




Protecting Children With Disabilities From Bullying, Abuse, and Other Maltreatment

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What Is People Safety?

Definition: People being emotionally and physically safe with people, including themselves.

A strong foundation of People Safety skills and knowledge helps to protect people from bullying, abuse and other types of maltreatment, AND provides tools for developing positive relationships that enrich their lives.

Water Safety is more than just "Drowning Prevention."

Fire Safety is more than just "Burning Prevention."



Special Risk Factors for Young People With Special Needs

Same as typically developing children *only more so*.

Young people with special needs **often**:

- Don't know what behavior is safe and what is not safe.
- Don't know how to use their power in safe ways.
- Don't have the words to say to explain a problem.
- Don't know how to get help.
- Are lonely and longing for affection and attention.
- Don't know how to protect their feelings and stay in charge of their bodies in a safe way.
- Are easily coerced by others.
- Are perceived and treated as being helpless by others.



Kidpower's Underlying Principle Is **Put Safety FIRST!**

The safety and healthy self-esteem of a child are worth causing ***anyone*** embarrassment, inconvenience, or offense.

-Ellen Bass, Co-Author of *The Courage to Heal* and
Kidpower Founding Board President



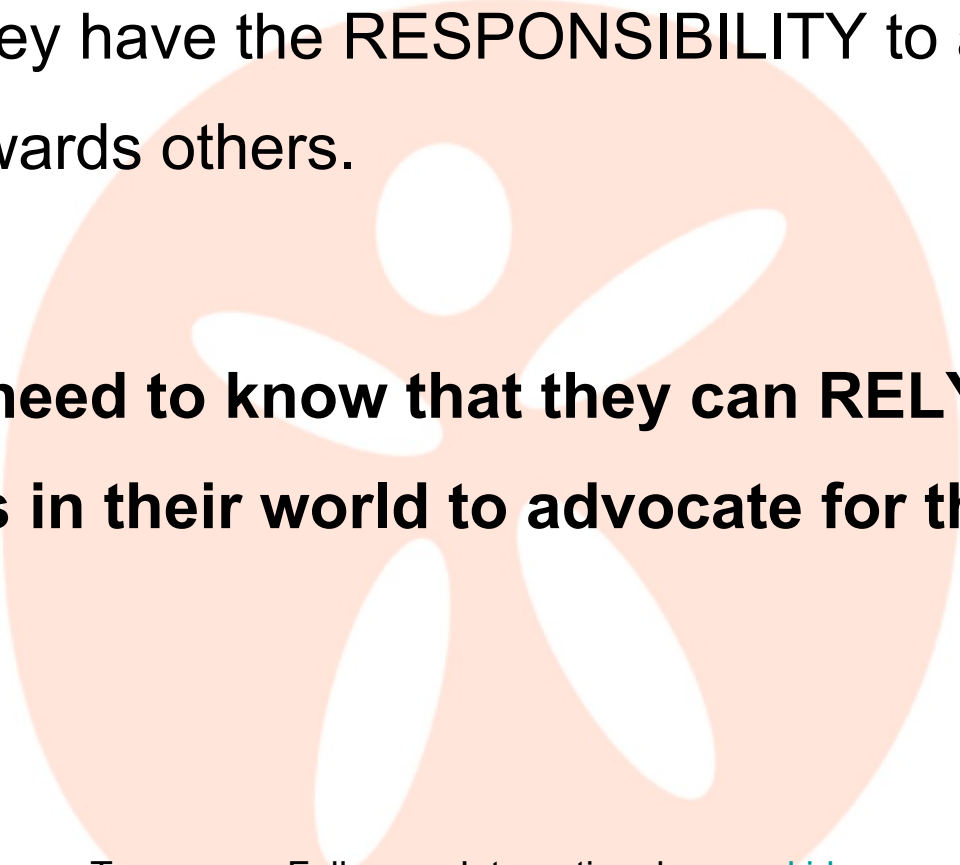
What Adults Need to Do to Protect Kids from Bullying

1. Insist on powerful, respectful adult leadership from all caregivers.
2. Make sure kids know you care. (*Listen supportively if they come to you with problems.*)
3. Keep your radar on. (*Know what is happening with kids in your care at all times.*)
4. Don't let kids throw stones, physically, verbally or emotionally. (*Stop name-calling and teasing just the same as you would stop a child from throwing a stone through a window.*)
5. Teach kids skills for taking charge of their safety.



What Kids Need to Know

- They have the **RIGHT** to be safe.
- They have the **RESPONSIBILITY** to act safety towards others.



Kids need to know that they can **RELY on the adults in their world to advocate for them.**



Give Kids This Message As Soon As They Can Understand

“Your safety and well being are VERY important to me. If you have a problem, I want to know. Please tell me even if I seem too busy, even if someone we care about will be upset, and even if it is embarrassing. I will help you.”

