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TEATREE TELLS

A Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Kit

PARENT
GUIDE

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The Canadian Centre for Child Protection is a registered charity dedicated to the personal safety of all children. Our goal is to reduce child victimization by providing programs and services to the Canadian public.

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TEATREE TELLS TABLE OF CONTENTS

PARENT GUIDE	A
INTRODUCTION	C
WHAT DO CHILDREN NEED TO KNOW?	D
HOW DO PARENTS PARTICIPATE?	D
UNDERSTANDING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE	E
HOW DOES IT BEGIN?	E
WHO SEXUALLY ABUSES A CHILD?	E
HOW CAN RISKS BE REDUCED?	F
I. PAY ATTENTION AND QUESTION	F
II. TAKE NOTE OF CHANGES	G
III. SCREEN ORGANIZATIONS	H
IV. GET INVOLVED	I
V. COMMUNICATE	J
IV. CONSIDERATIONS FOR YOUR CHILD	J
FAMILY ACTIVITIES	K
KEEP AND SPEAK SECRETS	K
INFORMATION ABOUT <i>KEEP AND SPEAK SECRETS</i>	K
MATERIALS REQUIRED FOR THESE ACTIVITIES	K
REINFORCE IMPORTANT SAFETY MESSAGES	K
ACTIVITIES	L
I. TEATREE'S KEEP AND SPEAK SECRETS STORYBOOK	L
II. JOURNAL	L
III. ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY	M
CLOSURE	N
JOURNAL ENTRY	O
PARENT EVALUATION	P

TEATREE TELLS PARENT GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

The issue of child sexual abuse is not an easy subject to talk about. As parents, we try to protect our children from all types of harm. We “baby proof” our homes as our children begin to explore, we ensure that they wear seat belts in cars, we teach them to look both ways before crossing the street, and we make sure they wear helmets while riding their bikes. As our children grow up, we continue to teach them how to be safe in the world they live in.

However, when it comes to the issue of child sexual abuse, we often do not know what to do to protect our children. It is hard to imagine that such awful things could happen to children or that someone could possibly hurt them in this way. As a result, this topic is often avoided.

MORE THAN HALF OF ALL VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT (59%) REPORTED TO POLICE ARE CHILDREN AND YOUTH UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE (OGRODNIK, 2008).

BETWEEN 2013 AND 2014, THE RATE OF POLICE-REPORTED CHILD PORNOGRAPHY VIOLATIONS IN CANADA INCREASED BY 41% (BOYCE, 2015).

Unfortunately, the reality is that child sexual abuse does occur and causes harm to our children. As adults, we have a responsibility to learn about this issue so we can protect children from being sexually abused.

In order to help parents, teachers and educators learn more about this issue and better protect children from sexual abuse, the Canadian Centre for Child Protection has created **Teatree Tells: A Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Kit**.

The kit is designed for children from 4–6 years of age. Lessons are age appropriate, fun and include an animated character that teaches them how to be safe.

TEATREE TELLS PARENT GUIDE

WHAT DO CHILDREN NEED TO KNOW?

A question parents often ask is “What should I begin discussing with my child to reduce her/his chances of being physically or sexually abused?” While most parents want to know how to begin the discussion, they also worry about scaring their child and making her/him afraid of all adults. This concern is probably the most common reason as to why this discussion is avoided altogether.

Research suggests that education, without the use of fear, is effective at reducing a child’s risk of sexual abuse. Age-appropriate strategies are also strongly recommended when trying to increase personal safety.

Teatree Tells includes lessons dealing with:

- Proper names for body parts, including what areas of the body are private
- Boundaries — including Okay and Not Okay touching
- Assertiveness skills
For example: Teaching children that it is okay to say “No” to something or someone that makes them feel confused or uncomfortable. It is also important for children to understand that it is not their fault if they cannot bring themselves to say “No” or if someone does not listen when they say “No.” Teach them to always tell an adult they can go to for help.
- The kinds of behaviours that need to be told to an adult
- Identifying Safe Adults in the child’s life
- How to get help from Safe Adults

HOW DO PARENTS PARTICIPATE?

As a parent, you play an essential role in the **Teatree Tells** prevention program. Your child’s school or child care facility will be sending activities home for you to use. The activities create opportunities to have open discussions with your child and reinforce the messages that are being introduced.

The activities that will be sent home include:

- A Teatree journal page
- A Teatree storybook
- A Teatree puppet (optional)
- Discussion questions

TEATREE TELLS PARENT GUIDE

UNDERSTANDING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Child sexual abuse is a serious problem in our society and occurs more frequently than people realize. In order to protect children, it is important for parents to learn about child sexual abuse and ways to protect their child from experiencing abuse.

HOW DOES IT BEGIN?

Child sexual abuse is a process and usually begins before the sexual touching starts. It often starts with building a relationship with a child and her/his family to gain their trust for the purpose of sexually abusing the child.

This process is called “grooming.”

WHO SEXUALLY ABUSES A CHILD?

Research reveals that children usually know the individuals who sexually abuse them. This may include family members or someone in the family’s circle of trust (such as a family friend) or someone who has prolonged access to the child (such as an educator, or coach). **Offenders come from all walks of life and cannot be physically identified.**

MYTHS

- Most offenders are strangers.
- All offenders were sexually abused as children.
- All offenders look creepy and weird.

FACTS

- Adults who sexually abuse children usually know the child.
- There is a much higher percentage of males than females sexually offending against children.
- Adults who sexually abuse children can also be in adult sexual relationships.
- Offenders may test a child’s boundaries in front of other adults such as “accidentally” touching the child’s private areas.
- Sexual abuse that does not include contact can still have a psychological and emotional impact on victims.
- Adolescents can sexually abuse a child.

Offenders come from all walks of life and cannot be physically identified.

TEATREE TELLS PARENT GUIDE

HOW CAN RISKS BE REDUCED?

I. PAY ATTENTION AND QUESTION

If interactions between an adult and your child seem inappropriate, remember to carefully and objectively review the behaviours you are noticing before assuming the individual is grooming your child. Consider the following:

1. Use your instincts as a guide

Ask yourself whether or not someone else witnessing the behaviour would feel uncomfortable.

- Does interaction between your child and the adult seem odd?
- Does it make you feel uncomfortable?
- Does the child seem uncomfortable?
- Does “weird” behaviour seem to happen all the time or too often?
- Has anyone else noticed or commented on the adult’s behaviour?

2. Do not over- or under-react

It is important to be aware and protect your child; but not to start off distrusting people within your community or those working with your child without first witnessing or hearing about concerning behaviour.

3. Determine how the child feels about the behaviour

Find out whether the child feels uncomfortable or confused by the person’s behaviour. Keep in mind that the child may not reveal her/his true feelings for a variety of reasons (i.e. to avoid causing trouble, to protect the individual, because the child cares about the person and enjoys spending time together, etc.).

4. Do not dismiss your concern

A child may not see any issues or reasons for concern. However, that does not mean that your concerns are misguided. Once again, trust your instincts and monitor the situation.



IT IS IMPORTANT TO BE AWARE AND PROTECT YOUR CHILD; BUT NOT TO START DISTRUSTING PEOPLE
WITHIN YOUR COMMUNITY OR THOSE WORKING WITH YOUR CHILD WITHOUT FIRST WITNESSING OR
HEARING ABOUT CONCERNING BEHAVIOUR.

TEATREE TELLS PARENT GUIDE

II. TAKE NOTE OF CHANGES

It is important to pay attention to changes in your child's behaviour patterns (should last longer than the child just having an "off" day). When a child is distressed, s/he will communicate more through behaviour than words. If your child is demonstrating concerning behaviours, do not automatically conclude that your child has been abused. There can be many explanations. Nevertheless, it can be a sign that your child requires support and assistance.

Concerning behaviours

- **Advanced sexual knowledge**
A child has sexual awareness beyond her/his age. This may include information about certain smells, sounds, tastes, and/or visual details about sexual activity.
- **Advanced sexualized behaviour**
A child acts out explicit sexual behaviour. This could be with toys, peers or adults. Pay attention to a child that masturbates excessively, and then does not respond to the limits placed on her/his behaviour.
- **Withdrawn/depressed**
A child becomes increasingly withdrawn. S/he resists playing with usual friends and withdraws from activities previously enjoyed.
- **Decline in school performance**
A child's performance at school declines and her/his grades drop.
- **Distressed around a particular adult or gender of adults**
A child shows distress or resistance to spending time with a particular adult, or may demonstrate concerning behaviour only around a certain gender of adults.
- **Excessively seeks time with a particular adult**
A child excessively seeks time with a specific adult, as s/he may be given extra attention, gifts, or privileges.
- **Aggressive behaviour**
A child seems agitated and acts out aggressively towards others.
- **Self-destructive behaviour**
A child is physically harming her/himself and makes statements that indicate a lack of self-worth such as "I wish a was dead," "I should not be alive," or "What's the point in living?"
- **Physical symptoms**
A child shows physical signs of abuse in the genital area (e.g. pain, bleeding, discharge).

