



Boost Child Abuse Prevention & Intervention

Primary Prevention Programs for Children

Boost Child Abuse Prevention & Intervention is committed to eliminating abuse and violence in the lives of children, youth, and their families. The centre is a registered charity and provides programs and services to children, youth, and their families in Toronto and surrounding areas. In 2008 Boost opened two new locations in Central Ontario to deliver to children and youth. In 2009, in partnership with the YMCA, Boost will provide training to professionals in 14 cities and towns across Ontario to recognize and respond to suspicions of child abuse.

We believe that all children and youth have a right to grow up in a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment. We are dedicated to the prevention of child abuse and violence through education and awareness, and to collaborating with our community partners to provide services to children, youth, and their families.

Boost offers a range of prevention programs for children, youth, caregivers, and professionals. Despite our best efforts over the past two decades, the problems of child abuse, bullying and community violence have not significantly diminished. Children's Aid Societies continue to respond daily to allegations of physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect. Significant numbers of children are living in environments where they are being exposed to and traumatized by violence in the home and the community.

Research is showing that children living in homes where family violence is present are at increased risk for mental health issues and behaviour problems. The numbers of children and youth with aggressive behaviour in schools has also increased with bullying now being identified by educators and parents as a very serious problem in the lives of children and youth. One of the largest challenges we face is educating the general public about these issues and the need for awareness and prevention. Boost offers the following prevention & public education programs for children. These programs are designed to be implemented by teachers in the classroom and the concepts can easily be linked to existing curriculum outcomes.

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I'm a Great Little Kid!

The **I'm A Great Little Kid!** primary prevention program introduces children to the 6 basic concepts (self-esteem, communication, making good choices, respect for self and others and how and where to get help) that assist them to develop and strengthen healthy relationships, and acquire skills and attributes that lessen their vulnerability to abuse and bullying.

The **I'm A Great Little Kid!** program (for children four to seven years) consists of six storybooks and a Facilitator's Guide. Each book addresses the basic concepts of:

- self-esteem
- communication
- making choices
- respect
- touch
- how and where to get help

The storybooks contain colourful, fun illustrations and are written in gentle rhyme. The accompanying guide contains information for facilitators and activities designed to reinforce the concepts and messages in each book. The I'm A Great Little Kid! program was the recipient of the Mayor's Community Safety Award in 2005.

Kids Comments:

I learned that respect is correct and the right choices are do good things and to appreciate yourself and to never keep secrets about touch and to speak out for yourself and be a kind kid.

Raven, Age 7

Being a great kid means to speak out if something happened or tell an adult. And to be a great kid if you can't do something keep on trying and never give up on your self. I have self of steam!!!!

Sarah, Age 8

The thing I learned about being a great little kid is that it's not hard at all!

Caelon, Age 6

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I'm A Great Kid!, an innovative primary prevention program for children 8 to 11 years old, empowers children to think and act in positive ways. The program includes a 20 minute DVD (with six 5 minute teaching modules) and an accompanying guide that can be used to introduce and reinforce the following basic concepts:

- the importance of building positive self-esteem
- developing effective communication skills
- making good choices
- respecting differences
- learning how and where to get help
- understanding different kinds of touch

This unique program teaches children primary prevention skills appropriate for their age and stage of learning and development. The accompanying guide provides strategies that reinforce the concepts introduced in each video through classroom activities.

Kids Comments:

Being respectful to others and also being respectful to yourself. Self-esteem is like a glowing light inside of you and could never go away. Whenever there is a question and you don't know it, you will hear SELF-ESTEEM and then when you answer the question you will get it right. When someone is hurting you the self-esteem will make you say something to stand up to the person who is hurting your feelings.

DiMarjio, Age 9

I learned to inform the teacher or your parents if something is bothering you, even if it's small, don't keep it inside. It will feel better to tell people, they can help, so get help when you need help.

Sonali, age 8

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I have learned something very special and that special thing is believing in myself. My brother always puts me down but now I tell him "YES I CAN" because I just remember I am a Great Kid!

Patricia, Age 10

I liked how I learned things that I already knew but after Sharon taught us I felt like I never even heard about them. The whole thing about the golden rule and how its good to treat other people the way you yourself would like it to be. That's a big one!

Matthew, Age 9

One thing that I learned is that all touch can be talked about and that if you try to tell someone something important and they don't listen you tell some one else and you keep telling peoples until you get someone to listen and help you out.

Alex, Age 9

Sharon really helped me with my self esteem. You know that poster we made? Well when I'm down in the dumps I look at that poster and I feel better about myself. I feel like a GREAT KID!

Katrina, Age 9

Information for Teachers & Caregivers:

The dynamics of victimization suggests that children who are targeted are often chosen for the very qualities that prevent them from saying "no" or telling someone about the abuse. Vulnerable children with low self-esteem, poor communication skills, a lack of understanding about how and where to get help are at a higher risk of victimization.

The purpose of the I'm A Great Kid! program is to empower children to think and act positively while building the skills and abilities that lessen their vulnerability to victimization. This can be accomplished in children by building their self-esteem, developing their communication and decision- making skills, and fostering a developmentally appropriate understanding of healthy relationships and respect for others.

