick Street
Hawthorn Vic 3122
(03-819 1400)

This is a sexual abuse prevention program for use with children aged three to seven years. It includes a puppet, discussion pictures, cassette, worksheets and teachers' and parents' guides. The program has been developed to help children learn about their bodies, names of body parts, ways to say 'no' to adults where appropriate and general safety rules in the area of unwanted touching.

The program has been designed for easy use by teachers and others working with young children. The material is well presented and appeals to young children.

However, the approach to prevention of abuse is quite prescriptive — telling children what they should do in different situations and giving clear rules.

The program is useful for those working with young children particularly in the area of 'my body'. However, as it only covers the area of sexual abuse, it is better used as an adjunct of a wider program. It is also important that children are not made to feel further victimised if they are not able to follow the safety rules.

Talking About Touching Program II: Personal Safety for Preschoolers

Available from: Committee for Children
172 20th Avenue
Seattle, WA. 98122 USA

This curriculum covers the following areas.

- Safety Training
- Personal Safety
- Touching Safety
- Feeling Safety
- Resources

The writers present the program as a full personal safety curriculum for preschool children covering dangerous situations with fire, traffic and water as well as exploitative situations which involve people. The basic strategies used in this curriculum are to provide children with information and to equip them with self-protective skills aimed at decreasing their vulnerability in situations of danger or abuse.

The curriculum is well set out and useful providing readily accessible information and practical resources for carers or teachers. The messages conveyed are that:

- children should follow safety rules for environmental and interpersonal situations.
- children should say 'no' to unsafe situations or exploitative touch.
- secrets between adults and children about touch are not okay.
- children are never to blame if they are involved in a situation of exploitative touching, no matter how long it has gone on.
- children must tell someone about dangerous or exploitative situations, and keep telling until they are believed.



We all have the right to
feel safe all the time.

Protective Behaviours Program

Available from: ACT Protective Education Network
PO Box 396
Dickson ACT 2602

The Protective Behaviours Program was developed by a social worker (Peg Flandreau West) in Wisconsin, USA. It is an anti-victim training program for children, adolescents and adults and aims to teach coping skills for use in a variety of situations. It is a program incorporating assertiveness skills, problem-solving skills and network-building into a process-oriented package.

The program is based on two main themes —

We all have the right to feel safe all the time
and
Nothing is so awful that you can't talk about it with someone you trust.

The two themes are addressed in two basic sessions of the program. Children are taught to identify their own 'Early Warning Signs' which give bodily clues to let them know that they are not feeling safe. They also learn to distinguish between 'scared, but still safe feelings' (i.e. adventurousness) and unsafe feelings.

Then children are asked to start identifying their own 'network' people, to whom they can go if they are not feeling safe.

In further sessions of the program, participants use the strategies already learned to look at solutions to specific areas of concern — lost key, physical abuse, verbal abuse, inappropriate sexual touching and domestic violence. Other situations where the program can be used include danger from strangers, peer pressure, bullying, etc. The program spans all age groups and has been used with a wide variety of people, such as the aged, prisoners and teenagers. It can stand alone, or be supported by many other resources.

Basic steps in the program are as follows.

Step 1 Talk to Your Child

This step is based on the belief that parents, carers and teachers should talk to children about how to keep themselves safe and encourage children to believe they have the right to feel safe at all times.



Step 2 Talking to a Child About Trust

This step involves parents and teachers teaching children that nothing that happens to them in life is so awful that they could not talk about it with someone they trust. In this process children learn that it is OK to share your feelings about how you feel inside whether those feelings are good or bad.

Step 3 Networking

In this stage children learn who they can talk to if they are not feeling safe. Of course this includes Mum and Dad and carers and teachers when appropriate but also other trusted adults. When trusted parents, carers or teachers are not around and an unsafe situation arises it may be necessary to talk with some other trusted relative or friend.

Step 4 Persistence

When children are in an unsafe situation they will need to persist in telling a trusted adult about it until someone believes and helps them: someone who is brave and effective enough to intervene in a child's life and see that any abusive behaviour is stopped. Children need to learn to speak out for themselves until someone does something that means the child feels safe again.

USING PREVENTIVE PROGRAMS WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

Concern has been expressed about the use of protective behaviour programs with younger children. Some of the concepts are sophisticated for preschoolers and many of the situations are not fully relevant. However, with creative and thoughtful teaching, children as young as three have been able to understand and benefit from preventive programs.

It is not possible or appropriate for teachers to seek to prevent all abuse of children. However, it does fall within their role to raise children's awareness of some of the dangerous aspects of life and to teach practical and effective strategies which increase children's options for living in a safe environment. This process needs to occur along with teaching to expand children's knowledge of the supportive safe activities and people in their world. Carefully, teachers, carers and parents can join together to help children develop as safely as possible in a warm secure environment.

The areas that safety programs cover range from the traditional stranger-danger teaching that many of us knew as children across issues such as: being locked out of the house; coping with verbal abuse; what to do when bullying or fighting occurs; how to deal with unwanted or inappropriate physical touch; through to issues like drugs and alcohol. Those who work with young children will need to choose carefully what aspects of programs to teach and how to teach them — as is the case in all curriculum areas.

The Protective Behaviours Program was brought to Australia in 1984 by the Victorian Police as a more appropriate replacement for their Stranger Danger program in schools. Following successful trials in primary schools in Victoria and South Australia, the program has spread Australia-wide. It is now used extensively in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. In the ACT more than half the primary schools have implemented the program during the last three years. Preschools in all states have been using the program.

It has been used most widely in South Australia where training is provided regularly for preschool and child care centre staff and Protective Behaviours consultants are available.

In the ACT most training and support with implementation is provided by school counsellors and specially trained resource teachers.

In Victoria, implementation of the Protective Behaviours Program at a preschool was evaluated by the teacher and a mother helping with the program (Oldham and Barrett, 1987). This report was favourable and suggested useful techniques and resources. There was strong parent involvement in this program and parent evaluation was very positive.

An evaluation of the Protective Behaviours Program was attempted in the ACT (Price, Quarmby and Windeyer, 1987) where preschool and kindergarten teachers were asked about their attitudes to the program and its suitability for young children. It was found that teachers who were actually teaching the program found it very useful and had devised strategies to make it appropriate for the early childhood age group.

In South Australia a number of pilot programs have been trialled. These again have been generally successful but stress the need for support being available for the teacher and for appropriate resource backup.

It does seem that protective behaviour programs may assist children to help protect themselves in abusive situations even though the programs often need some adaptation from the original manual and some concepts may take time for young children to grasp. However with creative flexible teaching the programs have much to recommend them in giving ideas and suggestions to encourage problem-solving skills and help children feel safe. Even for children who do not face any sort of abuse the program can teach some useful ways to handle difficult situations. As it is stated in the Protective Behaviours Program manual: **'Even if you are scared, you can still think!'**

WHAT CAN WE DO TO HELP? PRACTICAL IDEAS

Teachers, parents and carers can work together to attain the objectives of protective behaviour programs by using the 'teachable moments' in each day.

Following are some examples of areas in which to work and simple strategies to use.

- **To increase 'anti-victim' strategies for children**

Encourage children to take responsibility for things that happen.

Example

Not 'he made me' or 'it hurt me' -- all of which are 'victim language'. Children can be taught to say 'I did ...' or 'When I fell off the slide I hurt my knee on the ground'.

- **To foster children's positive self esteem**

Use lots of positive comments about children and their activities -- give feedback about the good times, not just the difficult ones.



Example

'You've played so well together today, listening and sharing; you are acting like good friends today.'

- **To foster children's positive self-image**

All general body awareness activities are useful.

Example

Child lying on the floor and drawing around hands and feet, and singing and action games which enhance children's good feelings about themselves.

- **To recognise an individual's feelings and emotions**

Use natural play incidents to base planned discussions on.