- Ask kids occasionally, *“Is there anything you’ve been wondering or worrying about that you haven’t told me?”*



Kidpower's 4 Keys For Teaching Safety

1. *Make it simple* – because simple things are easier to remember
2. *Be consistent* – because consistent messages make more sense
3. *Practice* – a lot! – because repeated, successful practice makes skills stronger and increases confidence
4. *Make it relevant* – because people learn a skill faster when it seems useful

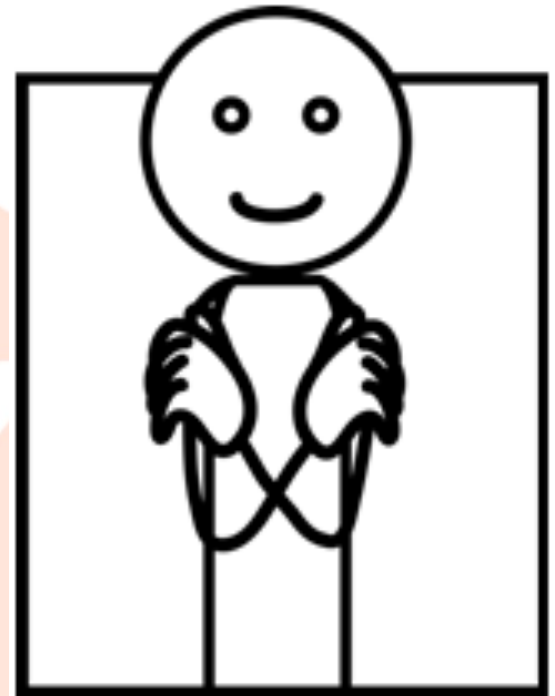
Kidpower Safety Signs for Everyone, Everywhere

Simple gestures, graphics and words to teach core safety concepts in their simplest form.



Kidpower's Personal Boundary Rules

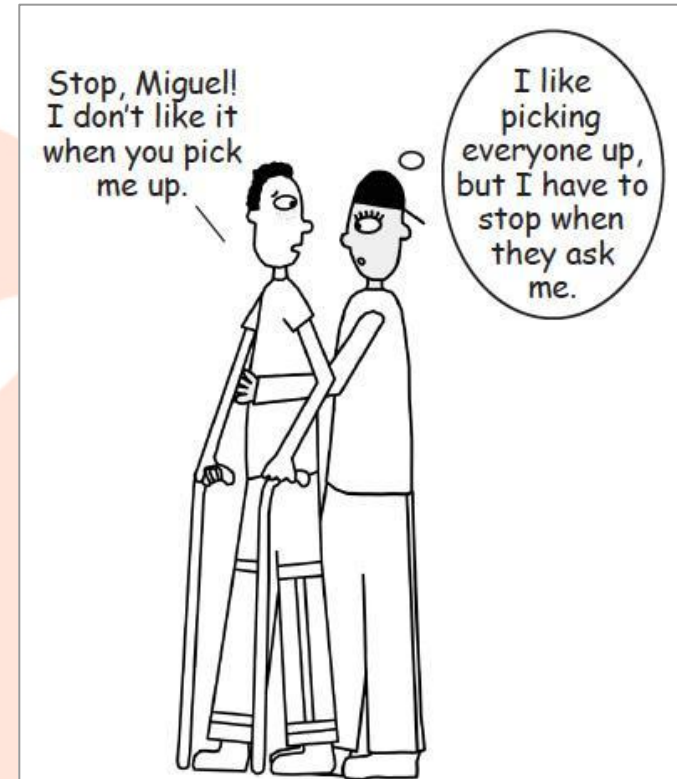
1. We each belong to ourselves.
2. Some things are not a choice.
3. Problems should not be secrets.
4. Keep telling until you get help.



Kidpower Safety Rules on Touch and Games

Touch and games for play, teasing, and affection should be:

1. Safe,
2. The choice of each person,
3. Allowed by the adults in charge,
4. Everyone can know - not a secret.






Key Kidpower Skills to Stop Bullying

Kids need to learn and be able to safely practice how to:

