

Educator Guide



Australia's Biggest Child Safety Lesson

The Early Years and Junior primary version of Australia's Biggest Child Safety Lesson is suitable for children aged 4 to 7 years. The Upper Primary version of Australia's Biggest Child Safety Lesson is suitable for children aged 8 to 12 years. It can be viewed in large or small groups at school and can also be watched by children at home.

ABCSL will teach children key personal safety concepts in a fun and age-appropriate way.

Key learning objectives

To **RECOGNISE** safe and unsafe situations and body clues.

To **REACT** to keep ourselves safe.

To **REPORT** unsafe situations.

Discussing sensitive issues

Teaching personal safety is sensitive and can be triggering. To best prepare yourself for this content, you can read the lesson synopsis for a better understanding of what will be presented. We also encourage educators to reach out to their support staff and personal network if any of this content is upsetting.

Discussing sensitive issues may also trigger distress for some children. Each child could have a different reaction to the same information. Have a plan for assisting children should they become upset, emotional or are finding the content too difficult.

One step removed

Endeavour to utilise the 'one step removed' strategy. This strategy removes the use of first person when posing questions or presenting hypothetical scenarios. Instead, where possible, utilise third person. For example, instead of saying 'You have an unsafe secret,' say, 'Someone you know tells you they have an unsafe secret.' This strategy allows for the exploration of sensitive topics whilst reducing the possibility that students might be personally confronted.

Protective Interrupting

Involvement in a safety lesson may prompt a student to be ready to make a disclosure of abuse. Whilst a group of children may have been advised to save personal stories for later, it is possible that a student may begin to disclose, or a teacher might sense that a student is about to make a disclosure. In such a situation, protective interrupting validates the importance of the disclosure, whilst protecting the individual from revealing personal abuse which may increase their own vulnerability. This strategy also protects other children from vicarious trauma which can be experienced due to hearing a disclosure.

If such a situation occurs, a teacher should endeavour to postpone the divulging of further details until they have a safe and private context – using phrases such as, 'I really want to hear what you have to say, but...' or 'It sounds like you are about to say something really important. I think we should talk about this privately.' The educator could gently suggest that the child talks privately with them after the lesson. Where possible, if staff are available to continue the lesson and supervise the remaining group, the teacher should request that the child goes out of the classroom with them to continue the conversation.

This strategy for managing disclosures is not meant to dissuade the child from disclosing harm. It is very important that educators are prepared to respond sensitively to any disclosures of abuse. If any protective interrupting has been necessary, it is essential that the educator subsequently creates a safe situation for a follow-up conversation with the child.



They should be ready to facilitate the disclosure as soon as possible after the protective interrupting. Each Australian state and territory has its own specific requirements relating to the reporting of harm, so it is important to understand what this means for individuals.

Interactive component

During the lesson, there is a prompt for viewer involvement. This occurs when the newsreader, Lillie, introduces body clues in a scene which depicts a young boy **RECOGNISING** his body clues while gaming. Lillie asks, "Can you think of some other body clues?" Students have 15 seconds to generate answers. These could include: shaky legs, the feeling of being unable to move, hair standing up, crying or going to the toilet without meaning to.

Red flags record keeping

Harm is not always an isolated disclosure or event. Sometimes, a teacher may notice something that could be viewed as accidental or innocent as a one-off occurrence. For example, a child not having lunch one day could be accidental. However, if it is a frequent occurrence then the pattern of behaviour could be viewed as concerning. Educators may notice many incidents of worrying behaviour or concerns that do not reach the threshold for reporting. Keeping a diary of smaller incidents can help to build a picture over time of a pattern of behaviour that could indicate abuse.

Keeping a record of potential indicators that harm is occurring is vital to be able to effectively monitor a child's wellbeing. Ensure you record:

- dates
- the potential risk or potential harm that could be occurring
- the impact on the child's well-being, behaviour, emotional state or ability to learn
- whether you or your principal has discussed any issues with the child's care givers and what their response was
- if you or your principal have made an offer to refer the family/carer to a community service for assistance, record the family or carers' willingness to engage with the service and improve the situation for their child.

Keep your principal, school guidance officer and student wellbeing delegate updated and informed about the situation and any suspicions you may have. Closely monitor the wellbeing of the child. Teachers are well placed to identify and respond to suspected harm against their students but doing so can sometimes be a long journey. Reach out for support when needed and keep trying to do what you can to improve the situation. Make sure that you have a support network and enact selfcare.

