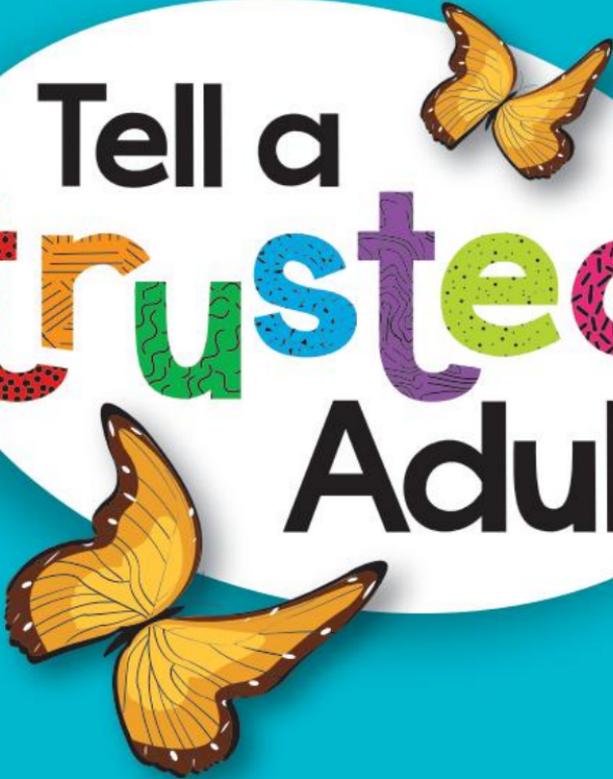


THIS BOOKLET IS A GUIDE FOR USING THE CARDS



Tell a trusted Adult

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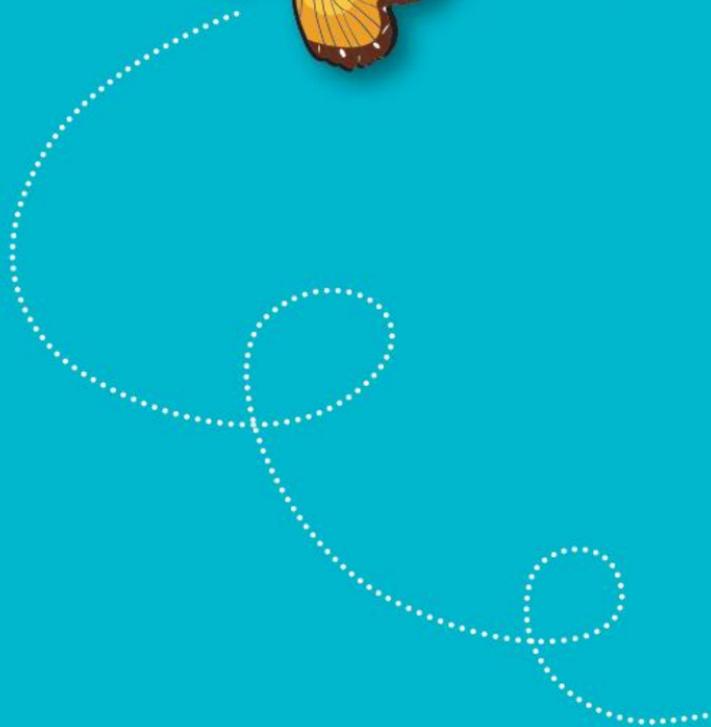
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St Luke's Innovative Resources acknowledges the Jaara people of Dja Dja Wurrung country, the traditional custodians of the land upon which our premises are located and where our resources are developed and published. We pay our respects to the elders—past, present and emerging—for they hold the memories, traditions, cultures and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, and other First Nations peoples. We must remember that underneath this earth, upon which we so firmly stand, this is, was and always will be, the traditional land of First Nations peoples.



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Introduction

Anyone who cares for children wants to keep them safe. However, it can be tricky to find a balance. On the one hand, we want to protect children and stop them getting hurt, and on the other, we want them to take risks, make mistakes and challenge themselves.

After all, taking risks, making mistakes and challenging ourselves is how we learn and grow.

Sometimes, however, the safety of our children is out of our control. The reality is, no matter how much we protect them, children are likely to find themselves having to deal with difficult situations that may feel dangerous or potentially damaging.

Given this reality, should we wrap children in cotton wool and 'helicopter' every moment of every day? Or would it be more useful, empowering and

sustainable to give children the tools they need to deal with the challenging situations that will inevitably come their way?

If we choose option number two, then we need to equip children with skills, knowledge and resources. Children need to feel confident they can deal with challenges and take action when they feel unsafe. In other words, they need a toolkit.

This toolkit could include things like:

- a strong awareness of their own bodies and what it feels like to be safe and unsafe
- a language to talk about these feelings and body signals
- a set of strategies for getting themselves out of danger (including telling a trusted adult) and reducing risk of harm.



The *Tell A Trusted Adult* cards can be used to help children develop their own personal safety toolkit. These cards come in pairs, one depicting a child feeling safe and one depicting a child feeling unsafe or under pressure. They are designed to help children build their social and emotional literacy, especially in relation to how their body communicates distress or concern.

Learning about what it feels like to be safe and unsafe, and how to respond to these feelings, can empower children to feel more confident as they navigate their world. It can also help them to:

- manage transitions
- deal with bullying and other forms of exclusion
- build social connections and friendship behaviours
- recognise when other people are feeling unsafe
- identify what helps when they are feeling unsafe

- build their confidence and ability to act when they find themselves in difficult or challenging situations.

Our body tells us when we feel safe and unsafe

Our bodies are amazing. Before we are even conscious that we are feeling scared or under threat, our body will send us messages. We might feel butterflies in the tummy or our shoulders might tense up. We might hold our breath or take short, sharp breaths. We might start to perspire or our legs might feel weak.

One of the most valuable skills children can learn is the ability to recognise when they feel unsafe. They can do this by learning to recognise and interpret the signals their body is sending them. Sometimes called 'early warning signs', body signals tell them when they feel unsafe or under pressure.

When danger or threat are perceived, certain parts of the brain (such as the amygdala) spring into action, automatically releasing a chain of chemicals commonly known as the 'fight, flight, freeze' response. More recently, 'flop' and '(be)friend' have been added to this list of automatic reactions. These automatic reactions have accompanying body signals that children can learn to interpret.

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Equally, it is important that children know how it feels in their body when they are feeling safe. Our body sends us signals for this too. When we feel safe, our breathing may be even and calm, our face might be relaxed or smiling, our body posture may be open and accepting.

Being able to recognise and interpret the unconscious signals our body gives us, and make them conscious, is a crucial skill for keeping safe.

Tell A Trusted Adult has a strong emphasis on supporting children to recognise and interpret their body signals. The paired cards focus on what it feels like in the body to feel unsafe or safe. They invite children to think about times they may have felt this way, what triggered those feelings for them, how they will know when they feel safe or unsafe, what other people might notice about them if they are feeling safe or unsafe, amongst other things. By educating children about body signals, they can learn to trust their body to let them know when something is not right.

What is the difference between body signals and body language?

Sometimes people get confused between body signals and body language. While the terms 'body language' and 'body signals' are

sometimes used interchangeably, they are actually quite different (although there is certainly some cross-over between the two).

Body language usually refers to the way the body communicates with others. This might include gestures, posture, facial expression, stance and other aspects of non-verbal, physical behaviour.

Body signals can be defined in various ways. In this resource we are referring to the physiological responses of the body to something in the internal or external environment, whether it be a perceived threat or something quite the opposite such as pleasure or comfort.





Body signals are visceral responses such as blushing, goose bumps, palpitations, butterflies in the tummy, constricted throat, perspiration and trembling.

Essentially, the function of body language is to communicate with others while body signals are the body's way of communicating with us.

Learning about body language can be useful, as it can help us to interpret the messages other people are sending us. Body language can help give us clues about whether people are safe or unsafe to be around. For example, if someone is constantly in our space or crosses their arms and plants their feet in a dominating way, we might feel uncomfortable. It can be useful to be able to interpret those gestures or messages.

It can also be useful to understand the kinds of messages our body is sending other people. If we stand up straight and look people in the eye, for example, what message does that send them? How is this message different if we slouch and don't make eye contact, or if we giggle every time someone talks to us? In this way, understanding body language is an important part of understanding the world and staying safe as well.

Tell A Trusted Adult has a strong focus on supporting children to build a language around emotions and body signals. While this does include some elements of body language, the greater focus is on body signals and emotions.

It is important to note that most of us do not have sufficient control to stop body signals at will, nor to make them happen at will. But we *can* develop the skills needed to soothe them, release them, and make decisions about whether to act on them or not. In other words, while body responses (such as short, sharp breathing when we are anxious or panicked) are involuntary, we can learn to respond to them consciously and even to mitigate them or provide 'antidotes' to help them subside when they are triggered erroneously. (See p.52 for some soothing activities you can do using the cards.)

Building social and emotional literacy

Like anything in life, if we don't have a language for our experiences, it can be very difficult to communicate with others. Emotions and body signals are no different. While we may pick up some words to describe emotions, feelings and our body incidentally as we journey through life, for many people this language is partial and incomplete.



Tell A Trusted Adult has a strong focus on supporting children to build a language around emotions and body signals.

Just as we need to be taught the patterns, rules and structures for subjects like mathematics and French, art and history, sport and science, we also need to learn about emotions, relationships and body signals.

In other words, we need to build our social, emotional and body literacy. A big part of this is learning how to interpret patterns of behaviour, social cues, and what is ok and not ok in our relationships with others. It is also about building a language to describe feelings and body signals.