SELF- ESTEEM is a feeling of self-worth and feeling good about oneself. It means recognizing uniqueness, strengths and areas of improvement. It is important for children to participate in activities that build on their strengths, thereby helping them develop a sense of confidence and an appreciation of their abilities. Self-esteem is about how children "feel inside" with respect to themselves. Self-concept is about how children think about themselves. Children who are confident and feel good about themselves are

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not only less likely to be victimized, but also are less likely to grow up to victimize others.

COMMUNICATION is the process of sending and receiving verbal and non-verbal messages. It involves understanding feelings and needs, recognizing that everyone has the right to express feelings without infringing on the rights of others, and knowing how to express thoughts and feelings clearly. Children can increase their skills and their confidence in themselves as communicators when they receive the support they need to communicate in situations they recognize as important.

Teachers can support their students to develop communication skills:

Talk with them: Give lots of opportunity for children to participate in conversations.

Listen to them: Recognize that what children have to say is important.

Respect them: When you consider your student's feelings, they learn that everyone's feelings are valued.

Set an example for them: Surround your students with positive communication where ideas and feelings are expressed openly.

Guide them: Recognize that words are powerful and use positive messages when responding to your students.

DECISION-MAKING is the ability to think of options (different ways of doing something), consider the risks and consequences of each option, and act upon a choice.

For children, making choices involves:

- recognizing that they have the ability to make decisions
- having the opportunity to practice developmentally appropriate decision-making, both as a group and independently
- using critical thinking skills such as identifying cause and effect, analyzing, processing, and predicting
- recognizing that making decisions is developmental and it is OK to ask for help and support if the choices are confusing

Teachers can support their students to learn how to make positive choices:

Provide opportunities for choice: Give your students the chance to make age appropriate decisions every day.

Express confidence in their ability: Let your students know that you have faith in their ability to make reasonable choices.

Consider others: Consider your students' feelings when you make decisions, and they will learn to consider others in their decision making.

Respect the choices of others: Show your students that you respect the choices of others by accepting their decisions, as long as no one's well being is being jeopardized.

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Consider different points of view: show your students that you value what others have to say, and will make decisions that are right for you.

RESPECTING OTHERS is about treating people the way in which we want to be treated. It means paying attention to our own and others' feelings, ideas, bodies and property. We show our respect through our actions and our words. Respect entails a universal regard for differences and a celebration of culture, religion, values, family, and diversity. It involves teaching children about their rights and the need to respect other people's rights.

Teachers can support their students to learn the importance of respect:

Show respect: listen to what others have to say

Talk openly: all feelings and ideas are valuable and important and can be talked about.

Set an example: treat everyone in the class fairly, providing opportunities for all students that respect their interests and abilities.

Appreciate people's differences: participate in events and activities that give children the opportunity to share in and appreciate the beliefs and customs of others.

TOUCH is an important part of human relationships. Touch is a confusing area for many adults, as well as children, because it can convey mixed messages. For example, parents may tell children to kiss someone goodnight when they would not kiss the person themselves or a child may be spanked as a punishment for hitting a sibling. Children need to be taught that they can give permission to touch or to be touched. They also need help developing the skills to sort out the difference between touch that feels good, touch that does not feel good and touch that is uncomfortable. Most importantly, is the knowledge that no one has the right to force or trick someone into touch, and that all touch can be talked about with others. Children who know they have the right to say "no" and/or question such behavior have gained valuable prevention skills against exploitation.

Teachers can support their students to talk about touching:

Respect differences: emphasize that people have different beliefs about touching depending on their culture, family values, age, sex and personal preferences, beliefs that should be respected.

Talk about touch: when opportunities arise, openly discuss with children different kinds of touch and the feelings connected to touching.

Show respect: talk to children about liking and respecting themselves, appreciating that they have the right to decide how they want to be touched.

Set an example: children need to know that angry feelings are okay, and that problems can be solved without being physical and hurting one another.

There are no secrets: explain to children that no one has the right to tell them to keep any kind of touch a secret- remember all touching can be talked about.

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HOW & WHERE TO GET HELP involves recognizing and accessing a support system- people around us who are helpers, who can provide support, encouragement, and who can speak out for us. There are two kinds of support systems: a formal support system that includes teachers, doctors, nurses, counselors, police, and child protection services; and an informal support system that includes family, friends, relatives, and neighbours. Knowing when to go for help is based on trusting our feelings. Knowing where to get help, and to keep telling until they get the help they need is crucial.

Teachers can support their students to feel comfortable in asking for help:

Identify supports: talk with students to identify which adults they would go to for help, recognizing that whom they choose must be someone they trust.

Talk about secrets: discuss the difference between secrets and surprises- reinforce the message that no one has the right to ask you to keep a secret, especially if it makes you feel uncomfortable.

Always trust your feelings: emphasize to students that they should trust their feelings and talk to someone if they need help, even if they feel embarrassed, confused, or scared about telling.

Set an example: show children the different ways in which friends and family help one another.

Keep telling: empower children to get help for themselves and others by encouraging them to keep telling until someone helps them.

I've learned that people will forget what you said,
people will forget what you did, but people will never
forget how you made them feel.

- Maya Angelou

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