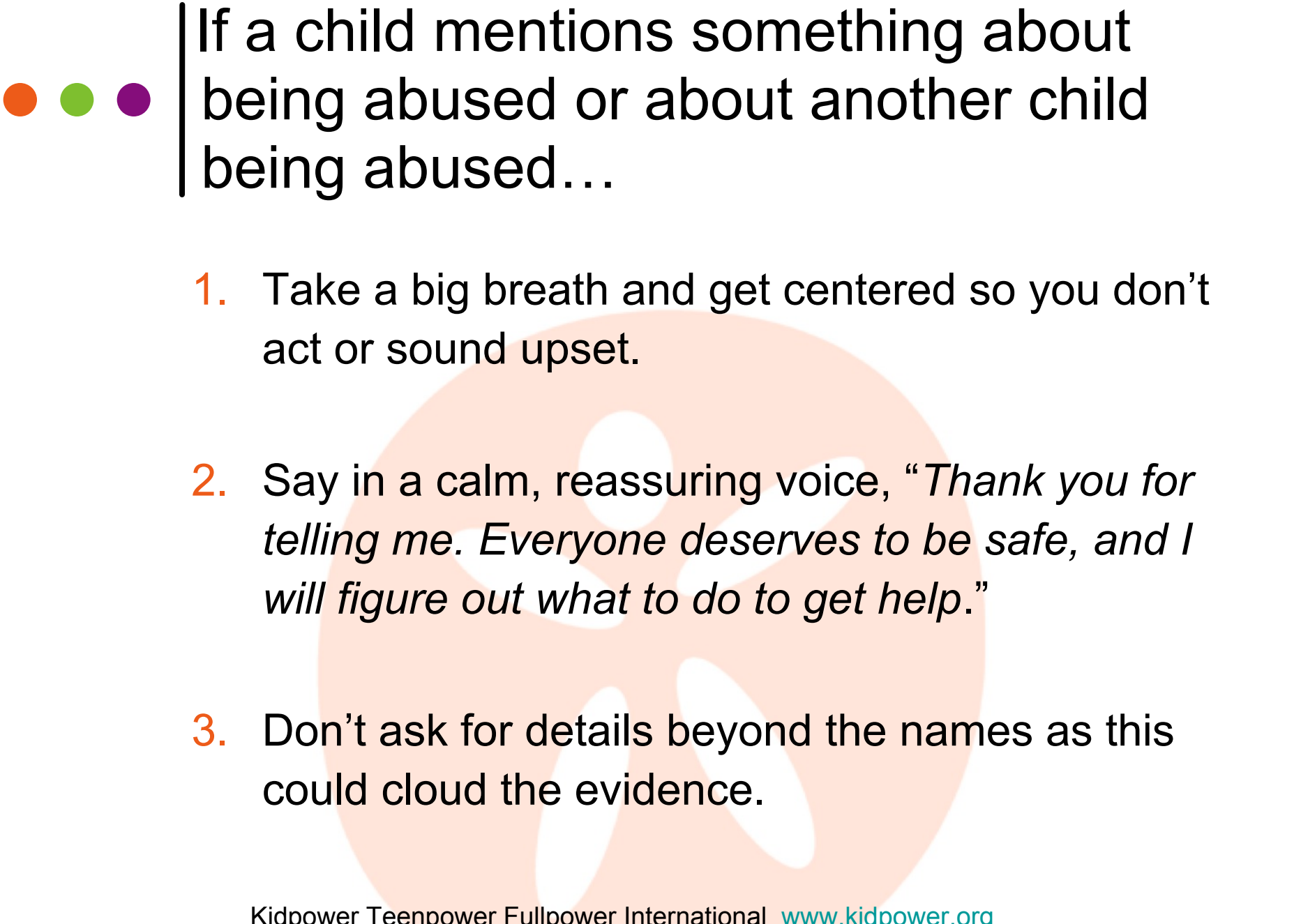
- Stay in charge of what they say and do even if they are annoyed or upset;
- Project an attitude of respectful confidence;
- Recognize unsafe behavior;
- Leave a potentially dangerous situation;
- Protect themselves from hurtful words and behaviors;
- Resist emotional coercion;
- Set boundaries even if there is a lot of social pressure not to;
- Be persistent in getting attention of busy, distracted adults in order to get help, and;
- Defend themselves from an assault.



State clearly your values against bullying, abuse, and other violence and take a strong stand.

“As a school or youth service organization or business, the safety and well-being of children are our top priorities:

- We will always Put Safety First with our activities and policies, and we will immediately address any potential safety problems impacting our community or clients.
- We are committed to the emotional and physical safety and well being of each person we serve.
- We will address any issues of bullying, abuse, or other maltreatment even if it means that someone in a position of power will be embarrassed or upset.
- We will make it clear to children and adults that we want to hear about problems or concerns, and we will act on them in a fair, balanced way in accordance with our policies.”



If a child mentions something about being abused or about another child being abused...

1. Take a big breath and get centered so you don't act or sound upset.
2. Say in a calm, reassuring voice, *"Thank you for telling me. Everyone deserves to be safe, and I will figure out what to do to get help."*
3. Don't ask for details beyond the names as this could cloud the evidence.



If a child mentions abuse, continued...

4. If the child asks you to keep it a secret, explain that you can't keep this kind of problem a secret, and that you will help this child all you can.
5. Write down right away exactly what the child told you.
6. Report what happened to authorities immediately and follow up to make sure action is taken. If the child might be in immediate danger, call 9-1-1 and keep the child with you.



Six ways to avoid being falsely accused of abuse...

1. Act in a way that you would be comfortable with everyone knowing about.
2. Think first before you choose to be alone with a child.
3. Respect kids' boundaries about touch and other kinds of connection.
4. Acknowledge a child's right to dislike and feel unhappy about something you do.



Six ways, continued...

5. Model and uphold clear boundaries about avoiding sexual behavior, including jokes. Respect family values that might be more conservative than your own.
6. If a child says you have been abusive, don't try to suppress or deny it. Instead, use this as a teaching moment. You can say, "Thank you for telling me. I am sorry that this upset you. Problems should not be secrets, and we are going to talk this over with your parents."



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