This isn't always easy. Sometimes our body may send us a signal that can be interpreted in different ways. Butterflies in the tummy, for example, could mean that we are feeling nervous, scared or anxious. Equally, it could mean that we are feeling excited or full of anticipation.



Trauma can also impact people's ability to regulate their emotions so they may easily become angry or turn to self-harming behaviours to relieve stress or anxiety.

Additionally, different people may experience the same situation in different ways. One child may enjoy performing in front of other people and feel calm or energised, while another child may experience body signals and emotions that tell them that this is a highly dangerous and threatening situation.

So, how do children know the difference between feeling unsafe because they are challenging themselves or feeling unsafe because they are confronted with a genuinely threatening situation?

At the heart of social and emotional literacy is having a range of strategies, knowledge and tools that can be used to interpret each situation on its own merits. If we can give children the cognitive tools to analyse each situation rationally, and the social and emotional literacy to interpret their responses, this will help them build the confidence to ask for help when they need it.



However, it is important to keep in mind that even adults with highly developed levels of social and emotional literacy sometimes need help to know if they are safe or not in a given situation. Therefore, the primary message for children in this resource is:

**IF YOU FEEL UNSAFE,
TELL A TRUSTED ADULT!**

Trauma-informed practice and protective behaviours

When a child has experienced trauma or abuse, particularly at the hands of people they are supposed to be able to trust, they may find it challenging to know how to identify who is safe and who isn't. They may also find it difficult to interpret what their body is telling them. To survive, the child may have had to distort or sublimate some or all messages from their body or emotions. This may leave them confused and unsure about how to respond to feelings, relationships and body signals, as they don't have a reliable

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reference point. In other words, they have no reliable model for what ‘safe’ looks and feels like.

Trauma can manifest in a range of behaviours or emotional responses. We know that trauma in childhood alters the development of the brain and results in changes to physical, emotional, behavioural, cognitive and social functioning.

Children who have experienced trauma can experience a range of psychological and physical symptoms. They may, for example, be hypersensitive to external stimuli, hypervigilant or in a persistent stress response state.

They may also find it difficult to bond with parents and primary caregivers, trust others or build and maintain relationships. Trauma can also impact people’s ability to regulate their emotions so they may easily become angry or turn to self-harming behaviours to relieve stress or anxiety. Feelings of guilt, shame and self-blame are common for people who have experienced trauma and can result in a distorted self-image and a sense of hopelessness or powerlessness. Children who have experienced trauma often have periods where they find it difficult to concentrate or put their feelings into words and may act out this trauma in a range of ways.

It is not uncommon for children who have experienced trauma to:

- misinterpret situations, behaviours and non-verbal cues as threatening
- react to challenging situations in impulsive or aggressive ways
- feel more comfortable with non-verbal rather than verbal communication
- have poorly developed problem-solving strategies.



Sometimes children who have been identified as having a particular condition, such as an intellectual disability, ADHD, autism or learning difficulties, may have experienced trauma and their behaviours are actually trauma responses. It is always important to have a trauma-informed lens when assessing children's behaviour and support needs.

In situations like these, counsellors and teachers can support children by helping them to reconnect with their body and body signals. As the child's emotions are likely to have been manipulated or

distorted by the abuse and trauma, they may need to relearn how to interpret their responses to situations.

A key protective behaviour for children who have experienced trauma is being confident enough to tell someone they trust. By building social and emotional literacy into the curriculum, teachers can support children to recognise and respond to symptoms and signs of trauma in proactive ways.

The primary aim of *Tell A Trusted Adult* is to empower children to use their voice and find the courage to tell someone if they are feeling unsafe. To do this, they

Often when children feel unsafe, they may also feel fear, shame or guilt, and they may blame themselves for what is happening.



need to have the skills and confidence to be able to recognise and interpret their body signals and emotions.

Challenging the secrecy around abuse, trauma and neglect

Often when children feel unsafe, they may also feel fear, shame or guilt, and they may blame themselves for what is happening. They may also feel powerless to change the situation. By teaching children to recognise when they feel unsafe, we can also support them to challenge feelings of powerlessness and take action to protect themselves.

Fear, shame and guilt all serve a purpose. They tell us that something needs attention.

When a child has experienced trauma, violence, abuse or neglect, it takes an enormous amount of courage to speak up. Secrecy can be a protective behaviour. Children often keep abuse secret as they are fearful that the violence or abuse (for them or those they care about) may get worse if they tell someone.

A strategy for challenging the silence that often surrounds abuse and trauma is to initiate open and honest conversations with children about secrets—the different kinds of secrets, how secrets make us feel, the purpose



of secrets, how we know we can trust someone with a secret. (See the activities section on p.47 for more suggestions on how to use the *Tell A Trusted Adult* cards to have these conversations.)

Giving children the skills and confidence to speak up when they are holding on to a harmful secret is one of the most empowering things we can do as educators, counsellors, social workers, parents and carers.

Creating a circle of trusted adults

Once a child knows how to recognise when they are feeling unsafe, they then need to know what to do next. Who should they tell? Who can they trust?

It is important to have conversations with children about what they would do if they found themselves in a challenging or confronting situation. Talking through options and developing a plan can help reduce fear and build confidence.

It can also be reassuring for parents and carers to know that, should their child find themselves in a difficult situation, they have strategies for managing that situation in proactive and positive ways.

One of the key messages in the cards is to seek support from a trusted adult when you feel unsafe. But identifying adults we can trust is a skill in itself.

Learning how to identify adults we can trust takes practice. Knowing how and when to speak up safely takes confidence. We need to ask ourselves questions such as: How will we know which adults are safe? What should we be looking for? What red flags might we notice if someone isn't safe? As discussed earlier, when a child has experienced abuse or trauma, they may be confused about what to look for when identifying a trusted adult.

A trusted adult usually has certain traits. We can talk about this and support children to create a list of qualities that they might associate with a trusted person. This might include things like:

- they listen to me
- we come up with solutions together



- I feel happy and calm around them
- I feel safe and respected around them
- they don't judge me when I make mistakes
- they celebrate my strengths and the things I do well
- they encourage me to try things I feel good about
- they are respectful of other people
- they respect my personal space and my right to control my body
- they don't ask me to keep secrets that make me feel bad
- they stand up for themselves, and others, when they need to
- they believe me.

However, many of the qualities of a trusted adult may also be qualities of perpetrators of abuse (for example, perpetrators may also be great listeners and make the child feel special—sadly, this can also be grooming behaviour). Children need to know how to identify the 'red flags' that people may not be trustworthy. You might describe to children some of the things that trusted



adults would never do. For example, trusted adults don't:

- touch your body in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable or scared
- ask you to keep secrets that make you feel bad or worried (describe how some secrets are fun to keep, like when someone is throwing a surprise birthday party, but some secrets are not fun and feel scary to keep)
- hurt you or use violence around you
- make you feel small, insignificant, stupid or bad about yourself.

Discuss the fact that if an adult does any of these things, they should find someone they do trust and tell them about what has happened or is happening.

Another way to support children to be able to identify trusted adults is to model the behaviours and language of trust. Teachers and other adults can create safe spaces for children, where children feel valued, supported, encouraged and heard. This modelling can help teach children to know the difference between safe and unsafe environments.

Once children have identified their trusted adults, it can be valuable for them to connect with these people to let them know. This might be in the form of a letter, a picture, a text or email, a message on social media (if appropriate) or a phone call.

Of course, this is based on the assumption that the child has some trusted adults in their life they can turn to in times of need. Sometimes children may feel that there is no-one they can trust. It is important to talk about other strategies for keeping safe and for finding trusted people to talk to. This might include drawing their attention to resources like children's helplines, useful websites or school counsellors. You might choose to provide all the children you work alongside with this information or have it available in the classroom as posters, pamphlets or apps.

Thinking about culture

Sometimes children feel unsafe because they have experienced trauma, violence or neglect. Other times, children feel unsafe because they have been excluded, victimised or bullied because of their culture, religion or ethnicity.

A Victorian government study noted that racism is a common experience for children in Australia, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) children. One study suggests that 70% of children and young people from these backgrounds had experienced some form of racism and the main setting



for this racism was school. Racism can impact on wellbeing in a range of ways.

In children and young people, racism has the potential to negatively affect development with consequences for health and mental wellbeing, educational and social outcomes throughout their life course. Child health research has linked racism to higher rates and risk of anxiety, depression, psychological distress. Racism has also been associated with behaviour problems. Childhood exposure to either direct and/or vicarious race-based discrimination has been linked to poor child health, wellbeing and development. Experiences of discrimination due to systemic racism also impact on children's wellbeing through access to resources needed for optimal health.

https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/~media/resourcecentre/publicationsandresources/discrimination/vh_racism-and-child-health_factsheet.pdf?la=en

Racism, whether it is overt or covert, can result in children feeling unsafe. This lack of safety can have a range of other consequences (as described above). As such, it is crucial that any conversation about safety and trusted adults includes a cultural lens.

Even if children haven't been directly bullied or excluded because of their culture, religion or ethnicity, they may still feel unsafe for other reasons that are indirectly related to their culture. They may feel different to the other children or not understand the 'hidden rules' of mainstream culture—what food to bring for lunch, popular culture references, slang, how to make friends, where to sit in the classroom, what music to listen to or shows to watch. They may feel embarrassed about how they spend their weekends compared to their peers or their different family structures or values.

Another aspect of culture that is worth considering when using the *Tell A Trusted Adult* cards is the different ways people from diverse cultures may interpret body language and body signals. For example, in some cultures, direct eye contact is a sign of respect while in others it is disrespectful to look someone straight in the eye. Or a 'thumbs up' gesture in one culture is celebratory, while in another it is insulting.