Consultation with parents/carers of student(s) with a history of abuse

It is important that educators are aware that this lesson incorporates content which may be confronting or upsetting for some students. It is recommended that in circumstances where a history of abuse is known, educators engage with significant and appropriate people in the child's life (such as a parent or carer) prior to the commencement of the lesson. Caregivers and educators should collaborate to devise strategies to respond to the individual student's needs.

Prior to the lesson discuss the following safety guidelines with children

For students to engage, it is important that they feel safe and supported during the lesson. Talk to the students about some ground rules for the lesson and encourage them to agree upon the group rules. These rules should include:

1. No put downs – be nice to each other.
2. Respect others and value their individual contributions.
3. If you have a private story to tell, talk to a safe adult after the lesson.
4. It is okay to ask questions.

Educators will need

- Access to lesson via www.danielmorcombe.com.au
- Internet connected and audio enabled device.
- Interactive whiteboard or screen to display lesson.

Children may need

- Printed copies of relevant activity sheets from 'Keeping Kids Safe' suite of resources
- Pen or pencil.
- Desk or hard surface (floor)

Personal safety education should not be taught as a one-off lesson but integrated into learning activities throughout the year. If your school is already doing this – congratulations! If not, this lesson could be a starting point.

Responding to disclosures

Help seeking can be a scary and uncertain time for children. How educators respond to disclosures can influence how the child feels and how likely they are to seek help again.

Keep the following things in mind when responding to disclosures:

- Ensure the child knows that they have the right to feel safe, that their safety is your number one priority and that you will do all you can to help them feel safe.
- Adults are responsible for keeping children safe.
- Actively listen and take the child's concerns seriously.
- Support the conversation but let the child speak freely in their own words and do not ask leading questions.
- Ensure the child feels supported, believed and safe.
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing by telling you.
- Be honest about your obligation to share information if you have concerns someone may be at risk and the next steps.
- Always follow your organisation's guidelines regarding reporting.

Helpful things to say

- I am going to try to help you.
- I believe you.
- You did the right thing by talking to me.
- You are not to blame.

What do I do after I have received a disclosure of harm?

Explain the next steps

It is important to tell the child what you are going to do next. Leaving things open ended can result in the child experiencing high levels of anxiety which can increase the effects of the trauma already experienced. Explain that you are going to need to report the abuse to someone who can help. For this reason, it is important you don't make promises about information sharing that you can't keep.

REPORT

It is vital that you document and report any suspicions or indicators of harm against a child as soon as possible. Do this while the information is fresh in your memory. It might help to make some notes immediately after speaking to the child.

Try to be as accurate as possible and also mindful of the need for privacy and confidentiality.

Don't start to investigate the allegations or confront the alleged abuser. Doing so could make the situation worse and might undermine any investigation by the relevant authorities.

Mandatory reporting

For information on the mandatory reporting relevant to your state or territory visit <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/mandatory-reporting-child-abuse-and-neglect>.

Where to get help

- In an emergency, call the Police or triple zero (000)
- If you suspect that a child has experienced abuse or is at risk of harm you should contact the relevant state or territory child protection agency. The Australian Institute of Family Studies has an up-to-date contact list <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/reporting-abuse-and-neglect>
- Parentline - 1800 30 1300 provide free counselling and advice to parents and carers. Resources are available at <https://www.parentline.com.au/> to support parents and carers to understand a wide range of issues related to raising children and young people
- Kids Helpline - 1800 55 1800 provide a free, 24 hour counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25 years. Resources and webchat are available at <https://kidshelpline.com.au/>.

Useful resources

- Keeping Kids Safe Resources – The Daniel Morcombe Foundation provides free downloadable activities to engage children and young people in learning about personal safety at <https://danielmorcombe.com.au/keeping-kids-safe-resources>
- [Responding to a disclosure of abuse](#)
- [Trauma-informed information and resources](#)
- [Responding to children and young people's disclosures of abuse](#)

Looking after yourself and others

It is important to be aware that receiving a disclosure can be very stressful for a teacher or other school staff. If you are feeling that your mental health is being affected you may need to seek support from a colleague, your school's Employee Assistance Program, or mental health organisations (listed below).

- Beyond Blue - <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>
- Lifeline - <https://www.lifeline.org.au/>
- National Office for Child Safety - <https://www.pmc.gov.au>