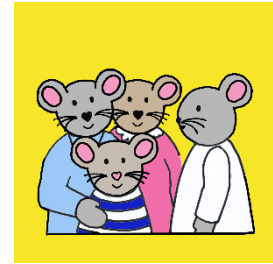


Safety Planning

Use This:

To increase the child's ability to maintain personal safety when there are known risks in the environment.



Goals

- The child will understand how to maintain his or her personal safety
- The child, parent, and therapist will develop a plan to ensure safety in the present and future
- The child and parent will understand and follow the safety plan

Materials

- **Fear Thermometer** and **Fear Ladder** (2 unrated copies, for anxiety/trauma), **Feelings Thermometer** (for depression) (pp. 305, 307, 329)
- Educative materials as needed (pamphlets, dolls, videos)
- **Weekly questionnaires** and **Monitoring sheet** (see pages 268 – 285)
- **Therapist Note Taking Sheet** (p. 267)

⌚ If time is tight: Your main objective is to develop a plan for the child's present and future safety.

Main Steps

<input type="checkbox"/> Set an Agenda	Remember to start by setting an agenda together and by reviewing any practice assignments.
<input type="checkbox"/> Obtain Weekly Ratings	If the main focus is traumatic stress or anxiety, use the 0 to 10 scale of the Fear Thermometer to obtain Fear Ladder ratings from both the child and his or her parent. If the main focus is depressed mood, use the Feelings Thermometer to take a rating. Review the Weekly questionnaires and Monitoring sheet . Discuss any difficulties with monitoring, usefulness of monitoring, what is being monitored etc.
<input type="checkbox"/> Minimise Self-Blame	There is a risk that children will interpret your plan to teach safety skills as evidence of their having failed to respond appropriately to the traumatic event (e.g., "I did not do the proper things to keep myself safe; this was my fault"). To minimise this risk, start out by normalising and validating the child's previous responses to trauma, and praise him or her for doing what he or she knew to do at the time.

<input type="checkbox"/> Review Basic Facts and Vocabulary	<p>Review basic facts related to the type of trauma the child experienced (for example, statistics related to sexual abuse, natural disasters, etc.). Ensure the child has the appropriate vocabulary to discuss the trauma (for example, children who have been sexually abused may need to review anatomical names for body parts). This may require some outside research on your part to prepare to cover this material.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Teach Child to Detect Danger	<p>Discuss with the child how to detect actual danger cues (“true alarms”) in his or her environment. Because not all danger has external cues (e.g., smelling smoke), you should also discuss what sorts of feelings we have when we are in danger. These could include physiological cues (sweating, heart racing) or affective cues (guilt, anger, worry). This may include rehearsal or role plays in which the child acts out a scenario he or she might face.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Example script</p> <p><i>Let’s say you believe someone in your family is angry and about to start a fight. Let’s talk about how you would know that is about to happen? What clues are there, and how would you feel?</i></p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Discuss Body Ownership	<p>If the trauma involves sexual abuse, discuss body ownership with the child, noting that some parts of the body are private. Clarify the difference between “good touch” and “bad touch,” and note that any touching that makes the child feel uncomfortable can be a sign to use the safety plan.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Develop Safety Plan	<p>Working together, write down steps the child can take in the future to ensure safety. For situations in which steps can be taken to minimise or appropriately confront the danger, the plan should incorporate such steps (for example, not leaving candles lit to prevent fires, learning how to operate a fire extinguisher). For situations in which the danger cannot always be addressed directly, such as those involving abuse or domestic violence, the emphasis should be placed on identifying safe places and people to whom the child can turn in order to report these events. The written safety plan can include: (a) identifying safe people to talk with about dangerous or uncomfortable things, (b) identifying safe places to go when something dangerous is happening, (c) calling 999, or (d) planning how to ask for help (which can even involve writing a script together). The plan should involve sequential steps, such that if the first step does not work, the child has a “back up plan.”</p>

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- Address Secrets** If the nature of the trauma could involve the child being asked to keep it a secret, review the difference between “safe” and “unsafe” secrets.

Example script

Safe secrets are secrets that we don't keep forever, and that are fun – like planning a party of a present that you know someone will really like. Unsafe secrets are secrets that kids are asked to keep from parents and never tell anyone about. These are secrets that kids don't want to keep, and don't feel comfortable keeping. Unsafe secrets include things like someone asking you to keep “bad” touches a secret.

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- ACTIVITY**
Rehearse Plan Practise the plan together by imagining an unsafe scenario. Ask the child first to identify the signs of danger and then to name the safety plan steps that would be taken. Be sure to ask lots of questions (“What would you try next?” “What if that person didn't answer the phone?” etc.) to ensure that the child has a firm understanding of the plan and when to use it. Provide plenty of praise.

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- Send the materials for the next session** Tell the parent/s you will send a written summary and the materials for the next session. Remind them that they do not need to be completed for next session as you will go through them together in the session. Tell the parent/s you will also send the **Weekly questionnaires**, and **Monitoring sheet** which need to be completed for the next session.

Confirm date and time of the next call.

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- Summarising** Ask if they would like you to summarise the session, if they want to summarise or if you should do it together.
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Leave ‘Em Laughing

End the session on a positive note with the family by perhaps talking about things that are unrelated to treatment or a game or activity that will leave them feeling good about the work you’ve done today. The end of each session should be used to praise the family’s efforts and to convey support and encouragement.

Helpful Tips

- Depending on the family situation, a parent may be involved in the entire session, including rehearsing their responses to the child’s safety plan.
- There are many excellent books and videos/DVDs available for education about personal safety. However, since children learn best via interactive discussion and role plays, make sure that these materials are integrated into more active presentation of safety skills and planning.

How’s Your Style?

- Did you praise often?
- Did you review often, by asking questions?
- Did you simplify the steps as needed?
- Did your pace match that of the child or family?
- Did you stay on track?