Certain body signals are assigned different meanings in different cultures—itchy palms means 'money is coming' in some cultures and in others, it is simply an allergic reaction. So while body

signals may be common to all humans, our interpretations of them can vary between individuals and across cultures.

Tell A Trusted Adult includes images of children from different ethnicities and cultures. The cards can be used to talk about how we can be inclusive of people from different backgrounds and how we can create safe and inclusive spaces for everyone. They can also be used to talk about how we are all different and unique and how we can learn from each other—that our differences are actually what make us interesting and strong. Unless we make a conscious effort to build a culture of inclusion and respect for difference, some children are likely to continue to feel unsafe. We encourage you to use the cards to invite conversations about culture and ways we can celebrate diversity and similarity alike.

Thinking about gender and sexuality

Children may also feel unsafe in relation to their gender or sexuality. While we have come a long way when it comes to gender equality and being inclusive of diverse gender identity, we still have a way to go.

One of the significant causes of children feeling unsafe at home is family violence.



Studies on family violence demonstrate that while anyone can be a victim of violence, the vast majority of violence is perpetrated by men against women. Our Watch, a national leader in the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia, says that the main drivers of family violence include:

- rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity

- 
- male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women
 - condoning of violence against women
 - men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence.

If we want to support children to feel safe and become people who treat others with respect and dignity, we need to challenge rigid gender roles and stereotypes. We also need to consider depictions of violence in our culture.

We can do this by making sure we use resources that include children of all genders in a range of roles. We can also have discussions about how people of different genders are depicted in our culture and how limiting gender stereotypes can be. If we are to create a safer future for people of all genders, we need to start having conversations about gender early.

Statistics show that LGBTIQ people are more likely to experience violence, bullying, mental health and other health issues. They are also more likely to self-harm or commit suicide.

(<https://www.lgbtihealth.org.au/statistics>).

This is largely because they feel unsafe and have experienced discrimination,

violence or exclusion based on their LGBTIQ identity. Unfortunately, this often starts in childhood. As such, being sensitive and inclusive when talking about bodies, gender identity and sexuality is crucial.

Until recently, many people thought about gender in very binary ways—people were believed to be either male or female. However, gender is more complex and nuanced than this. Even young children may already be aware that the gender they were assigned at birth doesn't feel right or doesn't fit how they feel about themselves.

Equally, children may already be aware that they are not heterosexual, even though they may not yet have words for this. They may just feel different.

Additionally, each body is different and children with intersex characteristics may feel excluded or unsafe if discussions about the body don't include an acknowledgement of the fact that each body is unique, different and normal. Whenever we are talking about body signals and what it feels like to feel safe in one's body, we need to be conscious of the way we are talking about people's bodies.



While children may not be fully aware or have consciously identified their gender identity or sexuality, or have a language for what they are feeling, they are likely to have internalised messages from the culture about what it means to be a woman, man, girl, boy, or be in a 'normal' relationship. They may already be feeling unsafe to express this aspect of themselves and may already have been the target of bullying or exclusion.

While cultural images and representations are becoming more inclusive, it is important for LGBTIQ children to see themselves represented and included in discussions about bodies and identity.

Please note: Be careful not to ask children direct questions about identity or 'out' them. Just include a broad range of images or examples in conversations and activities. Think about the language you are using and make sure it is inclusive of all genders and sexualities, and does not reinforce stereotypes or judge people.

Tell A Trusted Adult includes images of children of different genders participating in a range of activities. This includes images of gender-neutral children.

**If we are to create
a safer future
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to start having
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about gender early.**





The cards also include an image of a child feeling angry and frustrated. This card could be used as a jumping-off point to talk about violence in our culture and how it is portrayed, in ways that are developmentally appropriate, of course.

Children with disabilities and additional support needs

As the Australian National Disability Service (NDS) states, children with a disability are:

- more than 3 times higher risk of physical violence
- more than 4 times higher risk for emotional abuse and neglect
- nearly 3 times more likely to experience sexual abuse
- more likely to have experienced repeated incidents of sexual abuse by the time they are 18.

https://www.nds.org.au/images/resources/Promoting_The_Safety_of_Children_With_Disability.pdf

There are a number of reasons children with disabilities may be more vulnerable to experiencing abuse, harassment and bullying, including:

- social isolation
- limited provision of developmentally appropriate sexual and relationship information

- low levels of expectation held about their capacity to identify and report concerns
- inaccessible pathway to raise issues, concerns and complaints
- communication difficulties
- personal care needs requiring the involvement of different people and various levels of supervision
- signs of abuse being viewed as being related to the child's disability.

<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/resources/tipsheet-safety-children-disability.pdf>

In their article titled, 'Understanding safeguarding practices for children with disability when engaging with organisations', Dr Sarah Wayland and Dr Gabrielle Hindmarsh note that children and young people with disabilities are often left out of prevention programs aimed at educating them about protective behaviours and practices because there is an assumption that these programs are not relevant or that the children won't understand the content.

They state that the other reason children with disabilities are left out of education programs related to safety is that there is a belief that children with disabilities don't experience abuse. As we have

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already noted, the evidence suggests otherwise. The other issue facing children with disabilities is that they may have less opportunities to have informal conversations with their peers about how to stay safe.

Children and young people with disability, like all children and young people, have the right to receive evidence-based education about what is and what is not safe touching and to be learning and practising protective behaviours.

It is the responsibility of educators and those delivering inclusive and specialist services for children with disability to recognise the rights of these children and young people, to become informed about their heightened vulnerability to maltreatment, and to seek out—and implement—suitably adapted, evidence-based, age-appropriate educational materials.

<https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/understanding-safeguarding-practices-children-disability-when-engaging>

Apart from making sure that organisational processes and procedures are adequate and that staff are appropriately trained to support children, the primary prevention

strategies identified by the Victorian Government's Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) focus on empowering children with disabilities to have a voice, educating them about their bodies and encouraging them to tell an adult if they are feeling unsafe.





with a disability know who they can go to if they feel unsafe or have a concern or complaint – make sure these processes take into account the child’s developmental level and communication requirements.

- If children have communication difficulties, organisational procedure must ensure vigilance in identifying indicators or warning signs. Listen to children, no matter how they communicate their thoughts, views and concerns.

<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/resources/tipsheet-safety-children-disability.pdf>

They suggest the following:

- Empower children with a disability by assisting them to build their self-esteem and confidence.
- Teach children about their bodies and their safety, including online activities (sex and relationships education).
- Enable and facilitate independence with dressing and toileting and personal care where possible.
- Communicate directly with children with a disability about how safe they feel.
- Be inclusive and collaborative with families.
- Raise awareness about abuse and ways to seek help. Make sure children

Tell A Trusted Adult is designed to be a visually-engaging tool that can be used by children with diverse or limited verbal communication skills. The activities focus on building self-esteem and identifying personal strengths and capacities, and are inclusive of a range of learning styles and preferences. By sharing stories, insights and experiences, children can start to build a shared language around safety and protective practices, while also deepening their empathy and understanding of the experiences of others (social literacy). The activities can also support children to develop stronger friendships, better communication skills and greater social connections.

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Best practice—taking a holistic approach

While *Tell A Trusted Adult* is primarily a resource to support children to develop the knowledge and confidence to stay safe, the skills and awareness children gain from these conversation will be helpful in all areas of their lives.

The strengths-based, solution-focused principles that underpin the cards can help children to identify their strengths and capacities, while they simultaneously learn to notice and

celebrate the strengths and capacities of others. These skills are invaluable for:

- developing a strong sense of self-esteem and identity
- building the confidence to speak up for themselves
- establishing respectful and inclusive relationships with others
- working through challenges and difficult life events
- identifying possible solutions to problems when they arise
- asking for help when they need it.



Conversations using the cards can also support children to develop a range of qualities like resilience, persistence, empathy, curiosity, listening skills and the ability to put themselves in other people's shoes.

The cards are designed to be used across all areas of the curriculum. The 9 activity cards include ideas for using the cards in circle time, writing, mathematics or art. There are game cards that can be

used in any session, including health or movement classes. (See p.33 for more information about the activity cards.) The cards can also contribute to oral language development.

Tell A Trusted Adult can also provide opportunities for children to build their meta cognition, that is, their thinking about their thinking, including their awareness of how their feelings and thoughts drive their actions. 🦋



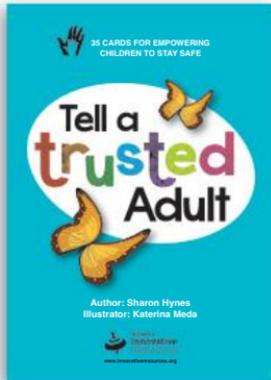
Purpose and structure of this resource

As the title suggests, the purpose of *Tell A Trusted Adult* is to support children to recognise when they feel unsafe and to develop a plan of action. A fundamentally important part of any safety plan is telling someone you trust and who can help you navigate a challenging situation in a safe and supportive way.

Children may need guidance to identify their 'trusted adults'. These 'trusted adults' need to have a particular set of qualities or traits. *Tell A Trusted Adult* can be used to help children identify these traits. They can also be used to support children to build the social and emotional literacy and confidence to seek help when they need it.

Why is this resource needed?

Most countries have child safety standards and many schools require teachers to build child safety into the curriculum. Currently, however, there are very limited resources that teachers and human services workers can use to talk to children about safety behaviours,



body awareness and strategies to respond to, or prevent, abuse.