Example

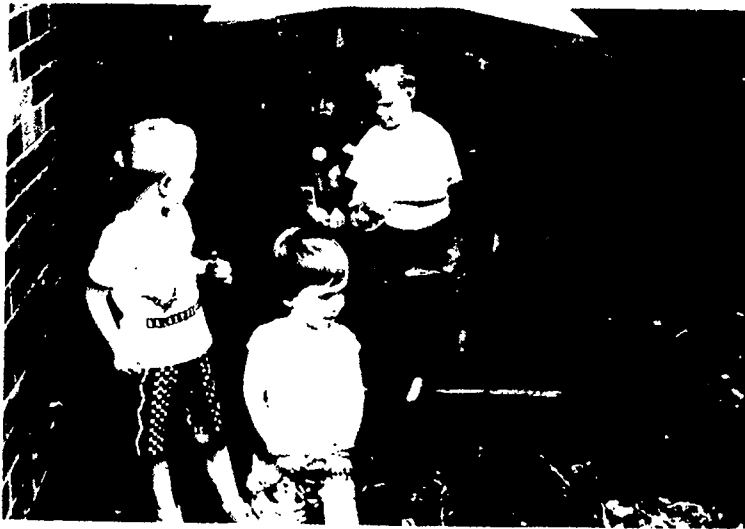
Explore children's feelings following a sand throwing scene in the sandpit; or discuss the different way it feels to be hungry before fruit time and full afterwards.

- **To encourage children to take responsibility for their own actions**

Establish safety rules with the children.

Example

Not running in the bathroom. Talk about how these rules keep them safe. For example, 'What if people run — what happens?'



Base your discussions on natural play incidents.

- **To encourage children's self-assertive strategies**

Help children stand up for themselves when someone is annoying.

Example

Encourage them to say assertively 'I don't like that' or 'Please stop — that is annoying me' and to say 'No' forcefully when appropriate.

- **Include parents in the planning and implementation of any program**

Give invitations to watch a session, hold parent meetings, offer individual interviews and provide regular newsletters for children to take home in order that all parents can feel involved and included.

Sue McGrath (1988) gives some useful suggestions particularly designed to assist children to recognise feelings for use with the Protective Behaviours Program.

- Blow up a balloon and then ask 'What if this goes pop?' Ask whether the children are feeling worried or scared.

- Ask a child on the top of a high slippery slide 'How does your body feel now?' and when they get down 'Does it feel different now?'
- Adults can also share their feelings with children. They can tell children what happens to them when they are feeling scared: 'I get an early warning sign when I see a spider — my hands go all sweaty and my heart goes thump, thump'.

The concept of networking for young children can be made very concrete so that children understand its importance. Talking about networking using people in stories or puppets is a useful first step. 'Who can this person go to for help?' can be asked in many situations. Talking generally about 'people who help us' is useful to give children the idea of a range of possible network people. Many books are useful in this area. *Are You My Mother?* and similar books portray a character going to a variety of characters for help.

It is difficult to make networks of trusted people with young children except on a one-to-one basis. Each child needs time to sort out which people they would choose to talk to when they want to discuss pleasant things. One suggestion which has proved useful for young children is to make invitations for people they would like on their network. These can be given to the selected people and can also provide information about what 'being on a network' means. It is important that the children are given the opportunity to use and 'review' their network and change it if they wish and as people move in and out of their lives.

Some useful topics for problem solving discussions with young children are:

- 'What if you saw something really scary on TV: how could you feel safe?'
- 'What if a kid much bigger than you said that he/she was going to beat you up: how could you keep safe?'
- 'What if someone touched you and it felt yucky: what could you do?'

Most of the situations used for teaching protective behaviours can be very simple and often will come up incidentally. In preschools and child care settings where a Protective Behaviours Program has been introduced many teachers are finding that after the first few sessions most of the program can be covered using regular teaching situations. It appears that when teachers internalise the ideas and use a planned approach which covers assertiveness training, problem-solving and networking situations, the children model this approach.

Puppets are useful to 'set the scene' for teaching situations and to encourage the children to join in role-playing or looking at ideas and options for action in various relevant situations. Some books have been written specifically for use with Protective Behaviours. Other books written for preschoolers which deal with feelings and topics related to feeling safe and unsafe and assertiveness skills can be utilised with the programs.

