



Stand Strong • Stay Safe Presentations

Your class will soon receive presentations Stand Strong • Stay Safe. The program consists of four lessons which last 20-30 minutes. The material will be presented by your trained campus counselor or by ChildBuilders' professional staff. **Please review the following information to be prepared to support your students during and after the presentations.** Thank you for allowing us to spend time in your classroom!

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General Tips for Classroom Teachers

- **Model skills.** Try to model assertiveness with adult colleagues to reinforce the Stand Strong Safety Skills throughout the school community.
- **Stay present.** A teacher or teacher's assistant is advised to stay in the room throughout each presentation. This adult should stay engaged and watch for signs of discomfort or disclosure and address them gently and discreetly as needed. Make every effort to keep children engaged in the lesson to ensure they can learn the safety messages.
- **Facilitate communication** between students and the presenter. Especially in the virtual presentations, students may not be heard or seen completely by the presenter. Please help the presenter address questions and reinforce skills throughout each presentation.
- **Take care of your own emotional safety.** The discussions in this curriculum can be difficult for adults, too. Practice self-care and emotional self-awareness in order to prepare yourself for being fully present and calm during each lesson.
- **Provide supportive feedback.** As students practice the skills in each lesson, encourage their use of correct stance, language, and knowledge of skills. When necessary, attempt to adjust behavior using a kind and nurturing approach, while showing them what they need to know to be safe. For example, "You're doing a great job standing tall, and remember we are using a strong, clear voice." Keep focus on the group instead of singling out individuals.
- **Enhance emotional literacy** by using physical and contextual cues to tell how someone might be feeling, but reinforce the fact that we can't read minds. Try to reflect this in your language by using words like "maybe," "probably," and "it seems like," when interpreting the characters' feelings and motives.
- **Watch for trauma reminders.** The stories in this curriculum, especially lessons 3 and 4, address abuse and neglect in a direct, age-appropriate way. Children with abuse-related trauma may experience trauma reminders at any point during the curriculum. Intervene to support students if their behavior, attitude, or demeanor change. School personnel should follow up with these students afterwards.

Overview of Lessons

Lesson 1: Assertiveness

Assertiveness is a communication style that conveys respect for oneself and others. The goal of this lesson is to teach children to be safe by communicating assertively about their needs and solving problems safely. Getting help starts with assertiveness. Throughout the lesson, the presenter will review the core concepts of assertiveness and model the behavior for the students. It is important that children see assertive behavior repeatedly and practice it for themselves. Even if this isn't as natural in some families and cultures, research shows that assertiveness skills protect against victimization (SSVRC, 2011), and assertiveness is a key component to building safe communities.

Cultural Connections: Assertiveness and standing up for yourself can look different in each family and community. Be understanding, but keep in mind that the skills presented in these lessons promote safety and are appropriate for all children.

Lesson 2: The Power of Kind Words

Words have great power. In this lesson, students will practice kindness through activities that show the effects of kind and unkind words. In order to create a world where all children are respected, nurtured, and protected, they must learn how to treat others and how they should expect to be treated. Hurtful words are not safe and can have a lasting effect on children (Felitti, et al., 1998).

Through the age-appropriate discussion of kind and hurtful words, this lesson addresses emotional abuse and, as such, could be a troubling topic for some children, particularly those who may have experienced certain forms of trauma.

Cultural Connections: Recognize that kind words and ways of showing kindness look different in each family and community. A useful extension to this lesson is to record students' suggestions for kind words as part of a Kind Words Wall that can be kept in the classroom. This way, children see their own experiences reflected in the classroom.

Lesson 3: Keeping My Body Safe (Sexual Abuse Prevention)

Learning the rules about the private parts of the body is central to this lesson and provide the basis for discussion of sexual abuse. It is important for the presenter to stay on script and recognize the discussion could be a trauma trigger for some children. All discussion goes back to the rules, which you can review prior to the lesson on page 4.

The presenter leads students in an activity that demonstrates where the private parts of the body are and teaches that "my body belongs to me." Including the medically accurate terminology for private parts is a powerful way to decrease secrecy and shame around private parts and promote safety. If school rules prevent this level of discussion, try to encourage families to have these discussions with their children.

While this content can be uncomfortable, it is so very important. Research shows approximately 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 13 boys experience sexual abuse (CDC, 2022). Be aware that this is often difficult for some families to talk about as well, which makes teaching this lesson vitally important. If possible, offer opportunities to talk to families about this topic as well.

Special Notes on Lesson 3

- Students are likely to giggle when you talk about the private parts of the body. This is normal! If this happens, briefly pause the lesson to allow students to "get their giggles out." Take a moment to giggle and wiggle. Then, have everyone take a deep breath and be ready to learn.
- It may be necessary to address the issue of curiosity about private parts at this age. If this comes up, be understanding and gently discuss the concept of boundaries and consent. This needs to be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

Lesson 4: Stopping Neglect and Physical Abuse

Child abuse and neglect have significant physical and mental health consequences for children and families. In this lesson, students will learn about neglect and physical abuse and the difference between spanking and physical abuse. Leaving any sort of mark on a child, regardless of culture or background, is physical abuse and is illegal. Students will be encouraged to create a Family Safety Plan with their family at home. This plan is meant to help children stay safe if there is an emergency and the caregiving adults are not available.

Discussion of the Family Safety Plan must be adapted to make sense for your students' community. Ahead of time, consider what options would be safe for students left at home who need to get help. Consider phone access, other forms of contacting a safe adult, the safety of neighborhoods, and the presence of community centers or other places help might be available. Encourage parents to think through these issues when discussing the Family Safety Plan with their families.

Cultural Connections: Recognize that families have different experiences and values surrounding discipline and spanking. It is important for students to understand what is safe and unsafe within those practices.