These are challenging and confronting topics—teachers and human service workers need to feel confident and well-resourced if they are leading conversations in this space. If they haven't had access to appropriate training

or don't have adequate support, they may feel ill-equipped to lead such conversations. They may also worry that a child will reveal something deeply personal or confronting in front of other children or they may be concerned they will inadvertently make the situation worse for a child.

Tell A Trusted Adult includes 13 pairs of body signals and 9 activity cards with simple, fun ideas for structuring respectful and inclusive conversations about safety (see p.47 of this booklet for more ideas). All activities are designed to be strengths-based and solution-focused, supporting children to build their capacities, confidence and resilience.



The kit (which can be purchased separately) also includes 10 sequenced lesson plans with variations for ages 3-10+. These can easily slot into an existing curriculum and have been carefully designed to enable teachers to create safe and respectful spaces for conversations. The lessons support children to gradually develop a toolkit of skills they can draw on, should they find themselves in a threatening or unsafe situation.

The kit also contains 6 full-colour A3 posters in PDF form.

Who are the cards for?

The cards can be used in a variety of settings. While they have been developed with primary teachers and early years educators in mind, they are equally useful for social workers, counsellors, wellbeing staff in schools, psychologists, parents and carers. The cards are versatile and can be

adapted for use in various settings and environments. They can be used in groups or classrooms, one-on-one, in pairs or small groups. They can also be combined with other resources like books, games or tactile resources.

Topics covered in the cards

Tell A Trusted Adult covers a range of topics, feelings and body signals. While there are no words on the cards, they include 13 paired images of children feeling:

- butterflies in the tummy (one feeling anxiety and one feeling excitement)
- fearful or safe
- voiceless or confident to speak up
- anxious or calm
- trapped or free
- trembles of worry or relaxed
- shame and guilt or self-confident
- frozen or free to move



- separation anxiety or happy to play with friends
- overwhelmed and isolated or connected to others
- scared to tell or open and honest
- angry and frustrated or content and able to self-regulate
- the need to run away in fear or the joy of running freely.

There are also 9 activity cards that can be used in various parts of the curriculum, or individually with children. Children learn best when they are having fun and enjoying themselves.

Given that conversations about feeling safe and unsafe can be challenging, the activity cards are designed to lighten these conversations and allow children to learn through play.

The activity cards cover the following topics and subject areas:

- Question Time
- Art Time
- Talk Time
- Circle Time
- Game Time
- Safety Time
- Writing Time
- Number Time
- Spelling Time.

About the illustrations

These beautifully conceived illustrations and designs are the work of Katerina Meda. Kat is a teacher's aide and graphic artist who has a deep interest in child safety.

The cards use bold and vibrant colours, textures and simple characters to depict a range of emotions, body signals and experiences. Some cards include trusted adults while some include images of not-so-trustworthy adults. Some depict the child alongside other children and in some, the child is alone.

Every pair of cards includes a different character. Kat has deliberately created a range of characters with various genders, cultural backgrounds, abilities and interests, to ensure that as many children as possible see themselves reflected in the cards.

You may have noticed that there are no words on the cards. The cards were designed to be used with children who have a range of literacy levels. They are also ideal for children whose first language isn't English. Having no words on the cards also creates more flexibility in how they can be used. For example, different children may interpret the images differently. They may also choose to pair different

cards together in unique ways. This allows for open and non-prescriptive conversations.

Using visually-appealing resources is a great way to engage children in conversation. While some children are happy to talk openly about their experiences, many children may feel vulnerable or exposed when asked to speak directly to an adult or other children. Having a tactile resource gives children something to focus on. It also gives them something to do with their hands. This can be reassuring and calming for many children.

Links to curriculum

Many countries have now mandated that schools teach child safety and ensure school environments are safe. They also expect schools to comply with child-safe standards.

For example, teaching child safety in Victorian schools (in Australia) is now a legal requirement. Order No. 870 (State of Victoria, Department of Education and Training 2016), under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic) states that all Victorian schools are required to comply with these new standards. Standard Number 7 now requires all schools to teach children to recognise when they are safe and unsafe, and what to do if they feel unsafe.

All the activity cards and lesson plans are aligned with Australian Child Safety Standards. If you are outside Australia, check with your local education department for relevant child safety standards. From there, it should be possible to align the activity cards and lesson plans with the relevant standards, regulations or curricula. 🦋

Why are there two logos?

The cards include two distinct logos—the *Tell A Trusted Adult* title logo and the Safe Hands logo.

Safe Hands refers to the overarching topic, which is child safety. This encompasses a range of strategies and interventions aimed at protecting children and keeping them safe from harm. Telling a trusted adult is one of these strategies. As such, this resource sits under the broader umbrella of child safety.



A decorative dotted line starts from the left, loops into a circle, and then extends towards the right where it ends at a small illustration of a yellow and orange butterfly.

Creating safe spaces for conversations in groups and classrooms

As many teachers and facilitators know, simple tools can be surprisingly powerful. This is something to take into careful consideration when using *Tell A Trusted Adult*, since this resource is designed to encourage reflection and conversation about children's experiences, attitudes and understandings about safety. These topics go to the heart of our identity, our relationships and the values, beliefs and stories that shape us.

A supportive environment is key for the success of *Tell A Trusted Adult* cards. To create a supportive space, children need to know that their responses, ideas and beliefs are valued. This environment should also be a place where children can explore their thoughts and feelings without fear of judgement. To increase the likelihood that children feel safe to engage in a group setting, the facilitator or teacher needs to ensure that every child feels heard and valued.

Vulnerabilities and raw emotions can surface for anyone using the cards, including the teacher or facilitator. Memories and concerns can unexpectedly arise, sometimes evoking painful and even overwhelming feelings. Conversations about safety



can feel confronting, even when facilitated skilfully and respectfully. This is especially true if children, teachers or facilitators have personal experience of discrimination, fear, violence, neglect or abuse.

There are likely to be children of diverse cultural heritage, gender, sexuality or biological sex in any group. There may also be children with disabilities, learning or developmental delays, behavioural challenges or mental health issues. Teachers and facilitators cannot



For some children, it may be confronting or distressing to find themselves participating in a conversation about safety without prior notice.

possibly know the full extent or effect of a child's lived experience, even if they think they know the group well.

While the teacher or facilitator cannot *guarantee* that group conversations will be respectful and safe for children, thoughtful preparation can go a long way towards creating the conditions where respect and safety are more likely. This is why it is crucial that the teacher or facilitator considers ways to uphold children's inclusion, dignity and safety before using *Tell A Trusted Adult* with an individual or group. (While the suggestions below are primarily aimed at people running group sessions, many of the principles and suggestions apply equally to one-on-one conversations.)

Please consider the following before using the cards with others:

- **Your reaction to the cards:** Try using the cards yourself first. What did you notice? What worked? What was challenging? What memories or feelings arose?
- **Your knowledge of the cards:** Get to know each card. Are there any cards you may want to leave out? Are there any cards that might not be appropriate for a particular group? Is it clear to you what the characters are doing/feeling in each card? Do some cards require more time to interpret? Have you considered a range of possible responses to each question?



- **Advance notification and permission:** For some children, it may be confronting or distressing to find themselves participating in a conversation about safety without prior notice. Should notification be given, or permission sought, in advance of the conversation? As most conversations are likely to take place with children, is parental consent or notification required?
- **Your knowledge of participants:** Are the cards mentally, emotionally, developmentally and culturally appropriate? Keep in mind that children experiencing trauma or discrimination may be feeling exposed or confused. They may experience fear, sadness, anxiety, recognition, grief or a range of other emotions as they use the cards. How will you provide support during and after the session should a child have a strong reaction?
- **Children's safety:** Are there any pre-existing tensions or attitudes that may affect a child's safety during or after the conversation? How will children's confidentiality, privacy and dignity be upheld? How will children be supported if the cards elicit negative comments or judgements from other children? How will you ensure that no one is 'outed' or exposed during the conversation?
- **Establishing group rules or guidelines:** Have you considered co-creating group rules with children before the conversation begins? These provide agreed standards of behaviour that the teacher, facilitator or anyone in the group can invoke at any time during the conversation to support respect and safety.
- **Flags of feeling unsafe during the session:** Another way to support safety is to ask children how they will indicate they feel unsafe during the session. Teachers or facilitators can arrange to have a support person available for children during breaks or at the end (this could be the facilitator or another appropriate person).
- **Opting out:** Have you made it clear that children are welcome to 'pass' if they wish to? How will they indicate that? No one should be pressured to speak or participate if they don't want to.
- **Planning the activities:** This booklet contains background information drawn from direct practice wisdom and experience, which can help teachers and facilitators plan activities and highlight things to keep in mind, especially taking care that the activities do not 'out', expose or exclude anyone. There are also 9 activity cards, plus suggestions for other activities on p.47 of this booklet.

A set of 10 lesson plans and 6 posters are also available as part of the *Tell A Trusted Adult* kit.

- **Plan B:** Sometimes an activity with the cards simply doesn't work—and this may not become obvious until you are right in the middle of it. Be prepared to adjust it or abandon it altogether and go to Plan B. Sometimes a card set simply is not the best resource to use.
- **Timing and pacing:** Is it the right time and place for these activities? Is there enough time for the activities to take place without rushing? Will you plan a mix of active and more reflective activities to take into account different learning styles?
- **Being inclusive:** How will you ensure that everyone gets a turn to speak and that quiet voices in the group can be heard?
- **Follow up and feedback:** Is any follow up needed after the session? You will not necessarily know if someone in the group has had a strong reaction, either during or after the conversation. For this reason, please consider letting children know at the beginning you will check in with *everyone* after the session. This prevents a child from being singled out.

