

TOOLKIT TWO: ACT

STAY SAFE CHOICES



GET OUT

If it is possible to “get out” of an unsafe place or situation, we can move to a safer place. We practice this when we leave the building during a fire drill, when we get inside to get away from a storm, or move away from someone that makes us feel unsafe. Teachers and community helpers (like police and firefighters) will meet us at our meeting space or come find us if we are in a different place.

PLAY PARALLEL: PLAYING TAG

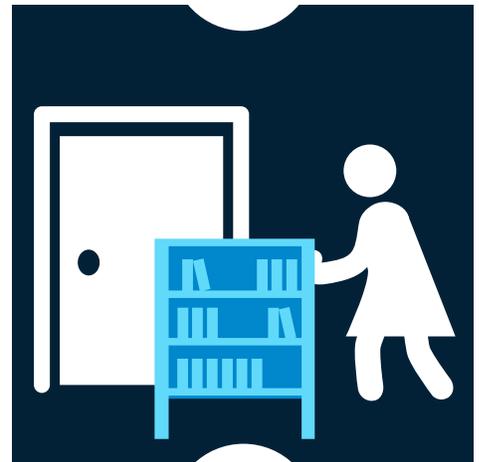


OR

KEEP OUT

If it is not possible to get out or away, danger can be kept out by locking and blocking doors (barricading). You may see your teacher or other grown-ups keeping danger out by locking doors or putting furniture in the way.

PLAY PARALLEL: BUILDING FORTS



AND

HIDE OUT

Keeping out of sight from danger can also help us keep safe. This is different from what we do in a fire emergency. We must be quiet while we wait; and, we must be sure that we can “get out” if necessary.

PLAY PARALLEL: PLAYING HIDE AND SEEK





Parent/Educator Background and Guidance:

It is important when introducing any options-based program to students that options are presented as choices, not expectations. Education and practice are designed to help students make the safest possible choices in an emergency; however, human response is unpredictable. Individual human responses are normal, healthy, and naturally self-protective. Practice of certain strategies increases the possibility of successful self-management during a crisis.

- Students should never be made to feel as though their own unpredictable human response (such as “freeze” or “flight”) is wrong or inadequate. Educating students in safety practices according to the philosophy “Practice makes progress,” rather than the old “Practice makes perfect,” is of great benefit in building the confidence and resiliency required for situational and lifelong safety skills.
- We recommend against introducing “Fight,” “Take Out,” or “Counter” for Early Developmental Levels as it can be psychologically overwhelming and is often not physically manageable at these levels. In some situations though, young children will have already been exposed to “Stranger Danger” type protocols. In this case, it may be helpful to draw a parallel whereby children are empowered “to do whatever they need to” (counter) as a last resort to escape—throw, bite, kick, scream, etc. The decision of teaching these tactics to students is one that should reside at the local level and include a multi-disciplinary safety team. Parents must always be educated about and allowed to opt their children out of such programming.
- Even with more mature and aware students and staff, introduction to the principles of “Fight” and “Counter” must be carefully considered by a multi-disciplinary safety team, never mandated, and always introduced as last resort options.
- For districts that choose to include these options in their curricula, we recommend an “opt-in” or “opt-out” approach, similar to that used by many districts for sex education curricula. In other words, parents should be apprised of such programming and should have the choice as to whether or not their child(ren) will participate.
- As in any emergency, students need to know that it is important to listen to the grown-up(s) in charge for directions, but in the absence of an adult’s directions, students can make safety choices if they need to. No one will be angry at students for breaking rules (like throwing things, entering a staff-only area, running in the hall, or leaving the room) to be safe.
- Just like the building blocks of any other life skills developed over time (tooth-brushing, driving, money management) we continue to add information and options as appropriate until our children attain mastery and independence. We grow the repertoire from simple to complex over an extended period of time and in bearable bits.