TEATREE TELLS PARENT GUIDE

III. SCREEN ORGANIZATIONS

When you are choosing an organization for your child to attend (such as a sports facility, school, or child care facility), it is important to find out what systems are in place to prevent child sexual abuse. The following steps will help you choose the right organization:

1. Get to know the organization

- What do you know about the organization?
- Call and schedule a tour. What impression did you have after visiting?
- How did you feel in the environment? Did you feel welcome and comfortable?
- What did you notice about employee and volunteer interactions with children and with each other?
- Is the organization open to questions and outside ideas?
- Does the organization encourage family involvement, and if so, how?
- Does the organization have an open-door policy for addressing concerns?
- Are parents welcome to stay and watch activities?

2. Ask the organization questions

- Does the organization train staff about child sexual abuse?
- Does the organization have a Code of Conduct for adults working with children?
Does it set out expectations for appropriate boundaries between staff and children?
For volunteers? For children? For parents?
- How are staff and volunteers supervised in their interactions with children?
- Does the organization have screening and hiring processes for staff and volunteers (e.g. interview process, background checks)?
- What is the organization's policy for reporting child sexual abuse or staff misconduct?

TEATREE TELLS PARENT GUIDE

3. Inquire about how the organization manages the following adult-child interactions:

- Naptime
- Toileting
- One-on-one time
- Offsite activities (e.g. field trips, walks, etc.)
- Transportation
- Overnight trips (e.g. camps, tournaments, etc.)
- Child visiting staff's/volunteer's homes (i.e. activities that are held at a staff member's house, sleepovers, etc.)
- Staff/volunteers having contact with children outside their work duties (i.e. in-person contact, phone contact, text messages, online contact, sleepovers, etc.)
- Staff offering activities or services for children outside of work (i.e. sport clubs, tutoring, babysitting, school trips to visit another city, etc.)
- Staff visiting a child's home

IV. GET INVOLVED

Involve yourself in your child's activities and participate in the organizations by volunteering, supporting, and observing.



TEATREE TELLS PARENT GUIDE

V. COMMUNICATE

It is important to create opportunities with your child for open supportive and positive discussions regarding personal safety. Evidence shows that a child who is assertive and talks openly to a Safe Adult about her/his problems is less vulnerable to victimization.

Safety habits need to be reinforced and integrated into your child's daily life. To help develop safety habits, your child needs opportunities to practice problem solving about how s/he would respond safely to dangerous situations. Using "What if" scenarios and encouraging practice will help build her/his confidence and competence.

VI. CONSIDERATIONS FOR YOUR CHILD

It is important to help your child make sense of the safety information. When a young child is presented with new information, especially content that s/he may be unsure about, s/he will look to her/his parents for how to process it. S/he will mirror the parents' comfort level and will often have many questions. It is important to be available to listen and reassure your child of her/his safety. Use a "matter-of-fact" approach when talking to your child about this subject, similar to how you would teach her/him other types of personal safety (e.g. bike safety, swimming safety, how to cross the street safely, etc.).

Avoid over-exposing your child to adult information. Keep in mind that not all information is appropriate to share. Some information is better used by adults and should be carefully kept from your child. Avoid exposing her/him to cases profiled in the media such as child abduction cases. Sharing too much information with your child can cause more harm than good. It can create worry and insecurity. Screen the information and be careful to share only what is age appropriate.



TEATREE TELLS FAMILY ACTIVITIES

KEEP AND SPEAK SECRETS

The following activities have been created for parents to use at home with their child. The activities provide an opportunity for parents to be engaged in the learning process. Parental support and involvement is instrumental to a child's learning. These activities help parents know what information to share.

INFORMATION ABOUT *KEEP AND SPEAK SECRETS*

An important component of child personal safety is helping a child distinguish between harmless secrets s/he can keep and hurtful secrets that need to be shared with a Safe Adult. Many dangerous situations involve some element of secrecy. **Sexual offenders often use ploys to manipulate a child into keeping abuse and inappropriate behaviour a secret.**

Keep and Speak Secrets was created to address the issue of sexual abuse and secrecy using age-appropriate information. The intent of teaching this strategy is to help disrupt harmful situations a child may encounter and to increase the reporting of sexual abuse.