You are warmly encouraged to view the free video 'Reminders for Creating Safe Spaces for Conversations' on the home page of our website www.innovativeresources.org. This video contains expanded material for facilitators on creating respectful conversations, especially in groups.

If you believe a child is unsafe, get support for them immediately. If you are unsure about the best service, ring Kid's Helpline, your local police station or 000 (in Australia). See Emergency and Support Services at the end of this booklet for additional resources. 🦋





Thumbnails and uses for each card

In this section you will find thumbnail (small) images of all 35 cards (26 body signals cards and 9 activities cards) with information about the purpose of each card. This information will naturally suggest many activities and questions that can be used with each card.

While the cards don't have words written on them, they are numbered. This is to help identify the card when it is being used as part of an activity.

Question Time

The 12 questions on this activity card are based on the 4H reading strategy used in many education settings—'Here, Heart, Head and Hidden'. They are divided into four sets of three questions, aligning with the 4Hs.

On Australian Teacher's blogspot, the 4H strategy is summarised as follows:

The 4H strategy is really simple—Is the answer literal, right here in the text? Is the answer hidden, do I need to think and search? Is the answer my own opinion or based on my past experience; so is it in my head?

Or, is the answer how I feel and therefore in my heart?

<http://australianteachers.blogspot.com/2015/11/higher-order-thinking-and-teaching-of.html>

All the questions on the Question Time card are general and non-specific, which enables them to be used alongside any card in the set. The first set of questions are quite concrete, while the other questions require children to explore their thinking, feelings, beliefs and assumptions at a deeper level.

The Question Time activity card can be used in a number of different ways including:

- for whole class discussions
- using the card images one at a time on a screen
- as a random draw-a-card type activity
- as a lead in to a writing or research activity.



Art Time

Please use the booklet for tips about creating safe conversations.

Creative activities can help children reflect on their feelings, thoughts and experiences in fun, non-threatening ways.

Draw yourself in your safe place

- Think of a place that is meaningful when you feel completely safe.
- Draw yourself there.
- Place a partner, describe your safe place and how you feel when you imagine yourself there.



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Create a comic strip

- Choose a scene or event.
- Draw a simple scene in a box.
- Place the end of the child feeling exactly how he feels, and the end of the comic feeling safe at the end.

Make your own pup

- Imagine a person who is feeling unsafe.
- What are they feeling and what is their body language doing to show they feel unsafe?
- Imagine the person has met a trusted adult. Draw the person's pup.
- Ask a friend if they can pick which picture best shows they're a trusted adult, and which is safer.

Design a poster

- Design a poster with the message: "I'm A Trusted Adult!"

Art Time

When children (and adults!) are being creative and using their hands to make something, they often feel calm and relaxed. This can be a great time to support them to explore their emotional wellbeing and safety.

The Art Time activity card includes four suggested activities — draw yourself in a safe place, create a comic strip, make your own pup and design a poster. These activities can be done as part of an art class or can be included alongside other parts of the curriculum, such as social studies or in health and wellbeing classes.

Talk Time

Please use the booklet for tips about creating safe conversations.

These activities can help children develop skills in communicating and listening, abstract thinking and problem-solving— enriching literacy and building empathy.

Pick a card

- Can you think of 5 words to describe how the person is feeling?
- What question could you ask the person about the card?
- What do you think you have in common with the person?
- What advice would you give them about feeling safe?

Mystery card

- Select the card and read them down.
- Choose a card, ask it's, but don't show anyone else.
- Others in the group ask a yes/no question about the card, trying to guess which one it is.
- Continue until someone guesses the card.

Partner

- Choose a card and discuss what you remember about the character and scene depicted.

Safe questions

- Select a card and brainstorm the "normal" and "not so normal" feelings.
- Can you guess by 3 clues that show the child is feeling this way?

Build a group story

- Set a timer for 5 minutes.
- Start a story for 30 seconds.
- When the timer rings, the next person tells 30 seconds to continue the story.
- Continue until everyone has had a turn.



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Talk Time

In a world dominated by technology, children have less and less opportunities for meaningful, reflective conversations with others. And by necessity, classroom talk is often led by the teacher. The activities on the Talk Time card are designed for small groups supported by an adult. Wherever possible, the children should lead and direct these conversations.

Talk Time includes five activities: Pick a card, Mystery card, I wonder..., Let's debate! and Create a group story. The Talk Time activities encourage children to connect, listen and relate to one another. This not only helps build empathy and respect, it also enriches literacy skills and supports children to develop abstract thinking and problem-solving skills. The activities support children to understand the things they have in common, while also acknowledging that everyone has a right to their own perspective. All of these skills are invaluable for building a child's capacity to seek help if they need it.



Circle Time

In many classrooms, Circle Time is a regular part of the week. Circle Time is when the teacher brings all the children together in a circle to do an activity or talk about particular issues or challenges. One of the main goals of Circle Time is to help children develop their social and emotional literacy by focussing on thinking, listening, looking, speaking and concentrating. While Circle Time is often associated with schools, it would work equally well in a range of other settings.

The Circle Time activity card includes three sets of sentence starters that invite children to think about what it means to feel safe, unsafe and when they should talk to a trusted adult. Sentence starters are designed to open up conversations. How a sentence is finished is entirely up to the child—there are no right or wrong answers. Feel free to use the card or sentence starter to spark the conversation, then follow it wherever it takes you.

The *Tell A Trusted Adult* cards can be used in a range of ways during Circle Time. Cards can be all spread out face up or placed upside down or in a pile. The cards can be selected randomly or deliberately chosen. The cards can be used to talk about an incident that has happened that left a child or children feeling unsafe. They can be used to talk generally about how respectful and disrespectful language impacts on people and what strategies could be used if someone is being disrespectful. They can be used to have a conversation about different types of body signals.

When running a Circle Time activity, it can be valuable to have an agreed-upon set of guidelines for the group in relation to things like taking turns, respecting each other, listening, understanding privacy, allowing children to ‘pass’ and making sure everyone is included. (See p. 29 for other suggestions for creating safe spaces for conversations in groups or classrooms.)



Game Time

Please use the booklet for tips about creating safe conversations.

Children learn through play. These activities are based on popular games (some require 2 or 3 packs of 'Tell A Trusted Adult' cards).

Memory (2 packs, 2 players)

- Remove the 8 safety cards from each pack and shuffle the remaining cards.
- Deal 4 cards to player face down (some people may have more cards).
- Taking turns, each player places their top card face up on the table, leaving a pile.
- If a player cannot find a card on top of their pile, they must draw 1 card.
- The player who 'knights' first wins the card pile by matching their face-down pile.
- The last player with cards remaining is the winner.

Memory (1 or 2 packs, 2 or 4 players)

Remove the 8 safety cards.

- Shuffle the cards and lay them on the table, face down, in rows.
- Taking turns, each player turns over 2 cards.
- If a card matches its pair, remove and if using 2 packs, some characters if using 4 cards the player keeps the pair.

Charades

- If the cards don't match, turn the 2 cards face down again, and it's the next player's turn.
- The pair on with the most pairs at the end, wins.

Charades

Place a random image of a card (safety - see booklet) 1/2

- Draw one 2 safety cards, shuffle the cards and place a face down on the table.
- One player chooses the top card, describing the scene and the card.
- The other guesses the card.
- The winning person or team has the most correct guesses.



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Game Time

The three games on Game Time are based on popular card games that children are likely to be familiar with, like Snap, Memory and Charades. However, the games have been reconceived so that they focus on safety and unsafety.

These games are designed to be a fun and simple way to introduce children to body signals, emotions and feelings. They can be used as a non-threatening, indirect way to talk about how we can recognise signs of safety and unsafety. When working with the 13 card pairs, encourage children to notice what safety and unsafety look and feel like, how they contrast with each other, and how we might move from one to the other.

Multiple packs of the cards may be required depending on the game (this is detailed on the card).

Safety Time

Please use the booklet for tips about creating safe conversations.

These activities encourage children to identify their body signals and their circle of trusted adults, and ask for help when needed.

The feelings detective

- Make a list of all the feelings 'Safe' and 'Unsafe'.
- Look for clues in the cards that tell you the person looks safe or unsafe.
- Place the cards under the 2 headings.

Safety continues

- Assign a character to a line from the character leading the next talk, to read aloud. (They ask us right or wrong responses—emotional, physical and regulation.)
- Ask children to give reasons for their decisions.

Circle of trusted?

- Create a chart with the headings 'Good' and 'Bad'.
- Ask children to describe their body signals when they feel unsafe.
- Then draw body signals when they feel unsafe.
- Complete the list. How can we help differences between being excited and scared?

Who can I trust?

- Ask a student to read. Create a list of questions these adults have and the feelings they feel.
- List some things people might say or do that could be 'red flags' to tell a trusted adult (see the booklet p. 16).
- Encourage children to keep telling a trusted adult until they feel better and safe.



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Safety Time

The Safety Time card includes four activities, all of which can be used to talk about what 'safe' and 'unsafe' feel like in the body, how to recognise when you are unsafe, and what to do when you feel unsafe, namely: Tell A Trusted Adult!

Taking risks and challenging ourselves is an important part of learning and growing. When we take risks, it can feel scary or uncomfortable. The third activity on the Safety Time card can be used to talk about the difference between when it is fun to be scared and when we are actually unsafe. We can use this activity to talk about having a 'growth mindset' where making mistakes and challenging ourselves is understood to be a valuable part of the learning process.

The final activity focusses on the qualities of a trusted adult and identifying a network of trusted adults.





1a

Anxious feelings can present in the body in a number of ways. One of these is a fluttering feeling in the stomach. Notice that the child in this card also has their eyes closed, a down-turned mouth and their hands crossed. You might use this card to ask questions like, Have you ever had butterflies in your tummy? What did they feel like? What colour and size were they?

