



Lesson Information

The Safe Life Program empowers individuals with disabilities (developmental and other disabilities, including Autism) with skills to make positive choices and decisions. The objectives for clients are:

1. *To learn why* self-determination, abuse awareness, personal safety, reporting skills, appropriate relationships, and civic responsibilities are needed.
2. *To receive information, tools/strategies* that can be used to address physical well-being, emotional well-being, social well-being and civic well-being.
3. *To practice and apply* learned safety, abuse prevention and decision making skills in daily living environments with regard to physical well-being, emotional well-being, social well-being and civic well-being.

Safe Life Lesson Theme Descriptions

1. ***Respecting Yourself and Others.*** This lesson addresses social and emotional well-being. It teaches rules for developing good citizenship, rights and responsibilities as a citizen, and helps to create an environment that promotes respectful behavior in group situations. Social and emotional well-being can help lead to good relationships and positive self-image. People who have friends and feel good about themselves are more likely to advocate and report problems.
2. ***Emergency Preparedness.*** The need for emergency preparedness is becoming more and more evident in today's society. This lesson focuses on awareness and best practice procedures¹ for emergency, natural disaster and terrorist situations - including shootings and bomb threats in public locations. The lesson also covers emergency preparedness and emergency drill practice activities. Practicing what to do in the event of an emergency helps to ensure a safe response in a real emergency situation. Practice also helps client support persons know what to document as necessary adaptations that individual clients need, in order to be safe during emergency practice drills and real emergency situations.
3. ***Feelings.*** This lesson teaches clients about different kinds of feelings - how to identify feelings in themselves and in others. This lesson also teaches clients to learn, practice, and communicate/express their feelings appropriately. Effective and appropriate communication about feelings can help clients to develop good mental health, develop/maintain healthy relationships, and also help them to stay out of trouble.
4. ***Increasing Awareness About the Problem of Abuse.*** This lesson gives information about the problem of abuse. It is a very important lesson because people with disabilities are 4 to 10 times more at risk

¹ California State Juvenile Officers Association Annual Trainings. Sacramento, California. (Annual conference providing ideas for practice procedures and prevention regarding violence in our communities and schools – used a resource for material presented in this lesson.)

of being abused than people without disabilities². One of the contributing factors is lack of education/awareness regarding the problem. This lesson also introduces some of the safety skills that are practiced and reinforced in other Safe Life Program lessons; such as teaching clients how to identify safe persons and report problems.

5. ***Empowering Language and Communication for Safety.*** This lesson teaches concepts, vocabulary, and communication skills needed to empower individuals with disabilities to identify and report abuse. The lesson also covers bullying. When students are educated about inappropriate vs. appropriate behaviors and actions, they may be more likely to question, identify and tell about things that need to be reported and stopped.
6. ***Your Body.*** This lesson covers the importance of taking care of your body. It includes information about diet, exercise and developing good habits for a healthy life. Clients who learn and practice healthy habits are more likely to feel good physically and mentally. The lesson also teaches the names and jobs of body parts so that individuals with disabilities can recognize and report problems. 16-30% of all boys and 39-68% of all girls with disabilities are sexual abused before they are 18 years old³. Clients need information about their bodies to help reduce their risk of being sexually abused.
7. ***Additional Information About Abuse.*** This lesson expands on the topic of abuse and teaches about the different kinds of abuse including: physical, emotional, sexual, cyber, fiduciary and neglect, and about things that are not abuse. The lesson also teaches who might be an abuser, where abuse could happen, and when abuse could happen. Clients need information and skill practice to identify abusive situations in order to help reduce their risk of being tricked and/or abused. An example of a practice activity for this lesson would be when different scenarios are described to a client and the client determines: 1) if each of the described scenarios is an abusive situation or not; 2) what an appropriate response would be for each scenario; 3) whether or not each of the situations needs to be reported to a safe person.
8. ***Empowerment to Address Problems.*** This lesson focuses on problem solving and reporting problems. It emphasizes the importance of having safe persons in one's life; people to whom the client feels comfortable communicating, and can go to, in the event of a problem. The lesson contains a problem-solving plan and self-report form to empower and assist students in solving and communicating problems. Clients who know they have the right to be safe, know how to report problems, and know who to report problems to, are more likely to seek help if they are being abused or if they are faced with an unsafe situation.
9. ***Practice for Application of Safety Skills.*** This lesson gives information and teaches about skills for personal safety at home, in the community, and in online situations using the Internet. The home safety section covers: answering the door, using the phone, and using the Internet safely; responding safely to texting and social media, keeping windows covered when dressing; being safe around home tools and appliances, poisons and medicines; fire safety; minor first aid, etc. The community safety section covers: protecting and being responsible for personal information and items; looking and acting like a strong person, rather than a victim; self-defense; and coming into contact with unfamiliar animals. The online/internet section includes general skills for *appropriate use of Internet, texting, instant messages, and social media websites/applications.*

² (Sobsey, D. (1996) Relative Victimization Risk Rates: People with Intellectual Disabilities - published manuscript).

³ Roerher Institute, 1988, Vulnerable: Sexual Abuse and People with Intellectual Handicaps.

10. **Critical Thinking for Good Choices and Decisions.** This lesson cover concepts and decision-making skills to help empower clients to enhance basic quality of life domains – including physical well-being, social well-being, emotional well-being, productive well-being, and civic well-being. The lesson covers an individual’s right to make choices, and their responsibility to think about and to try to make choices that will lead to a safe and healthy life. The lesson also covers the importance of discriminating between good and bad directions. Clients who feel confident in making choices, and having those choices respected, are more likely to be confident in saying no to abusive situations or to bad directions. Clients who receive support and practice skills to act safely and responsibly in various situations are more likely to reduce their risk of abuse. Clients who know that they are expected to act safely and responsibly are more likely to do so. The lesson expands to include good choices and appropriate use of cell phones/computers and covers social media rules, responsibilities, and consequences for bad decisions. The lesson will include making good choices when using the Internet for email, texting/messaging, and on social sites (such as Facebook, Snapchat, dating sites, adult sites).
11. **Healthy Relationships.** This lesson teaches about the differences between family, friend, helpful person, romantic, acquaintance, and cyber acquaintance relationships, and rules that go along with those relationships. It also teaches that there are some people with whom we have no relationship. The lesson introduces tools: the Social Plan, the Social Plan Evaluation, Planning Tool for Social Preparedness Practice, and the Relationship Timeline. The Social Plan helps students learn to plan activities with friends and the Social Plan Evaluation helps them think about people and activities, deciding if they are enjoyable. The Planning Tool for Social Preparedness Practice help students develop a plan for and practice appropriate responses for anticipated social interactions. The Relationship Timeline helps students to understand the time that is required in order to get to know someone well enough for safe and healthy relationships to develop. Information about appropriate relationships can help serve as a foundation for learning healthy rules and boundaries within different relationships. Clients who know the rules and boundaries of relationships are more likely realize and report if someone violates those boundaries and less likely to violate those boundaries themselves.
12. **Legal Issues and Other Problems in Our Society.** This lesson teaches students about staying out of trouble, avoiding unsafe or illegal situations, and avoiding individuals who make unsafe or illegal choices. The lesson also gives information and provides tools to help students prepare for situations that could include talking to police and other emergency helpers. As appropriate for young adult and adult clients, other discussion areas include criminal activity associated with pornographic action or pedophile activity, internet & social media activity that can be considered a criminal act. Clients need information and skill practice regarding how to stay out of trouble and also what to do in the event that they are suspected of doing something wrong.