MATERIALS REQUIRED FOR THESE ACTIVITIES

- Teatree's Keep and Speak Secrets storybook*
- Teatree puppet (optional)
- "What if" scenarios
- Teatree Tells journal sheet
- Evaluation sheet

** The storybook will be sent home from your child's school or child care facility, overnight, along with the lesson and activities.*

REINFORCE IMPORTANT SAFETY MESSAGES

It is important that parents reinforce the following safety messages (this complements what your child is learning in the lessons at school or the child care facility):

- **Secrets** about touching are Not Okay.
- **Secrets** about pictures are Not Okay.

*Note: the focus should be on the **secretive** aspect. If someone is touching or taking secret pictures of a child, s/he needs to tell a Safe Adult.*



TEATREE TELLS FAMILY ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITIES

I. TEATREE'S KEEP AND SPEAK SECRETS STORYBOOK

Together, read through *Teatree's Keep and Speak Secrets storybook*. Jointly, generate ideas of a Keep Secret (a secret that is Okay to keep). Next, generate ideas of a Speak Secret (a secret that is Not Okay and needs to be told). Use the following questions to guide your discussion:

1. What are two types of secrets Teatree learns about?
2. What secrets in the storybook should be told to a Safe Adult? What secrets are safe to Keep?
3. What might Teatree's secret be if it is a Keep Secret? What might it be if it is a Speak Secret?
4. If Teatree's secret is a Speak Secret who could she tell?
5. Who are adults you can go to for help?

II. JOURNAL (find on page 0)

Choose one of each type of secret to record onto the journal sheet. Write down the two secrets you and your child select in the space provided. Your child may choose to copy one word for each secret into the space provided for her/his journal entry. Ask your child to draw a picture of one of the secrets shared in the journal entry.



TEATREE TELLS FAMILY ACTIVITIES

III. ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY (recommended for 6-year-olds)

Together, read each scenario and have your child decide whether s/he thinks it is a Keep or Speak Secret. Ask your child how s/he chose her/his answer.

- | | | |
|---|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1. A teacher asks two students to stay in for recess to help decorate the classroom for an afternoon surprise party. The teacher asks the kids not to tell any other students. | Keep Secret | Speak Secret |
| <hr/> | | |
| 2. Ben is walking home from school when an older boy walks up behind him and hits him. He tells Ben not to tell anyone or he will hurt him again the next day. | Keep Secret | Speak Secret |
| <hr/> | | |
| 3. Erin's aunt is making a special dinner for Erin's parents. She tells Erin not to tell her parents. | Keep Secret | Speak Secret |
| <hr/> | | |
| 4. Scott is play wrestling with his friend's uncle. The uncle tickles him in a way that makes him feel uncomfortable. He does not stop even when Scott says he does not like it. He tells Scott not to tell anyone because he is just kidding around. | Keep Secret | Speak Secret |
| <hr/> | | |
| 5. Sydney's neighbour asks her if he can take pictures of her. He says he would give Sydney a present if she does not tell anyone. | Keep Secret | Speak Secret |
| <hr/> | | |
| 6. The school bus driver tells Jeff that he will take him on a special trip to the candy store one day after he drops off all the other kids. He says Jeff can only go if he does not tell his parents. | Keep Secret | Speak Secret |
| <hr/> | | |
| 7. Heather's dad is planning a surprise birthday party for her mom. He tells her not to tell mom. | Keep Secret | Speak Secret |

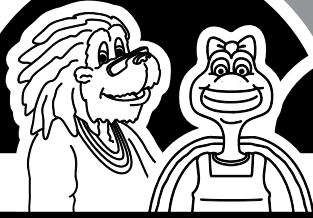
TEATREE TELLS FAMILY ACTIVITIES

CLOSURE

After completing the lesson with your child, please return the storybook (and puppet) and journal response to your child's educator.

The Canadian Centre for Child Protection would greatly appreciate your feedback on the **Teatree Tells** material. Please complete the evaluation on page P and return it to the educator.





Journal

PARENT'S JOURNAL ENTRY

CHILD'S JOURNAL ENTRY AND DRAWING