1b

The paired card shows the child releasing the butterflies. In this card, the child has a more relaxed posture, with palms up and eyes open. The butterflies are also symbolic of the healing process, of the child's story or secret being shared, and the release that follows. How can you release the butterflies in your tummy? Who could help? Butterflies can also signal excitement or anticipation.



2a

When a child feels anxious they will often say that they feel sick. Here the child has a heavy, messy, sick feeling in their tummy. Anxiety can be triggered by any number of things, from trauma or abuse, to worry about school performance. It could also be triggered by problems with friends or a generalised social anxiety. Do you ever feel sick with worry? When you feel sick with worry, what are your thoughts telling you?

2b

This card shows the child on a swing, moving freely without a care in the world. Use this card to talk about how sharing feelings with a trusted adult can help create a sense of clarity and calm. Knowing that you are not alone and everyone experiences anxiety from time to time can be very comforting and reassuring. What helps you to feel carefree? Do you have a happy place, where you feel relaxed and free to be yourself?





3a

When we are scared, our body might feel shaky or shivery. We may also have goosebumps, feel tense or perspire. Shaking or shivering (when it is not cold) can be a body signal of fear. In this card, the child has their arms crossed, shoulders tensed and they have a worried expression. Use this card to talk about the different reasons we feel shaky or shivery in our body. Support children to identify when feeling shaky is telling them they should ask for help. When does our body shake or shiver? How will you know it's time to tell someone that something is wrong?

3b

In the paired card, the child is laying on a hammock with a relaxed open body posture, enjoying the warmth of the sun. The child's eyes are closed. In some of the other cards, this represent fear or shutting off. Here, it represents a feeling of safety and calm. Being outside in nature has been shown to reduce anxiety and increase mental health. You could also talk about how a rocking motion and other movements can be soothing. When are you this relaxed? Where is your favourite place in nature?



4a

Being away from parents or adjusting to a new social situation can trigger significant anxiety for some children. They may express this separation anxiety with clingy behaviour or excessive worry. Separation anxiety can be triggered by general social anxiety, fear of the unknown or worry about the safety of parents. This is often short-lived and may reduce as the child feels more comfortable and confident, and the environment becomes more familiar. When have you been in a new and unfamiliar situation? What helped you feel more confident and relaxed?

4b

The paired card shows the child joyously going down a slide, arms wide open, with a friend following behind. The image can be used to talk about the benefits of being away from parents and having fun. Giving children the opportunity to share their fears and worries about being away from parents can help reduce the likelihood that avoidant behaviours become entrenched. Understanding that most children have felt this way at some point can also be reassuring. What do you like doing with your friends?





5a

In this card we see a child peering out from behind the door. There is a spider in the garden which appears to be a source of fear. Use this card to discuss the fact that everyone has fears. At school, children may have a fear of being teased, making a fool of themselves or being rejected by others. Hearing about other people's fears, and their different strategies for handling them, can be very empowering. Sometimes these fears are grounded in very real threats to safety so a discussion about protective behaviours can be valuable. What fears or phobias do you have? Who could help you with these fears?

5b

The paired card also depicts a child looking at a spider but in this card, they are full of curiosity and scientific inquiry. This card can be used to talk about how our fears can stop us from exploring the world and experiencing the richness of life. Investigating and testing the validity of our fears, sharing our fears with a trusted adult and listening to the experiences of others, can all be great strategies for overcoming fears. What do you want to find out more about? What's one new thing you could try today?



6a

The hand covering the child's mouth is an important symbol in this card. When we are not being listened to or feel unable to speak up, it can leave us feeling powerless and overwhelmed. Use this card to talk about what we can do when we feel frustrated, devalued, pressured to keep a secret or too fearful to speak up. When do you feel shut down? Who could help you find your voice?

6b

In the paired card, the silhouetted hands are applauding the child, who is singing on a stage. Having the confidence to express ourselves and use our voice is a skill that can be developed over time. Share stories about bravery and pushing outside comfort zones. Encourage children to think about the people who cheer them on, support them and want them to be successful. Who can you trust will always listen to you? Who encourages you to shine?





7a

When we are scared we are likely to react in one of several ways—fight, flight, freeze, flop or be-friend (the 5 f’s). In this card, the child is literally frozen to the spot, caught in the spotlight, unable to move or act. They appear powerless to speak. Being frozen with fear can leave people feeling vulnerable and helpless. Use this card to talk about the 5 f’s and the different ways we respond to scary situations. Have you ever felt frozen with fear? What’s one thing that could help in this situation?

7b

The paired card shows the child in a similar stance, yet the sheer terror of the previous card has been replaced with the creative expression of dance. Physicality and movement are great strategies for releasing anxiety, fear and stress. Discuss different forms of movement—dance, sport, walking, swimming, skateboarding, planting a garden, play. When do you feel free? What kinds of movement do you enjoy?



8a

On this card, a child hides under their hoody, wanting to be as small as possible. Three fingers point at them accusingly. This card focusses on shame and guilt. Use the card to talk about how we all mess things up or make mistakes sometimes—this is part of learning and growing. For children, feelings of shame or guilt may arise when they believe they’ve let their team down, haven’t followed social expectations or have mucked up a group project. Sometimes shame occurs when people blame themselves for the behaviour of others (as often happens with abuse survivors) or they are carrying a secret. When have you felt guilty or ashamed? If a friend was feeling ashamed, what advice would you give them?

8b

The paired card shows the same child with their hoody off, sitting cross-legged on a rainbow mat, giving a ‘thumbs-up’ and surrounded by golden light. This card could be used to talk about identity and being proud of who you are, the importance of including people who may be different to you and the value of diversity. It could also invite reflection on the value of meditation or mindfulness in challenging feelings like shame and guilt. How could you celebrate the ways you are different and unique? What helps you feel more positive?



9a

This card shows a child in a state of anger. When children have experienced trauma, abuse or neglect, or they believe they are being treated unfairly, their emotions may escalate quickly. Use this card to talk with children about their frustrations and triggers. Attitudes to violence are an underlying causes of family violence, so it can also be useful to use this card to talk about how violence is depicted in our culture (these conversations need to happen even with young children). Together, identify a range of strategies children could use when they feel anger rising—talking to a trusted adult may be one of those strategies. What are your triggers? What helps you stay calm when angry feelings start to rise?

9b

The matching card shows the therapeutic and calming strategy of hugging a pet. A pet gives unconditional affection and love (most pets do, anyway!)—they don't judge or blame. Even if a child doesn't have a pet, ask them to imagine one (it doesn't have to be real; it could be an alien or crazy made-up one, as long as it accepts them unconditionally and is always happy to see them). Then encourage them to imagine spending time with their pet. Alternatively, explore how other tactile experiences might be calming—grass between the toes, squeezing a stress ball, hugging a soft toy. If you have a pet, how do you feel when you play with it? What do you enjoy doing with your hands?

10a

As we talked about in 7a, flight is one of the 5 f's. When people are feeling scared or under threat in some way (bullied or excluded, for example), they often feel like they want to run away. Sometimes, leaving a situation may be an appropriate response—when someone is being aggressive or abusive, for example. Sometimes it can result in a child becoming more unsafe—if they leave the school grounds or run away from home, for example. This card can prompt conversations about when leaving a situation is the best response, and can invite conversations about other strategies a child could use when they feel like they want to run away. Have you ever felt like running away? What else could you do? Where (or who) could you run to that is safe?

10b

Running can be an exhilarating, empowering experience. Exercise is great for supporting mental health, especially when combined with social connection and having fun. Feeling strong and capable in your body can help build confidence and resilience. Use this card to talk about the value of staying fit and healthy, connecting with others and playing outside. What outdoor games do you like playing with your friends? When do you feel free in your body?



11a

Fear of the dark is not uncommon amongst children. The dark seems to amplify our fears, imagined or real. Night-time is also a time when children may feel most alone and vulnerable. A soft toy or other comforting object can help to alleviate the fear and bring comfort. However, in this image, even the teddy seems fearful. Use this card to talk about what you can do when you feel isolated or alone. When do you feel most alone? What helps calm your fears?

11b

This card shows a child sleeping peacefully. Restful and plentiful sleep is vital for children to be able to learn and grow. In an age of abundant technological distractions, children are often not getting the sleep they need. Anxious and ruminating thoughts can also contribute to disrupted or restless sleeping patterns. Teach children about good sleep hygiene—regular bedtimes, no screens before bed, calming activities leading into sleep—and encourage them to talk to a trusted adult if they are feeling fearful or anxious at night. Adults can also support children to learn self-soothing techniques they can use when they are alone. What helps you get a good night's sleep? What helps you soothe messy thoughts?



11b



12a

On this card, we see a silhouetted adult whispering a secret to a child. The child's uncertainty and discomfort is revealed in their expression and body language. Children who have experienced abuse or violence are often asked by the perpetrator to keep the behaviour a secret. Sometimes, the perpetrator may not directly tell them to keep a secret, but the child may feel so ashamed, guilty or fearful, they may decide it isn't safe to tell anyone. They may also be fearful of losing their family or causing conflict or pain for someone else. Use this card to gently talk about how secrets can be good or bad; they are powerful and can be used to control people. Discuss the idea that sharing a secret with someone you trust can be a relief and can help make the situation better. Have you ever had a secret that made you feel bad? Who could you have told?

