

Ontario Dress Purple Day: Lesson 1



Lesson 1: It Takes a Community to Care for Kids

Lesson Introduction

Children have a right to safety and well-being in all the spaces they occupy, including their homes and their schools. Safety includes physical as well as psychological, emotional, social, cultural, and spiritual well-being. Research has shown that ensuring that children have access to a wide social support system is crucial to ensuring their safety and well-being and preventing maltreatment.

Social support systems are made up of adults who can provide support and take action when children go to them for help. Social support systems can be both formal and informal. The former would include individuals such as teachers, doctors, counsellors, police, and child welfare workers. The latter would include family, friends, relatives, neighbours, and other community members.

In this module, children identify adults in their community that they can turn to for help when they don't feel safe, whether it is at home, at school, or anywhere they are spending time. They are supported to understand that everybody's support networks look different. In this module children are encouraged to keep telling until they get the help they need.

In general, younger children are more likely to disclose maltreatment to adults, and youth are more likely to disclose to their peers^{3,4,6}. In either case, adult involvement is necessary. Even if an individual discloses maltreatment to his/her peer, it is not the responsibility of the peer to intervene. Rather, the key message is to get help from an adult. The type of response children receive upon disclosure can determine whether they will continue to disclose and get help^{1,2,5}. If a child receives a positive response to his/her disclosure, it is more likely that s/he will reach out again for help when needed. This underscores the importance of the adult response to children's disclosures.

Key Themes

1. Many adults want to help kids
2. Identify helping adults in our own community
3. Keep telling until you get the help you need

Learning Outcomes

1. To help children recognize that a community is made up of different people who can help
2. To help children identify adults in their social support network they can go to for help



Grade-specific Learning Objectives

JK-SK:

- Introduce concept of being in a community or social support network of helping adults
- Introduce the concept of helping adults
- Help children identify two adults they can go to for help

Grades 1-2:

- Introduce concept of being in a community or social support network of helping adults
- Help children identify at least three adults they can go to for help
- Emphasize the importance of continuing to tell until children get the help they need

Grades 3-5:

- Reinforce concept of being part of a community of helping adults
- Discuss in detail why having a social support network is important for safety and well-being
- Help children identify at least three adults they can go to for help
- Emphasize the importance of continuing to tell until children get the help they need

Discussion Questions

JK-SK:

1. What does it mean to be in a community?
 - *A community is made up of different kinds of people; adults, including parents and caregivers, and children.*
 - *Some people in the community include... (give some examples of people's roles such as family, friends, teachers, doctors, etc.).*
2. What is a helping adult?
 - *A helping adult is someone you can go to who will listen to you and try to do something to help you.*
3. If you have a problem or a worry, who are two adults you can go to for help?
 - *Encourage children to provide more than one adult who they can go to for help.*
 - *Acknowledge that each individual's support network will look different.*
4. Why did I ask you to name two adults instead of just one?
 - *This question opens up the conversation of how the first person a child goes to may not be helpful or may be unavailable.*
 - *Emphasize that it is important to keep telling until you get the help you need.*

Grades 1-2:

1. What does it mean to be part of a community?
 - *A community is made up of different kinds of people; adults, including parents and caregivers, and children.*
 - *Being part of a community means that there are lots of people you can go to for support when you need it.*
2. Can you think of three people in your community you can turn to for help? Who are they?
 - *Encourage children to provide more than one adult that they can go to for help.*
 - *Acknowledge that each individual's support network will look different.*
3. Why did I ask you to name three adults instead of just one?
 - *This question opens up the conversation of how the first person a child goes to may not be helpful or may be unavailable.*
 - *Emphasize that it is important to keep telling until you get the help you need.*
 - *Can discuss the characteristics of a helping adult (e.g., someone who is willing to listen and take action on behalf of the child).*
4. If the adult you go to cannot help you, what should you do?
 - *Emphasize to children that they need to go to another adult and to keep telling until they get the help they need.*

Grades 3-5:

1. What does it mean to be part of a community?
 - *Being part of a community means that there are lots of people, including parents and caregivers, you can go to for support when you need it.*
2. Why is it important to have adults in your community or support network that you can go to for help?
 - *When children have a problem or worry or feel unsafe, they will know who to go to for help.*
 - *Emphasize that if one person cannot help, they can go to another person and keep telling until they get the help they need.*
3. Can you think of three adults in your community that you can go to for help? Who are they?
 - *Encourage children to provide more than one adult that they can go to for help.*
 - *Acknowledge that each individual's support network will look different.*
4. Why did I ask you to name three adults instead of just one?
 - *This question opens up the conversation of how the first person a child goes to may not be helpful or may be unavailable.*
 - *Emphasize that it is important to keep telling different adults until you get the help you need.*

- *Can discuss the characteristics of a helping adult (e.g., someone who is willing to listen and take action on behalf of the child).*

5. What happens if the person you go to cannot help you? What should you do?

- *Emphasize to children that they need to go to another adult and to keep telling until they get the help they need.*

6. Who else in the community can keep kids safe?

- *Mention organizations like help lines (Kids Help Phone, Black Youth Help Line, Naseeha Youth Helpline) Children's Aid Societies, police.*

Activity

- Template for 'Getting the Help You Need' activity is provided in package.

Relevant Ontario Curriculum Expectations

The new "Relevant Ontario Curriculum Expectations" will be available soon.

References

1. Hershkowitz, I., Lanes, O., & Lamb, M.E. (2007). Exploring the disclosure of child sexual abuse with alleged victims and their parents. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 31, 111-123.
2. Jensen, T.K., Gulbrandsen, W., Mossige, S., Reichelt, S., & Tjersland, O.A. (2005). Reporting possible sexual abuse: A qualitative study on children's perspectives and the context for disclosure. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 29, 1395-1413.
3. Kogan, S.M. (2004). Disclosing unwanted sexual experiences: Results from a national sample of adolescent women. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 28, 147-165.
4. Shackel, R. (2009). Understanding children's medium for disclosing sexual abuse: A tool for overcoming potential misconceptions in the courtroom. *Psychiatry, Psychology, and Law*, 16, 379-393.
5. Staller, K.M., & Nelson-Gardell, D. (2005). 'A burden in your heart' Lessons of disclosure from female preadolescent and adolescent survivors of sexual abuse. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 29, 1415-1432.
6. Ungar, M., Tutty, L.M., McConnell, S., Barter, K., & Fairholm, J. (2009). What Canadian youth tell us about disclosing abuse. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 33, 699-708.