RESOURCES

Books for young children

- Bass, E. (1981) *I Like You to Make Jokes with Me, But I Don't Want You to Touch Me.* Chapel Hill: Lollipop Power.**
— A book which tells very simply a little girl's way of handling 'uncomfortable touch'.
- Davis, D. (1984) *Something is Wrong at My House.* Seattle: Parenting Press.**
— One of the few books about parents' fighting. Very good for sharing with a young child who needs ways to cope with violence in their home.
- Freeman, L. (1986) *Loving Touches.* Seattle: Parenting Press.**
— A book for younger children about positive caring kinds of touching.
- Freeman, L. (1982) *It's My Body.* Seattle: Parenting Press.**
— A book to teach young children how to resist uncomfortable touch.
- Gordon, S. and Gordon, J. (1984) *A Better Safe Than Sorry Book.* New York: Ed. U. Press.**
— A small picture book which emphasises the 'No, Go Tell' approach about sexual abuse. Illustrations are very good.
- Gordon, S. and Litt, S. (1988) *Nolly and Groggle: The Gillows of Crimpley Creek.* South Australia: Essence Publications.**
— Stories to introduce the themes of Protective Behaviours to children up to six years.
- Gordon, S. and Litt, S. (1988) *Zing and Zip: The Troggs of Wongo Wongo Wood.* South Australia: Essence Publications.**
— Stories for children aged five to nine which reinforce the Protective Behaviours Program themes and strategies.
- Hessel, J. (1987) *What's Wrong with Bottoms.* New Zealand: Century Hutchison.**
— A beautiful little book about a young boy who is touched inappropriately by his uncle. The illustrations and text are very clear and non-threatening.
- Hindman, J. (1983) *A Very Touching Book.* Oregon: McClure-Hindman Books.**
— A useful book about all sorts of touch and feelings. The illustrations are great fun.
- Munro, H. (1989) *Try again Red Riding Hood.* South Australia: Essence Publications.**
— This book was written by Helen Munro and her class of nine year old children at Surrey Downs School, South Australia. It incorporates problem solving approaches to a fairy tale.
- Palmer, P. (1977) *The Mouse, The Monster and Me.* San Luis, California: Impact Publishers.**
— A book on assertiveness that includes useful activities to try.
- Patterson, S. (1986) *No No Little Seal.* New York: Random House.**
— A delightful book about a young seal who is touched by his uncle seal and how he deals with it. Very appealing to young children.

Polland, B. (1975) *Feelings — Inside You and Out Loud Too*. Berkely, California: Celestial Arts.

— A beautifully illustrated photographic book about feelings.

Rowley, T. (1986) *Did I Ever Tell You How Special You Are?* Brisbane: Queensland Centre for Prevention of Child Abuse.

— This book encourages children's self-esteem and confidence.

Rowley, T. (1986) *Touches and Feelings*. Brisbane: Queensland Centre for Prevention of Child Abuse.

— This book introduces the concept of personal safety for young children.

Rowley, T. (n.d.) *Knock Knock Who's There*. Brisbane: Queensland Centre for Prevention of Child Abuse.

— This book traces the feelings of a child who has been sexually abused.

As well as these books, there are many in any preschool or child care library which would be suitable resources for a program which helps children deal with abuse. These include: *Are You My Mother? The Best Nest, All About Me, How Do I Feel? A Dark, Dark Tale, There's A Nightmare In My Cupboard, Alfie Gets In First, Nobody Listens to Andrew, I Don't Like My Name, I Won't Be Afraid, Jenny And The Night Of The Storm* and many, many more. Any book or video which talks about feelings, emphasises problem-solving or suggests ways that children can ask for help is potentially useful in this way.

APPENDIX I

The Queensland Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse gives 12 alternative strategies to use instead of hitting your child.

When everyday problems pile up don't take it out on your child. Try any or all of these alternatives:

1. Stop in your tracks. Step back. Sit down.
2. Take five deep breaths. Inhale. Exhale. Slowly, slowly.
3. Count to 10. Better yet, 20. Or say the alphabet out loud.
4. Phone a friend. A relative. Even the weather.
5. Still mad? Punch a pillow. Or munch an apple.
6. Thumb through a magazine, newspaper, photo album.
7. Do some sit-ups.
8. Pick up a pencil and write down your thoughts.
9. Take a hot bath. Or a cold shower.
10. Lie down on the floor, or just put your feet up.
11. Put on your favourite record.
12. Water your plants.

Take time out. Don't take it out on your child.

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