12b

In the paired card, the child radiates confidence and calm. They are positioned above the adults (in the previous card, they are in a more powerless position) and they are sharing their ideas with two adults who appear to be listening intently. Use this pair of cards to talk about the difference between secrets that are fun to keep and secrets that make you feel bad. These two cards can also be used to talk about the qualities of a trusted adult—how can we know we can trust someone, what should we be looking for? What does it feel like to be able to speak freely?



12b



13a

Anxiety is one of the most common mental health issues and is on the rise in children. In this card, we see a child surrounded by clouds of messy and chaotic thoughts. Anxiety and anxious thoughts can feel overwhelming and make clarity extremely difficult. There are many strategies children can use to manage anxiety and overwhelm, including mindfulness and exercise (see the *Anxiety Solutions for Kids* cards for many suggestions and strategies). When have you felt overwhelmed? What helps you calm busy thoughts?

13b

In the paired card, the child is on the shoulders of an adult and their clouds of anxious thoughts have transformed into bubbles being blown from a bubble pipe. Focused breathing can be beneficial in clearing the negative thinking that often accompanies times of overwhelm. The superhero costume is a powerful symbol and can be used to talk about how everyone has what they need to be the hero of their own story—they just need to look inside themselves. What are your superpowers? Who helps you feel like a hero? 🦋

Getting started

The previous section outlined the purpose of every card and included several questions that teachers and facilitators can ask to build a conversation around that card. This section contains more ideas for using the cards. These ideas are not instructions; they are possible activities you may wish to consider. We hope they will spark your own creative ideas for using the cards.

When should I introduce the cards?

A resource introduced at the right time can be catalytic. It can support children to describe their situation very quickly. It can open up fresh insights and ways forward in a relatively short space of time. However, it is equally important to gauge the group or situation before introducing a card set. Sometimes, it's just not the right time.

The more you experiment with using the cards, perhaps in simple, small ways to begin with, the more confident you will become about the way various activities are likely to work, and the more tuned in you are likely to become about the time and place to introduce them.

If you are using the cards one-on-one with a child, it is respectful to seek their permission to introduce the resource,



perhaps asking them if they would mind if you introduced a resource others have found useful. It is important to make it genuinely possible for them to say no from the start, or to bail out of using the cards at any point.

It is often advisable to establish a connection and get to know the child's situation a little first before introducing a card set in a one-on-one situation. Moments when conversations seems to be stuck or stalled can be great opportunities to introduce a card set.

If you know that you are going to have a conversation using the cards with an individual or group, prepare a couple of potential activities you could introduce if the right opportunity arises. Trust your own judgement about whether to try them or not.



If you do decide to introduce the cards into the conversation, it is important that children know that it is ok not to have a response. Simply invite them to choose another card or give them the option to 'pass'.

And finally, please make sure you have read the section on p. 29 about creating safe spaces for having conversations before you use the cards with others.

Feel free to adapt these ideas

Please adapt these ideas to your style as a practitioner or teacher, and more importantly, to the needs of the children you are working with. Some of the activities presented in this section may not be appropriate for particular children, circumstances or settings. Always be guided by your own discernment and practice experience, and that of respected and experienced colleagues. With a small tweak from you (or a complete re-vamp) an activity may work so much better than implementing it exactly as presented in this booklet. Draw on your own learning about using cards and resources as you try out different activities.

Deliberate selection

This method involves spreading the cards out on a table or other flat surface and inviting an individual or group to look them over and make a selection



based on a question or other prompt. Some activities may involve picking more than one card—or even a series of cards.

The cards can also be displayed on a wall, window or noticeboard. Spreading the cards out on the floor is another possibility. Children can get a bird's eye view of the cards, walk around them or follow a line or meandering path of cards. If you are inviting children to pick up a card from the floor, take care that everyone involved can bend down comfortably.

Activities that involve movement such as walking or shuffling cards can open up different pathways to learning, particularly for those who favour a kinesthetic learning style.

Random choice

Activities using random selection often bring a great sense of fun into the room. Often an element of whimsy, playfulness and serendipity enters the conversation with random selection—children and adults alike love to play games and great learning can happen when people have fun. Let your imagination come into play!

Here are some fun-filled possibilities for random selection games:

- Place all the cards in a bag or container and invite children to select one from the 'lucky dip'.
- Place one card randomly on each child's seat (you can even play musical chairs).
- Form pairs. Each child randomly selects a card for their partner.
- Create a 'treasure hunt' where the cards are hidden and each child takes a turn to find a card. If you wish, you can play games of 'hot and cold' where you say 'hotter' or 'colder' as the child moves closer or further away from the hiding place of the card.

Sorting the cards into pairs or groups

As the *Tell A Trusted Adult* cards are designed as pairs, there are a number of ways you could create activities by putting the cards in pairs or groups (see the activity cards and lesson plans for more suggestions).

- Give each child in the room a card (make sure all the pairs are distributed – if you have an odd number of children, ask two children to team up). Once everyone has a card, get the children to find the person with the other card in their pair.
- Spread the cards on a table and ask the children to find all the cards with:
 - an animal in them
 - an adult
 - hands
 - more than one person. 🦋



More ideas for using the cards

Whether you use deliberate selection or random choice for getting the activity started, in this section you will find lots more ideas for using the cards. The following activities can be adapted to suit children, young people or adults, and to suit the style of the facilitator.

Describing body signals

- Can you find one or more cards for body signals you are feeling right now (or have felt sometime recently)?
- Do you feel these body signals often?
- Which ones would you like to feel more often?
- Which ones would you like to feel less often?
- Can you give even more detail about what those body signals feel like to you?
- If you had to make up a name for one of those body signals, what would it be? For example, 'Wormy Wiggles' for a tight tummy.
- If the body signal was an animal or a plant, what would be? For example, goose bumps could be a cactus, a pounding heart could be a bouncing kangaroo.
- Pick cards for body signals you experience often.
- Do you have any strategies for alleviating an unpleasant body signal you experience often?
- Have you ever felt more than one body signal at once?
- Invite children to act these out. You can have lots of fun by inviting them to really ham it up!
- Do you try to hide your body signals? What would other people notice if you are feeling really uncomfortable? Anything?



Interpreting the meaning of body signals and emotions

- Can you choose cards that might be interpreted in several different ways?
- Have you ever misread a body signal? For example, you thought you were scared but actually you were excited, or you thought you were angry but actually you were hungry.
- Body signals are often accompanied by emotions. Choose cards that show what is happening in your body when you are happy, sad, scared, angry, surprised and disgusted. Or nervous, excited, ashamed and so on.
- What about body signals that tell you something about your physical state such as cold, hot, hungry, tired, needing to go to the toilet?
- Sometimes you may not know what emotion you are feeling until you notice the associated body signals. For example, you may not notice that frustration has built up until you feel tightness in your jaw, shoulders, fists or chest and realise that you are angry or disappointed. Which emotions do you find easy to recognise and which ones are more difficult to notice?
- What we say to ourselves inside our own thoughts is sometimes called 'self-talk'. Sometimes we get into a habit of negative self-talk associated with a particular body signal. (For example,

blushing might be accompanied by negative self-talk that says, 'I am always such a hopeless idiot.' What do you tell yourself when you experience particular body signals?

- If your self-talk (when feeling a particular body signal) tends to be self-critical, what else could you say instead that is kinder?

Acting on body signals and staying safe

- Do you think your body signals are useful?
- How do they help you? What do they tell you?
- Do you pay attention to them?
- Can you give an example of when you really listened to a body signal? What happened?
- Can you give an example of when you ignored a body signal? What happened?
- Do you think it is always useful to listen to a body signal?
- How do you know which ones to ignore and which ones to act on?
- How do you decide how to respond to a body signal?
- What if you act on it but it doesn't go away?
- How do you know when you feel unsafe? Which body signals tell you that?



- Have you felt any early warning signs recently? Where and when? What did you do?
- Do you tell anyone when your body has an uncomfortable feeling or do you keep it to yourself?
- Who could you tell or who could help you when you feel unsafe?
- Who would be the first person you would feel safe to tell?
- Have you noticed any patterns in your early warning signs—for example, you always get a tight tummy when talking with a particular person, or when you are in a particular place?
- What do you think someone should do when they feel that way?
- What would you say and do if a friend or family member told you they had a particular body signal (or you just noticed) and you think they are feeling unsafe?

(Please see the section on p.50 for more activities relating to protective behaviours and trauma-informed care.)

Developing empathy

- Choose a few cards randomly. What do you think is happening for each of the characters right now?
- What do you think the character was doing just before this moment?
- What do you think they would do just after?
- What would you do?
- Have you ever felt like this?
- Has someone you know felt like that too?
- Do you think you can notice body signals in others? How? What do you notice?
- What can you do to help someone who might be feeling what these characters are feeling?

The next section features more ideas for using the cards in specialist areas, including safety and trauma, anxiety and transition, storytelling and journaling. 🦋



Let children know everyone feels scared sometimes but everyone has the right to feel safe. And sometimes we need help to feel that way.

Ideas for specialist areas of focus

Body signals can be used to help even very young children get in touch with their 'early warning signs'—messages from their body that they are feeling unsafe. This has particular relevance for protective behaviours and trauma-informed practice.

Protective behaviour and trauma-informed practice

By teaching children to recognise body signals that tell them they may be unsafe, you help them add a valuable protective behaviour to their kitbag. Knowing what action to take when they recognise they are unsafe is equally important. Simple messages like 'tell a trusted adult when you feel unsafe' are easy for children to remember and act on.

