



Activity: 3-4.5.1

Key Messages

- We can figure out if secrets are safe or unsafe.
- We tell unsafe secrets to an adult who can help.

Activity Details

Victorian Curriculum

Health & PE Identify and practise strategies to promote health, safety and wellbeing
VCHPEP091

Capabilities VCCCTR015

Time 30 minutes

Levels 3 & 4

Equipment

- selected story
- whiteboard and markers
- Class set of *Tell or don't tell?* worksheet

Tell or don't tell?

Purpose

To provide the students with information and skills to neutralise the power of secrecy in relation to sexual offences.

Teaching notes

Teaching about safe and unsafe secrets is a complex task. People who have not been victimised can find it difficult to understand why children do not report the first incidence of sexual misbehaviour. They underestimate the pressure on children to remain silent, especially if the perpetrator is a person known and trusted by the family. This activity aims to provide students with explicit instances, to allow students to determine when they need to tell a trusted adult about an unsafe incidence.

While this may seem like a confronting task to the teacher, it is necessary to discuss them so as to provide protective behaviour strategies for students to use when they are in a possibly unsafe situation.

Procedure

1. Read a suitable short story. Recommended stories include:
 - *No more secrets: protecting your child from sexual assault* (Caren Adams and Jennifer Fay, 1981)
 - *What's wrong with bottoms?* (Jenny Hessel, 2000)
 - *Zing and Zip: the troggs of wongo-wongo wood* (Sue Gordon, Sandy Litt and Sharon Brooks, 1998)
 - *Nolly and Groogle: the gillows of crimpley creek* (Sue Gordon and Sandy Litt, 1998)

Or consult your school librarian.
2. Explore the key issues about secrets in the story using the following questions as a guide:
 - Which secrets could someone tell?
 - Would someone really get into trouble for telling an unsafe secret? (ensure to explore both yes and no possibilities)
 - What might happen if an unsafe secret is kept secret?
 - Is anyone allowed to show/do rude or yucky things to children and tell them to keep it a secret?
 - Suppose that an adult, that someone really likes, asks a child to keep a secret about something yucky or rude. What could the child do?
 - Sometimes an adult, even someone who is liked a lot, may threaten children to make them keep a secret. What could children do if this happens?
 - Why do you think a grown up or bigger person might want a child to keep something secret?
 - How would being asked to keep an unsafe secret make you feel?
3. Distribute the worksheet *Tell or Don't tell?* to each student. Allow sufficient time for students to complete the sheet. Ask students to share their answers.
4. Discuss some of the key issues around keeping safe (as above) in relation to the scenarios on the worksheet.



Tell or don't tell?

Which surprises can we keep?

Which secrets must we tell?

Circle the word **Tell** if you think that a secret should be told.

Circle **Don't Tell** if you think it's a good surprise.

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| Someone's mum is planning a party for her partner's birthday and she asks the children not to tell anyone about it. She wants it to be a surprise. | Tell | Don't tell |
| A big boy in the schoolyard wants to show others some rude pictures of naked people. He says that it's for fun but the children can't tell anyone or he'll get his mate to hit them. | Tell | Don't tell |
| A dad takes his children shopping and buys a present for mum. He asks the children to keep it a secret until Christmas. | Tell | Don't tell |
| A boy/girl is watching TV with an uncle. He sits too close and puts his hand under their clothes and touches parts of their body which makes them feel scared and uncomfortable. He then says 'It's our special secret. Don't tell anyone or you'll get into big trouble.' | Tell | Don't tell |
| A boy shows his mates a \$20 note and says it was given to him by a man who lives in the next street. He says the man will give them both \$20 if they go to his house, but they mustn't tell anyone or he will get into big trouble. | Tell | Don't tell |
| The children like their babysitter a lot, until she/he asks them to play an undressing game and says they mustn't tell anyone. | Tell | Don't tell |
| Your friend tells you that his parents are planning to have another baby soon. He asks you not to tell anyone. | Tell | Don't tell |
| You and your older sister take the bus to school. As soon as you get to the bus stop, your sister hitches up her skirt and puts on eye liner. She asks you not to tell mum. | Tell | Don't tell |
| A boy/girl goes to his/her friends' home after school and the friend shows him/her rude videos on the computer. It makes him/her feel uncomfortable and worried. | Tell | Don't tell |

Adapted with permission from Briggs, F 2000, *Teaching children to protect themselves: a resource for teachers and adults who care for young children*, Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW.