



HANDY BOOKLET

FOR PARENTS

2

PREVENTION

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ESPACE Autonomous Community Organizations: Our Mission

Every action aims to offer children the chance to have a safe childhood free from violence. It is how we translate our ongoing commitment to preventing all forms of violence against children.

Preventing violence means not only giving children the tools they need to protect themselves against all forms of violence but also raising adults awareness of what their role is in prevention and equipping them to help children.

ESPACE's principal activities are:

- ◆ an educational program for elementary schools, daycare centres, recreational or sports groups, and other children's milieus. A one-on-one meeting is offered to the children after the workshop;
- ◆ raising awareness and supporting the general public, community organizations, associations, professionals, etc.;
- ◆ collaborating with various professionals in organizations, universities, colleges, the media, working groups, etc.;
- ◆ telephone consultations and referrals.

You can also view the activities of each ESPACE organization by visiting our website at www.espacesansviolence.org.



Introduction

Through your everyday actions, you can provide your child with much of the knowledge they'll need to deal with the different forms of violence they may be confronted with.

Votre organisme ESPACE

Membre du Regroupement des organismes ESPACE du Québec



Prevention

A good start

Doing prevention means not only talking about violence but also using discipline that educates and guides your child in order to help develop their self-confidence, autonomy, strength and self-assertion. It means creating and maintaining a strong bond with your daughter or son and encouraging relationships based on mutual respect.



*Creating bonds based on love and respect
promotes healthy development
and helps children take their place in society.*

Know that you are already helping your children each time you make them aware of their importance as a person, worthy of attention and respect. This happens each time that you...

... make them feel that you love them:

- ◆ by giving them hugs that they like and that reassure them;
- ◆ by offering a smile, a wink, a kind loving word, by blowing them a kiss;
- ◆ by spending alone time with them;
- ◆ by dedicating time to playing, reading, or drawing with them.



... talk with your child and take the time to listen:



- ◆ discussing subjects that interest them;
- ◆ letting them express their joys and sorrows, desires and frustrations, questions and fears;
- ◆ taking into account their points of view and opinions, and
- ◆ encouraging them to express them;
- ◆ teaching them to negotiate through discussion instead of confrontation.

... show your children that you trust them:

- ◆ by applauding their achievements and successes;
- ◆ by supporting their efforts;
- ◆ by helping them to be heard and assert themselves;
- ◆ by urging them to rely on and trust their own judgement, and act according to their intuition;
- ◆ by recognizing their ability to find their own solutions to certain conflicts.



... help your child to become responsible:



- ◆ by teaching them self-respect, as well as respect for others;
- ◆ by encouraging their self-discipline by establishing routines;
- ◆ by giving them responsibilities according to their age and abilities;
- ◆ by allowing them to make choices, to participate in family decisions;
- ◆ by helping them to accept responsibility for their decisions, choices and even mistakes.

... allow your child to discover that you are not perfect:



- ◆ by allowing them to question your behaviour or actions;
- ◆ by admitting your own mistakes;
- ◆ by apologizing when necessary.

You are probably already using many of these reinforcement techniques. They are so important for your child and are great preventive measures!

Another step

Doing prevention also means giving your child constructive and reassuring information.

Equip your child with ways to prevent all forms of violence and how to deal with them.



Why?

Because...

- ◆ girls and boys, of all ages and from all walks of life, need to know;
- ◆ it is as important to discuss prevention of violence as it is to talk about road safety or fire prevention;
- ◆ this knowledge is useful for insuring your child's healthy development.

**You may be asking yourself "Am I doing it right?
Is the message that I am trying to convey being understood?"
Leave your doubts behind, trust yourself and take action!**

When?



Choose moments when you have your child's undivided attention. Each day offers periods of time beneficial for discussions: mealtime, while driving around or taking a stroll, after an activity. Avoid starting discussions when you can't give your undivided attention.

Take advantage of everyday life situations. They can often provide great opportunities to talk about prevention. Use an incident that happened in the neighbourhood, a particular event that occurred at school or at daycare, something you or your child has read, cartoons or a television show you have seen, games or images from the internet.

Benefit from new experiences that make your child more independent, like starting daycare or school, their first bicycle ride, a new activity. These are good opportunities to learn or review prevention strategies.

What to emphasize

Explain to your children that they have the right...

- ◆ to feel safe, strong and free at all times;
- ◆ to react if anyone tries to take away these rights.

Four strategies to teach your child to deal with any situation of violence they may encounter:

1. Say NO!

Simply asserting oneself and demonstrating one's opposition can make the person who intended to take advantage of the child's vulnerability change their mind.



2. Ask friends or other children for help.

It is easier to find solutions and, if necessary, defend yourself when you are not alone.



3. Talk about the situation with a grown-up.

It is important that children can, if need be, confide in adults they feel comfortable with and trust, and that these adults can help them.



4. Use self-defence if needed.

It is usually possible to protect our rights using simple solutions, but it may sometimes be necessary to react physically. If your child feels in danger with someone they can:

◆ **Keep a safe distance or run away if necessary.**

If the person is holding them and preventing them from getting away, they can:

◆ **Say NO! LET ME GO!**

◆ **Use simple self-defence techniques** (for example: a kick in the shin, an elbow in the stomach, scratch, wiggle around a lot, etc.).

◆ **Yell** (See page 19 to learn how to do the self-defence yell and what it is for).

What subjects to discuss

- ◆ Any **questions** that may come up about **sexuality or intimate/romantic relationships**.



- ◆ The differences between **touching** that makes the child feel good and that which makes them feel uncomfortable. Tell children their bodies belong to them and nobody has the right to touch them without their consent. Teach them the proper names for different body parts.
- ◆ The dangers that are present on the **Internet**, like sharing personal information or pictures, meeting with strangers, etc.

- ◆ The notion of blackmail which allows a person to obtain what they want from another person either by luring them with gifts or favours, or by forcing them with threats.



- ◆ The difference between pleasant **secrets** and those that are heavy burdens, and should be revealed to a trusted adult.
- ◆ The **right to disobey and say NO**, in certain circumstances, to any person irregardless of their age or authority, if the child feels threatened, in danger or uncomfortable.
- ◆ The **right to lie, to break a promise or reveal a secret** if it is necessary in order to stay safe.
- ◆ Every person's **right to act when** facing situations that affect them or another person.

Whatever is happening (or has happened), it is essential that your children feel that you believe them, that you trust them and love them. Let them know that the only one who is guilty is the one using violence, not the one who is a victim of that violence.

Witnesses



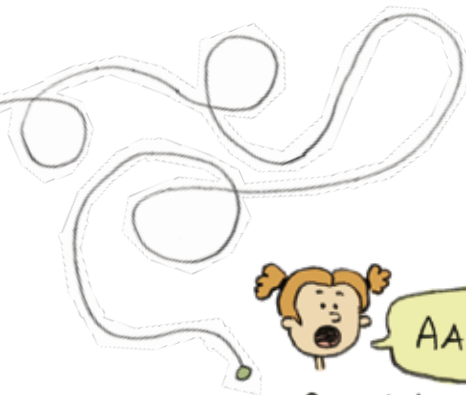
How to talk about it

- ◆ Start with short and simple explanations.
- ◆ Choose words adapted to the age and vocabulary of your child.
- ◆ Focus on the solutions rather than the dangers or fears.
- ◆ Use a book, a song, a video, etc.
- ◆ Do it in a relaxed and fun way.

Prevention through games

Games based on prevention are an excellent way to pass on information to your child. The more you play these games, the more your child becomes aware of their ability to find solutions. These activities will help them to better trust their intuition, to develop their confidence and to act to insure their own safety.

Self-defence



Special yell

The “What would you do if...” game

You can vary the scenarios and give your child the starring role with girls or boys the same age, then with older children. You can also introduce a stranger, or an adult the child knows, like a coach or a family member.

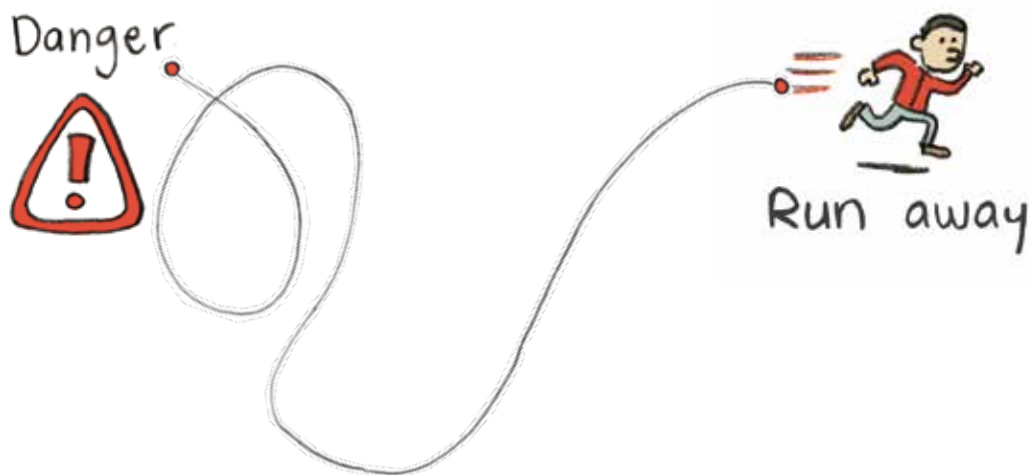
◆ The topics can include:

...unexpected situations. Ex.: What would you do if you got lost in a public place? What would you do if someone who is playing with you online asked you to meet with them? What would you do if someone sent you hurtful messages online?

...silly situations. Ex.: What would you do if your teacher asked you to cut up your shirt in tiny pieces in arts and crafts?

...embarrassing situations. Ex.: What would you do if someone that you know and love asks you to kiss them, when you don't want to?

...situations that, at first glance, seem very appealing. Ex.: What would you do if someone from your neighbourhood offered you 20\$ to help them bring their grocery bags into their kitchen?



- ◆ Daily life offers us many other topics that we can use in this game. Your child's questions can also provide ideas.



- ◆ Go from more or less difficult situations to more pleasant ones.
- ◆ The child's answer may be valid but incomplete? Congratulate your child and continue asking questions, encouraging them to push their reasoning further. If necessary, complete the information yourself.
- ◆ In short, your daughter or son must understand that it is important to:
 - ◆ **rely on their intuition;**
 - ◆ **say NO;**
 - ◆ **react physically if needed and run away;**
 - ◆ **talk about the situation with a trusted adult.**

Role-plays

How about doing some role-playing with your child? It's a fun way to practice the solutions of the "What would you do if ..." game.



The phone game

The child can pretend to experience different situations requiring using the phone to get help.

This game provides the tools to know:

- ◆ who to call
- ◆ where to call
- ◆ what to say



Practicing the self-defence yell

We use this yell to:

- ◆ surprise the perpetrator;
- ◆ alert the people around us;
- ◆ make ourselves feel strong and courageous.

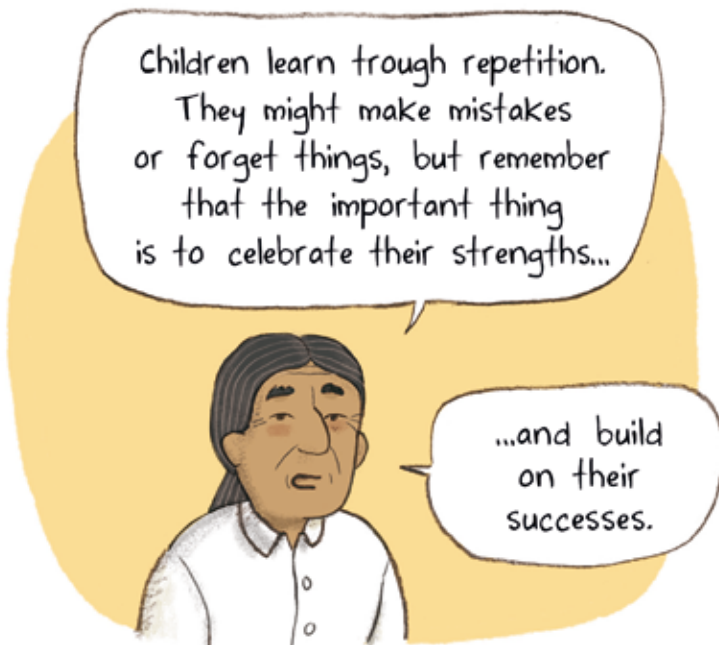


- ◆ Practicing allows the child to discover the strength of the yell. You will realize, while doing it with your child, all the power and energy it generates. With training, the self-defence yell will acquire even more strength and last longer and longer.
- ◆ Certain rules need to be observed.
 - ◆ This yell comes from the belly and not from the throat (it is a deep yell, not high-pitched).
 - ◆ Practicing must be done in a place where the yell will not be heard nor interpreted as a cry for help. Warn people that it is just an exercise.
 - ◆ Using the self-defence yell can be fun. However, remind your child that it must only be used in emergency situations.

The “Questions regarding safety” game

To answer the questions of this game, children need to think about attitudes or behaviours to insure or regain their safety. It is a good way to develop their prevention reflexes.

- ◆ Name a safety rule that we have at home? At school? For Internet use?
- ◆ Name three places **where** you feel safe indoors and outdoors?
- ◆ Who are the three people **with whom** you feel the safest?
- ◆ **Why?**
- ◆ **When** do you feel completely safe? Tell me about three of those situations.
- ◆ Tell me **what** you can do to feel really safe.



Conclusion

We hope you found concrete tools to discuss violence prevention with your child in this booklet. Remember, we're here for you and your child if you need support.

Every action is important. For additional information, you can also read the following booklets:

Booklet 1 — *Violence against children...*

Booklet 3 — *Clues to detect if your child is a victim of violence*

Booklet 4 — *When a child confides in you...*

Booklet 5 — *Help for you and your child*

Because every constructive action contributes to building a world where adults and children can finally **feel safe, strong and free!**



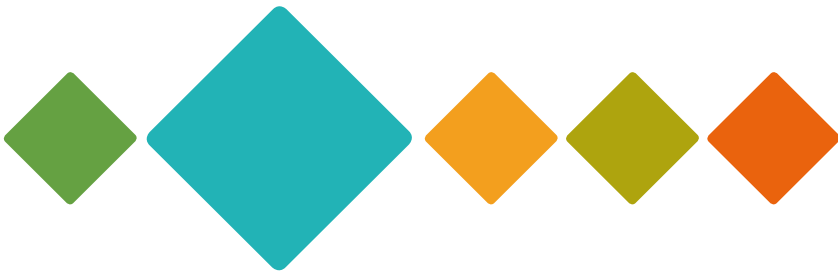
Regroupement des organismes ESPACE du Québec

The Regroupement des organismes ESPACE du Québec (ROEQ) is responsible for the implementation and development of the CAP-ESPACE program. It takes pride in the awards it has received.



- ◆ the Rights and Freedoms Award
- ◆ the Marie-Vincent Foundation Award
- ◆ the Persillier-Lachapelle Award
- ◆ the annual Desjardins award

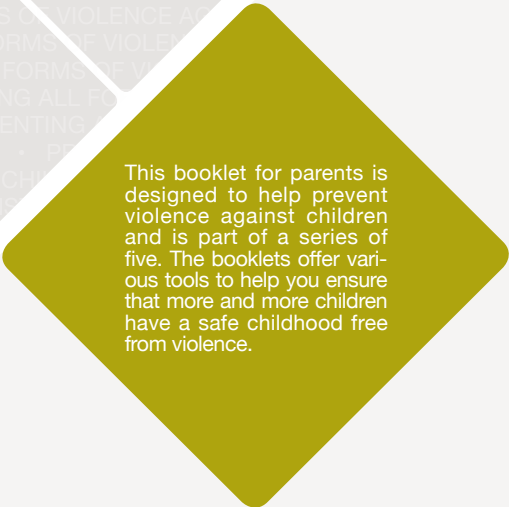
In collaboration with Université Laval, ESPACE has participated in various research projects to assess the impact of the program. This research proved conclusive. Visit www.espacesansviolence.org for info on the detailed results.



How to contact your ESPACE organization

ESPACE Abitibi-Est	819 824-3572
ESPACE Centre-du-Québec	819 752-9711
	Tel : toll free 1 833 297-9711
ESPACE Chaudière-Appalaches	418 603-8383
ESPACE Côte-Nord	418 296-2403
	Tel : toll free 1 866 589-2405
ESPACE Gaspésie-les-îles	418 368-2015
	Tel : toll free 1 866 368-2015
ESPACE Mauricie	819 375-3024
ESPACE Outaouais	819 771-1546
ESPACE région de Québec	418 649-5140
ESPACE Surcoût	450 371-8096
Regroupement des organismes ESPACE du Québec	418 667-7070

www.espacesansviolence.org



This booklet for parents is designed to help prevent violence against children and is part of a series of five. The booklets offer various tools to help you ensure that more and more children have a safe childhood free from violence.