Here are some other ideas:

- Let children know that they have a right to be safe. Let them know that their body is a very big help in letting them know when they are feeling safe or unsafe. Their body is very clever and is sending them important messages all the time. We just need to understand what our body is saying. What are different parts of your body saying?
- Pick out cards that represent body signals associated with feeling safe and feeling unsafe:
- Discuss each one in detail with children.
- Invite children to talk about a time when they felt scared or unsafe and pick out cards that show how they felt. Let them know everyone feels scared sometimes but everyone has the right to feel safe. And sometimes we need help to feel that way. It is very good to know *when* to ask for help, *how* to ask for help and *who* to ask.
- Play mirroring or copying games such as 'Simon Says' or 'Charades' where children copy that body signal. Encourage them to ham it up and exaggerate! Also let them know it can be a quiet little voice your body has at times. But it's still important to listen to your body even when it is 'talking' to you quietly.



- Draw outlines of the body and ask children to draw different body signals on the outline to show where they feel them in their body. For example, tight throat, beating heart or wobbly tummy.
- Discuss different words that can be used to describe various body signals.
- Ask them to match a body signal with an emotion—for example, tight fists might go with feeling angry (or scared). Smiling might go with feeling happy (or nervous).
- Pick a 'Card of the Day' or 'Card of the Week'. Place it on a box with a slot (like an empty tissue box) and ask children to post their name in the box when they are feeling like that.
- Create several slotted boxes for key 'Feeling Unsafe and Need Help' body signals. When they post their names in the box, the teacher knows they need help.
- Sometimes secrets are exciting and wonderful because your body somehow knows that these secrets 'feel' good and happy. But sometimes secrets don't feel good. Someone tells you not to tell anyone about the secret and you don't feel good about this secret in your body. Your tummy might feel upset or you might have a scared feeling like you are going to get into trouble or be hurt if you tell. Pick a card that shows how your body feels when you have a good secret.
- Pick a card that shows how your body feels when you have a secret that doesn't feel good, or when you are scared, worried or uncomfortable.
- Why is it important to tell someone straight away when you have a secret that feels bad, uncomfortable or scary?
- Who could you tell if you had a secret that feels bad or uncomfortable or scary? Draw a picture of all the people you could tell. Put a tick beside the person you would tell first. Who would you tell next if that person is not available or doesn't help you straight away?
- Which cards show how someone's body can react when trauma is experienced?
- What are some things that you can do to help yourself or get help from others?





De-escalating body signals in times of anxiety and transition

Times of change or transition can be stressful—whether the change is wanted or not. For young children, such times include beginning kindergarten or transition to ‘big school’. For a young person it may be social situations or sitting exams. For adults it may be starting a new job, the birth of a baby, or retiring.

While it is always important to notice and respect body signals, we can also become more and more skillful in learning how to soothe them when they are being triggered by past trauma.

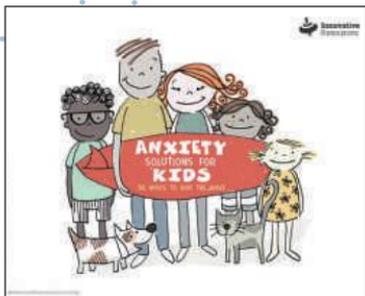
Sometimes our brain may cause our body to have a strong threat response to a situation even when our rational mind can see that there is actually no real threat. When this becomes a habit, it can lead to uncomfortable, and sometimes debilitating, states of recurring anxiety. Even if we don’t experience a diagnosable condition of anxiety, we all experience anxious thoughts or other difficult emotional states from time to time. For this reason it is very helpful to learn some simple techniques for defusing our brain’s unwanted threat response.

Encouraging children to recognise body signals associated with stress and

anxiety, and learn how to soothe them when there is no actual danger present, is an essential part of developing emotional literacy.

Techniques for soothing or de-escalating body signals include:

- **Mindfulness.** Simply describing the body signal in detail like a curious observer, without judging it as good or bad, is a foundational aspect of mindfulness. This creates the capacity to ‘witness’ what the body is doing, without becoming overwhelmed or overtaken by the body signal or associated thoughts. This attitude of curiosity without judgement helps to unstuck the identification with the body signal, and as such is a form of ‘externalisation’.
- **Giving a body signal a pet name** such as ‘Old Tight Tummy Worry Wort’ can be useful as long as it is very clear that no danger is actually present and that the anxiety is no longer serving a useful or protective function.
- **Pay attention also to how body signals are labelled.** The label we give something can accelerate the sensations. For example, a body signal associated with nerves before a performance could be ‘reframed’ as energy moving in the body gearing us up to deliver a peak effort rather than unwanted nerves.



- Distraction is another time-honoured method for soothing body signals associated with our brain's threat response. Counting colours, listing things, going through the alphabet, singing songs, reciting a poem are all effective distraction techniques to allow the body's threat response chemicals to slowly dissipate. The body signals soothe as this happens—the racing heart beat slows, the breathing rate slows as well.
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) techniques can also be very effective in soothing thoughts and deescalating body signals. These include such things as affirmations and repeating phrases that challenge the thoughts that arise in our mind when certain body signals are taking place.
- Physical movements such as tapping, jumping up and down, running, swimming and dancing also alter our brain chemistry and allow those threat systems to 'stand down'.
- Art, craft, music, gardening, woodwork and so on are all good ways to allow the body's stress signals to subside.

For those who are particularly interested in a range of creative activities for soothing body signals associated with anxiety, please see *Anxiety Solutions for Kids*—written by Selina Byrne and published by Innovative Resources. This card set can be used in conjunction with *Tell A Trusted Adult*:

- Invite people to pick cards for body signals that may be bothering them unnecessarily. Then ask them to pick different activities from the *Anxiety Solutions for Kids* card set, and give them a 'calm rating' from one to ten according to how well the activity helped to release or calm the body signal.

Whole-school approach

The most effective way to teach child safety is to take a whole-school approach. Embedding child safety into every area of school life ensures consistency of message across the school. It also helps to create a culture of openness and transparency, where children feel respected and valued.

Assemblies and other school events can be used to reiterate key messages and students can be encouraged to find creative and innovative ways to share these messages. This might include things like plays, dance performances, song writing competitions or poster competitions. All of these activities



could help communicate key safety messages, such as:

- Tell a trusted adult
- Our body tells us when we are unsafe
- Every child has the right to feel safe
- It is OK to say no, even to an adult.

There could be a key message allocated to every term. This message could then

be incorporated into specific class lessons and communicated to parents.

Posters can also be purchased as part of the *Tell A Trusted Adult* kit (which also includes 10 lesson plans) and can be displayed in the school foyer and other high traffic areas.

At home

Parents and carers may want to carve out some regular time to use the cards with their children. Creating opportunities for children to share their experiences in a fun and relaxed environment, by playing games, making up stories or using the cards alongside favourite picture books, for example, can help build trust and rapport. It can also help children and parents or carers develop a shared language around safety. Then, if a child is feeling unsafe, they are more likely to feel comfortable sharing their experiences and worries with their parents or carers. 🦋

Lesson Plans

The *Tell A Trusted Adult* kit also includes 10 lesson plans and 6 posters. This teacher's resource aligns with the Victorian and Australian curriculum and is designed to be delivered over ten weeks as a series of 60 minute sessions.

All lessons include suggested activities for children 3+, 7+ and 10+ so they can easily be adapted for use across early childhood and primary school environments.

They include a range of activities for individual children, pairs, small groups and whole-of-classroom, and are designed to be engaging for children with different learning styles and interests. They can also be incorporated into different areas of the curriculum.

No prior knowledge is needed to run these sessions, although we strongly suggest you read the booklet before running lessons on child safety. 🦋



About the development team

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About the publisher

St Luke's Innovative Resources is part of Anglicare Victoria, a community services organisation providing child, youth and family services. We publish card sets, stickers, books, and digital and tactile materials to enrich conversations about feelings, strengths, relationships, values and goals. Our resources are for all people regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, culture, ability or age. They are used by counsellors, educators, social workers, mentors, managers and parents. We also offer 'strengths approach' training and 'tools' workshops, both online, via videoconferencing and when appropriate, in person.

www.innovativeresources.org

Emergency and Support Services (in Australia)

Organisation	Service Provided	Contact details
Kids Helpline	Provides free, private and confidential phone and online counselling service for young people aged 5–25.	www.kidshelpline.com.au Phone: 1800 55 1800 Available 24/7.
headspace	Provides free online and telephone support and counselling to young people aged 12–25, and their families and friends.	www.headspace.org.au Visit a headspace Centre throughout Australia. Phone: 1800 650 890 Chat online or email (9am–1am AEST). Available every day.
Lifeline	Provides all Australians experiencing a personal crisis with access to online, phone and face-to-face crisis support and suicide prevention services.	www.lifeline.org.au Phone: 13 11 14 Available 24/7.
Beyond Blue	Works to address issues associated with depression, anxiety disorders and related mental disorders, and to reduce associated stigma.	www.beyondblue.org.au Phone: 1300 22 4636 Available 24/7. Chat online (3pm to midnight). Available every day.



***Tell A Trusted Adult* is a set of 35 cards to support conversations with children about safety.**

With a strong focus on body signals, this colourful resource is designed to help children build their social and emotional literacy. This is a great tool to guide children through transitions, help them identify their circle of trusted adults and build their confidence.

Consisting of 13 pairs and 9 activity cards, this resource is perfect for use with children aged 3-10+ in classrooms, groups or one-on-one conversations.

For teachers, counsellors, social workers, psychologists, parents or anyone wanting to help children manage feelings and respond to challenging situations.

'Sometimes teachers and other practitioners lack the confidence to teach child safety. They wonder where to start and what activities are appropriate. *Tell A Trusted Adult* can help take the trepidation out of these conversations.'

Also available as a kit with 10 lesson plans and 6 posters.



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