



Feeling safe

Guide for Early Childcare Educators

March 2020

Children feeling safe

How a child experiences the world – their safety, self - perception and understanding is reliant upon those they interact with. Childcare educators are an important, crucial part of children's immediate and future life experience.

Children who feel safe are less likely to experience anxiety, distress and display concerning behaviours. Children who feel safe are more likely to overcome trauma, loss and difficult experiences.

Our children require us to help them feel safe

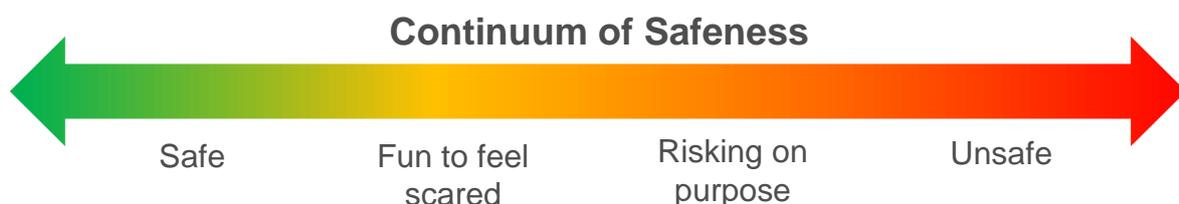
This can be difficult when people are scared and unsure of what to expect and what may or may not happen next, as in the case of COVID-19.

The building blocks to feeling safe – the safety equation

To help our educators assist children to feel safe it is important for educators to understand what the elements of feeling safe consist of. In Protective Behaviours personal safety and empowerment programs this is referred to as the safety equation:

Safety = Choice + Control + Time limit

During times of crisis, children and adults alike may feel like they have no choice, no control and no idea of how long the crisis will last. On the safeness continuum when the elements of safety are not present, it will result in someone feeling unsafe.



Feeling unsafe can result in panic, anxiety, stress, confusion, anger and behaviours that are out of the normal" range for that person. Example: panic buying is an attempt to control some of the situation and in turn help(s) the buyer to feel safer.



Discussions for educators to have with children to help them feel safe

TIP - include feeling safe into circle time

- 1- Ensure children know they all have the right to feel safe and you and all the educators in your setting care about this and will do all you can to help them to feel safe.
- 2- Let children know that it is ok to talk about how they are feeling, and their educators are available to talk with them anytime.
- 3- Be honest and age appropriate with children when talking about any crisis particularly COVID-19. Helping children to discuss feelings is a very important part of helping them to manage their feelings. Some topic questions could be.
 - Some people might feel afraid that people they love may get sick.
 - How might we describe feeling afraid?
 - How might someone know if they felt afraid?
- 4- Young children can find it difficult to negotiate what is legitimate media coverage, understand sensationalism and discern fact from fiction, they pick up on the quality of language, body language and on heightened emotions
- 5- You can help children to feel safer by encouraging them to stay away from social media and being mindful of the possibility of children hearing and or experiencing emotionally charged and panic driven conversations.
- 6- You can access correct information from your local government authority [WA Health Department](#) has some great resources [here](#). The [World Health Organisation](#) has other resources that are fantastic for using as guides in your education and care setting.

Feeling safe is different to being safe – We can assist children to FEEL SAFE even in the unusual situation of being unsafe, such as COVID-19 by reinforcing their feeling safe building blocks.



Choice

Discussion tips to help educators in reinforcing the CHOICE building block

Sometimes we don't always have a choice about what happens to us and that can sometimes feel unsafe. When this happens, the best option is to focus on what we do have a choice about.

Q. What are some of the choices we can make at our centre to help us feel safer?

A. Actions which someone chooses to do that may help limit the spread of a virus.

Q. What might this look like for the adults and children in our Centre?

A. Regular handwashing; keeping to just our own cups and /or drink bottles; keeping our faces hands free zones; remembering our personal space, reminding others of our personal space rule and more.

Group activity – create a positive choices wall. Include affirmative choices with children's drawings / photos. Review / add to it daily, at circle time.

Control – how we act and behave

Discussion tips to help educators in reinforcing the CONTROL building block

Control is our own super ability. It's inside all of us and it directs our actions, attitudes and effort. There are lots of things outside of our control – things that happen around us or to us and there are also lots of things we can control.

In particular we can control how we behave or respond to what is happening around us.

Q. What are some of the things we can control to help us feel safer?

A. Eat healthy food; wash our hands; respect others personal space; speak out when we see someone not practicing safe choices; be kind to others; talk with someone when we are feeling upset or worried; care for our own safety and care for the safety of others.

Activity – My super control abilities colouring and work sheets

Download at pbwest.com.au



Time limit

Discussion tips to help educators in reinforcing the TIME LIMIT building block

Having a time limit means we have some idea of how long something will last. With COVID-19 this is difficult.

To reinforce the TIME LIMIT building block, find other ways to measure time. We can keep track of time by counting everyday where we have practiced our choices and our control.

Our choices and our control will help limit the time it will take.

Q. What could be some of the ways we could measure the time?

A. We can keep track of time by counting everyday where we have practiced our choices and our control. By using clocks and calendars, we can make charts for hand washing; we can set goals where our choices have helped to assist in stopping the spread using time intervals eg: one day- one week, one month.

Activity – End of day awards and discussions on being responsible for our choices and actions, focus on how well the class and / or centre did during the day.

Being educators means our children will look to us and follow our lead on how to act and behave this is a wonderful opportunity for us to role model behaviours and help children to learn to be responsible for themselves and their behaviour choices. This also means we observe others right to feel safe with us.

Some of the ways we can model this behaviour includes using safe language, being mindful of our actions and of demonstrating our ability to regulate our emotions along with sharing these techniques and strategies with the children we care for and educate.

For more information



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